

NUGGETS of HISTORY

Volume 10

September-October, 1973

Number 5

BLAISDELL STREET HONORS AN EARLY SETTLER

By Mrs. Harold B. Hyde

Blaisdell Street, running east and west one block north of the 1100 block of School Street, bears the name of an early Rockford family. The progenitor of the American branch of this family was Enoch Blaisdell who died in Wales. His widow and three sons, Enoch, Abner, and Elijah, came to America twenty years after the landing of the "Mayflower", according to family history, and settled in Massachusetts. The youngest son, Elijah, was the direct ancestor of E. W. Blaisdell, Jr. One member of the family married a Nathaniel Whittier of the family of the poet John Greenleaf Whittier. It was after this man and the poet for whom Elijah Whittier Blaisdell received his middle name. Parrit Blaisdell, born November 11, 1759, died August 3, 1836, and married Ruth Folsom Ball, served in the Revolutionary War as a private from Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Parrit, the grandfather of E. W., also served in the War of 1812.

In 1853 Elijah Whittier Blaisdell arrived in Rockford. He had been born at Montpelier, Vermont, July 16, 1826, and was 27 years of age. When Elijah was a boy, the family moved to Vergennes, Vermont. Both his father and grandfather were printers and together took up publication of the VERGENNES VERMONT, a newspaper which had been founded by Rufus W. Griswold. Elijah later took over the publication of this newspaper. He was appointed postmaster of Vergennes by President Zachary Taylor.

Elijah Whittier Blaisdell was married twice. The first wife, Frances Robinson Blaisdell, died shortly after the couple reached Illinois. The second wife, Elizabeth Lawrence, was a daughter of Judge Ville Lawrence of Vermont and a sister of a chief justice of Illinois, C. B. Lawrence. There were five sons: Byron Richard, Henry Lawrence, E. Warde, George, and Shelley P. Blaisdell. Mr. Blaisdell's sons were born at 204 North Church Street, on the side of the Lafayette Hotel. Mrs. E. W. (Elizabeth) Blaisdell became a member of Rockford Chapter DAR in 1905.

E. W.'s father and brothers Charles and Richard came west at about the same time. Richard was well-known in the newspaper field. Charles Blaisdell came to Illinois with Wilbur F. Storey. While Mr. Storey was managing editor of the CHICAGO TIMES, Charles was the business manager. At a later time he was in charge of setting the advertisements for that paper. Then he moved to Los Angeles, California.

A son, Henry Lawrence Blaisdell, was graduated from Rockford High School and from the University of Wisconsin. He was one of the first reporters of the ROCKFORD MORNING STAR when it appeared about 1888. Later he was a member of the Winnebago County Bar. He founded the firm of Clark and Blaisdell, with offices in the Brown Building.

H. L. also had a liking for literature. For a number of years he was connected with the "Ten Story Book", a Chicago publication, which was founded by C. Dwight Allyn, a



HON. E. W. BLAISDELL.



Home of E. W. Blaisdell
204 North Church Street

former Rockford newspaperman. E. Warde Blaisdell, son of E. W., became an artist, studying in Paris, on a Chase Scholarship. He opened his own studio in Greenwich Village, New York. He became interested in animal drawings and illustrated the Peter Rabbit series. Then he studied oil painting with Harvey Dunn. He was also a cartoonist, and his works of "Bunny Bright" appeared in the Boston Herald. Then, too, he was a regular contributor to Frank Edminson's column "Frankly Speaking" appearing in Rockford Morning Star.

E. Warde was married in Minneapolis in 1912. He and his wife, Viola, a native of New York, had lived in Leonia, New Jersey, until 1933, then moved to Rockford where he died in 1944. His widow moved to Tucson, Arizona, in 1947, but returned to Rockford in 1952. Her two daughters living in Rockford are Mrs. Arnold Bunting and Mrs. Norman Anderson. Another grand-daughter of Blaisdell was Mrs. E. M. Atwood. Byron Blaisdell moved from Rockford to Chicago.

Mystery readers have enjoyed some of twenty-five books published by Dell Shannon. Mrs. Doris Bunting, a daughter of E. Warde, owns at least one of these, entitled "Coffin Corner". She says the author, Barbara, is the daughter of a half brother to her father E. Warde Blaisdell, named Byron Blaisdell, and that she lives in Glendale, California. There are several pen-names, one of which is Anne Blaisdell. She contributed material on Irish history to ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA.

A cousin of E. Warde Blaisdell, the late Dr. James Blaisdell, is a former president of Beloit College and Pomona (California) College. Another cousin is credited with inventing the Zippo lighter. The Blaisdell pencil was invented by Charles Blaisdell, another cousin.

