

Ruggets--Old AND New

the bi-monthly bulletin of the Rockford Historical Society

November - December, 1963

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Calling All "History Majors"

Hear ye! Hear ye! HEAR YE!! You are invited to attend the regular quarterly meeting of the Rockford Historical Society on December 4th, at Memorial Hall. Call to order at 8 p.m. sharp.

Attorney Philip Keister, Freeport, former president of the Illinois Historical Society, will be our speaker. Mr. Keister holds the honor of being an organizer and long time president of the Freeport Historical group. Among the points of interest, the speaker will explain how his chapter went about acquiring a museum and club house.

Bring a friend and prospect. There is room for 500 in our North Main Street memorial to county veterans of all wars. Let's try to fill it.

Director Robert Borden has the distinction of residing in one of the oldest homes on the east side. The Borden home on Cosper place was erected by Bob's grandfather in the same era during which Maj. Elias Cosper built another pioneer dwelling across the street. Dr. and Mrs. William J. Bryan now occupy the Cosper homestead.

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Rootage of Rockford History

Winnebago and Chippewa Indians gave out with some choice bits of travel information to Thatcher Blake and Germanicus Kent in the spring of 1834 that resulted in the founding of our town.

In tracing the route taken by the two disgusted lead miners from Galena to Rockford, one must assume that the travelers had unusual fortitude and a thirst for adventure. Galena was quite a town and it was thriving when the pair arrived from the east via boat, covered wagon and shank's mare. But both Kent and Blake caught the drift of conversation from earlier immigrants. Earnings from mining of lead were diminishing. Unless a new lead vein was discovered, Galena's fame as a mining center would soon die.

Friendly Indians related that "heap white man Mack" had a paying fur trading post near the confluence of Pek-a-ton-ika river and the "big river". They inferred that our Rock river valley was rich in forests, black soil and game. And so the pair began their pilgrimage east. When they reached Hilmilton's Diggings where a small cabin indicated habitation, they stopped long enough to whittle out a clumsy but seaworthy canoe out of an oak log. Proceeding down the Pecatonica river to Macktown, they were told that the "big river" was but a half-mile away.

From Rockton the two explorers made two or three stops to check soil and timber. When they reached a point near where downtown Rockford is now located, riffles on the water indicated shoals. Farther down stream they found a turbulent creek emptying its waters into the river and that was it. Kent staked his claim on what would be a square mile from the river west, extending from near State street south below Kent creek. Blake, whose first love was farming, laid out his claim $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the river, from a point west of present Avon street to beyond Independence avenue.

Both men saw the necessity of filing on their land claims and proceeded down

Contributions and Complaints should be sent to -----

Member Tickets

Ash Johnson, Editor; G. Herman Nelson, Robert Borden, Mmes. Richard Nielson and Edmund Porter, Contributing Editors.

We hope to have membership tickets printed for your use at the Memorial Hall meeting. Membership Chairman, Jack Mundy, is charged with the responsibility of passing out books of ten tickets to any who raise their hands.

Editorial Office: 2011 Guilford Road

Let's increase our membership 100% and thus broaden the scope of our activities.

Something Happened Every Year

What shall we name the baby?

1836 - Mrs. Daniel Haight chased two Indian braves for a half mile along the east river bank and retrieved red underwear and other items of a Monday washing. The Indians were reproved by an assistant chief, or he might have been a "lootenant" in the Winnebago tribe cavalry.

Here it is; easy on the mailman and easy on the eyes - we hope - the infant bi-monthly bulletin of our Rockford Historical Society. Ye editor is calling it "Nuggets - Old and New" until our Name Contest can be launched. If you have a suggestion, please mail it to the editor, 2011 Guilford Road. They will be preserved for a Name Committee, to be selected by President Bill.

1875 - Two St. Louis editors fought a duel with pistols in an oak grove at Brown's Creek, following cancellation of the speaking appearance here of Jefferson Davis. Neither adversary was injured!

1862 - Camp Fuller, Civil War volunteer recruitment camp, was dismantled after four regiments were sworn into service and dispatched to the front.

1917 - First spadeful of dirt turned as Camp Grant was designated as a military cantonment site June 17th. Sixty days later National Army draftees began training for the Big Adventure in World War I.

(To be continued)