Elijah Whittier Blaisdell never lost his interest in newspapers and he became interested in the ROCKFORD FORUM.

On February 17, 1843, J. Ambrose Wight, a graduate of Williams College who had come to Rockford in 1836, began publishing the ROCKFORD FORUM, a Whig newspaper. He sold the newspaper on August 18, 1843, to Austin M. Colton. Colton was successful with the paper for the next ten years. He sold it to E. W. Blaisdell, Jr., who changed the name, in January of 1854, to the REPUBLICAN and took his brother Richard P. Blaisdell into partnership. As the REPUBLICAN it continued to be published until 1862, when it was purchased by Elias C. Daugherty, and merged into the ROCKFORD REGISTER, which Mr. Daugherty owned. It was while Mr. Blaisdell owned the REPUBLICAN that his interest in Abraham Lincoln developed.

Politics attracted E. W. powerfully. A newspaper article in 1901, speaking of his political activity, stated that "Mr. Blaisdell (was) instrumental in calling the famous mass convention of this district which nominated Elihu B. Washburne for Congress." It stated, "The convention was held in a grove where the Spaulding flats on North Court now stand. The convention adopted a resolution that the sense of the meeting was that a new party should be formed to be called the Republican party and inviting for affiliation with it all those who opposed the extension of slave territory." Mr. Washburne was a candidate of the Whig party, which was meeting in convention the same day. Mr. Washburne was nominated by the mass convention of Republicans arranged by Mr. Blaisdell, then endorsed by the Whigs, and finally elected by a big majority.

In 1856 Blaisdell attended the meeting at Bloomington at which time the organization of the Republican party in Illinois practically resulted. Abraham Lincoln addressed this convention at Bloomington and Mr. Blaisdell decided Lincoln would be the coming leader when the blow for the abolition of slavery was to be struck. E. W. returned to Rockford and advocated the nomination of Lincoln with great vigor and directness. Gen. Palmer in his book THE BENCH AND BAR OF ILLINOIS gave the newspaper, THE ROCKFORD REPUBLICAN, credit for being the first newspaper to support Lincoln for the office of President in 1860, and Lincoln received the nomination later that year.

E. Whittier Blaisdell was elected to the legislature of Illinois in 1858. At that time senators were selected by the legislature and not by popular vote. Blaisdell voted for Abraham Lincoln who was opposed by Stephen A. Douglas, a Democrat. While Lincoln was not successful, his debates with Douglas made people aware of his abilities.

After Blaisdell served his term in the Illinois legislature, he was admitted to the bar and practiced law in Rockford for many years.

In 1854, the Republican Party celebrated its 100th anniversary of the party's founding in Ripon, Wisconsin. Mrs. E. Warde Blaisdell, a daughter-in-law of E. W., attended a Winnebago County Women's Republican Club picnic in Sillisippi Park commemorating the party's founding and was cited as the daughter-in-law of "one of the founders of the Republican Party in Illinois."

Versatility was exhibited in a long career as editor,

lawyer, poet, novelist and politician. Real estate, too, claimed a share of time. In 1895 E. Whittier Blaisdell built an office building located in the 200 block of South Main Street, which was the first building to use the services of city heat. During World War II it was converted into the Illinois Hotel and operated by sons George and Shelley. It was demolished in 1971 to make way for the Urban Renewal Program.

Through the boom days of the early 1890s Elijah Whittier Blaisdell took considerable interest in real estate. He placed much of the property which he owned in the north end on the market.

He erected a substantial business block between Wyman and Main Street and another on South Main Street opposite where the Masonic Temple was located in 1901.

E. W. changed his political affiliations when he was convinced that certain parties better fitted with the welfare of the people. In 1884 he turned to the Democrats and supported Grover Cleveland.

Four years before that he stood as a candidate for Congress against John Sherwin on the Greenback Ticket. He was described in those days as a good stump speaker with a fine clear voice.

He represented the fourth ward in the city council of Rockford for a time. During his term he made a memorable fight to demolish the old State Street bridge across the Rock River. He eventually won the end he sought.

Writing occupied much of the thought of E. W. Blaisdell after he retired and lived quietly at his home on Council Hill, 1240 North Church Street. He was working to complete a drama, "The General's Daughter", at the time of his death on January 14, 1901. He was also compiling a book of poems of his own composition. His "Hidden Record" was widely read. He also wrote a political burlesque, "The Rajah".

FREDERICK HOLLINGSWORTH
By Harry Hollingsworth

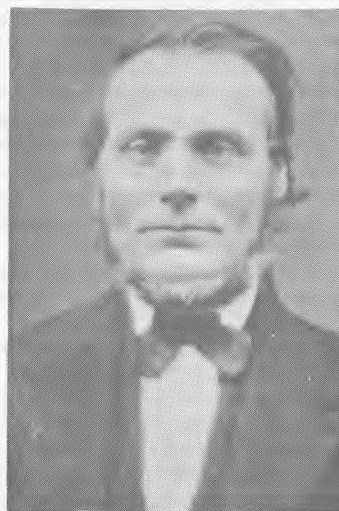
Frederick Hollingsworth was born about 1802 at Ballinakill, in the Parish of Ballycanew, County Wexford, Ireland. His parents were (supposedly but unproved) Samuel and Ann (Earl) Hollinsworth (sic) of that place. He died on February 2, 1869, in Jasper County, Iowa, aged about 66. He was turly a pioneer of Winnebago County and Cherry Valley Township, though his name never appears in any of the many histories of biographical works dealing with the area. Here are facts known about him, painstakingly gleaned from many unpublished sources.

The family reportedly moved to Ballinakill in 1665. This cannot be verified. I think they went to Ireland in the early 1700s. One John Hollinsworth, farmer, obtained a longterm lease on that farm early in 1746. He was born in 1713 and died in 1791. His slab gravestone, fully the size of his grave, lies partly legible in the old Protestant

churchyard. The memorials on the stone include his own, that of his wife, Elizabeth, who died in 1784, aged 70, and his son Samuel, who died in 1815, aged 48, and Samuel's wife, Ann, who died in 1849, aged 85. The last two named are believed to be the parents of Frederick, the Cherry Valley pioneer. Nearby lie other huge slabs erected to the memory of Thomas and William Hollinsworth, other sons of John.

If Frederick does fit into the family of Samuel and Ann, he was the youngest son in a family of about ten. The eldest, John, (1789-1877) married his first cousin, Susannah Hollingsworth, of the same parish, and inherited the farm in 1815 upon his father's death, according to English law. Edward, (1790-1853) was apprenticed to his cousin John Robinson and learned the paper manufacturing trade in Dublin, where he died. Jane (1791-1855) married into the wealthy Whitney family of Killanne Parrish, C. Wexford, and has descendants there today. Esther, (1794-1868) married her first cousin, John Hollingsworth of Cranacrower, Ballycanew, brother of her own brother's wife Susannah, and settled at Cranacrower. William (1797-1876) married Eliza Jones and emigrated to Picton, Ontario, Canada, about 1852. Ann died in 1822, aged 20, unmarried. Mary 1806-circa 1840 married John Agar and lived at Bagenalstown, County Carlow, Ireland. Of her four sons, two were surgeons, one was a sugar broker in New Orleans, and the fourth a meat packer in Chicago. Her living descendants include John Agar, first husband of Shirley Temple, a successful and popular actor in his own right, and Herbert Agar, Pulitzer Prize winning writer, co-founder of Freedom House. The youngest child of Samuel and Ann Hollinsworth, Susan (1810-1888), the last survivor, married Edward Dalton and lived at Foulks Mills, County Wexford. She has descendants living there today.

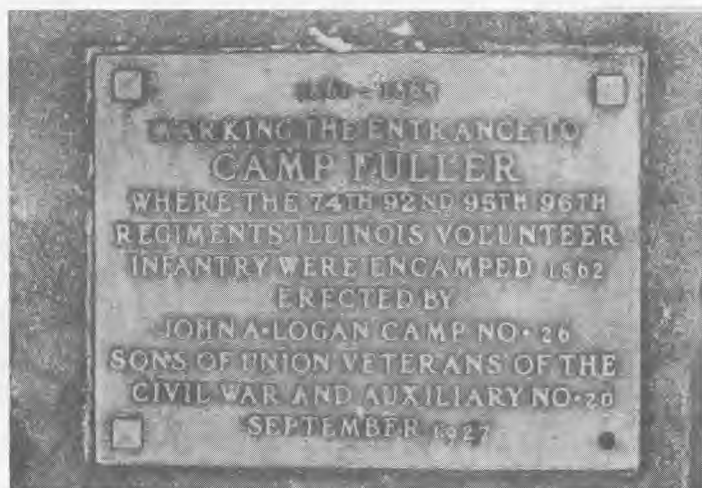
(continued in next issue)



Frederick
Hollingsworth



Boulder at northeast-
corner of Harlem Boule-
vard and Guard Street,
commemorating
Camp Fuller



Plaque on Camp Fuller monument

THE ORRIN GRAM STORY
By Stuart K. Golding
(Concluded from last issue)

But we know that he was not idle while he was home in Rockford, for when the diaries take up again there is a new and romantic note added and they are filled with mention of his Carrie. Whether he knew this girl before the war or met her for the first time while home on leave we do not know, but it was a romance that was to last for many years until his death in 1900. Time and again he writes with elation on having heard from her, and at others with pathos when no letter is received. And as we read further we find a peculiar condition which is hard to explain. Many times we find her name erased with perhaps another name substituted. But he is not consistent with these erasures, for the new name does not fit the text and sometimes her name will be erased at the beginning of the sentence and remain untouched at the end. Whether it was a lover's quarrel or whether he was embarrassed at having used her name so much is perhaps none of our business and we must wait 'til later to find how things turn out.

It is in November of '63 when the battery returns from Mississippi, and, with Memphis as headquarters, go out on several missions guarding the railroads east of the city. Christmas of that year is spent in the town of Salisbury, and Cram, who has been promoted to second lieutenant and is now in charge of one section, has less time for notes. They return to the city in the spring, and in June of '64 suffer their worst defeat of the war when under General Sturgis they are soundly whipped at Gun Town or Brices Crossroads. It was another time when Forrest's vastly outnumbered force



Headstone of Orin W. Cram in Cedar Bluff Cemetery, near the Southwest corner of the cemetery

es made a shambles out of the federal troops. Leaving their guns, they cut the harness from the horses and light out for Memphis. Cram's sister's brother-in-law, Will Mesick, is left for dead, and on the way back both horses and men are lost crossing the swamps and rivers. It takes them some time to get back in shape, and it is not for months that they learn that Mesick is only wounded and a prisoner in the south.

But the army is still out to get Forrest, and just a month later under General A. E. Smith they go out again in the same general direction and gain a victory at Tupelo, Mississippi. Their third hunt for Forrest proves rather embarrassing, for while Smith and his army are hunting for him in Mississippi, Forrest is making a raid on Memphis with but little result except causing some red faces.

In the fall they leave Memphis for the last time. They go down the Mississippi River and up the White River by boat to DuVall's Bluff, Arkansas. No fighting here but after marching all the way to St. Louis, Missouri, they make a belated chase after Price all the way to the Kansas line. Here they are just in time to find Price's army routed and almost disbanded.

They return to St. Louis for what is intended to be a long rest and refitting period. But it is not to be, for Pappy Thomas is calling for help at Nashville so they load the guns, horses and men onto the steamboat and set out. They arrive at Nashville just in time to help Thomas defend that city. The story of the bad weather and icy roads are part of the history of this battle, and Cram confirms it in



Cram Monument in Cedar Bluff Cemetery

anything but loving tones.

It is while they are in Nashville that the enlistment terms of many of the men expire and this almost means the end of the battery. But combining with other batteries that are in the same condition they continue as Battery E, and in January Cram receives his commission as Captain and takes full charge.

Soon after this they move to Chattanooga where they are to spend the rest of their time in garrison duty. Now their new captain has a lot of work to do to get them settled, but he takes time to explore the country a little and make a trip to the top of Lookout Mountain.

Cram, however, is anxious to see his Carrie, and in April he takes a short leave and starts for the north. He, along with several other officers on leave, are held up in Murfreesboro by washouts on the railroad, and it is while they are here they learn of the death of President Lincoln. At first they do not believe it, but when they find out the truth on Sunday it is a day of mourning even in the south where they are.

It is June when he finally loads his troops on the cars for Chicago, and on the fifteenth of July they are mustered out and he leaves for Rockford.

From then on the entries are few and far between and end abruptly on September 28th with this notation: "Today I was married to Carrie E. Lilly of Paines Point at father Cram's. We went to Beloit."

How much epilogue do we want? We know that several children were born to them, but this is another story. They lived in Rockford until his death in 1900, and his beloved Carrie lived here many years longer and died in 1936.

NUGGETS OF HISTORY is published bi-monthly by the Rockford Historical Society and sent to all members. Editorial Address: 1325 Cospser Ave., Rockford, Ill. 61107. Circulation Address: 2130 Clinton St., Phone 965-3126. Membership Chairman: Stuart Golding, 205 Washington St., Phone 226-1502. President: William Condon, 1215 Camp Ave., 61103 Phone 963-7203. Typing by Mrs. Warren Burlend.