

NUGGETS of HISTORY

The Bi-monthly Bulletin  
of the

ROCKFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE GREEN LIGHT IS ON AND IT'S TIME TO MOVE!

Let's all turn a hand on selling the picnic idea - and the dinner tickets - to your neighbor. He or she will have the best barbecued lamb dinner ever! If he is a history buff - he may absorb a few facts about Pioneering Days in Rockford.

DATE: Sunday, September 13th

PLACE: Rockford College Campus on  
Seminary Street

You bring the girl - and we'll gather at the river, where the first ferry plied across town via "pull on the oars".

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SANITARIUM HERE WAS ONCE SWEDISH BATH

Rosendahl was once a Swedish "water cure" institution, located in Rockford along Rock River. It was founded in 1869 by a group of early Rockford Swedish settlers. A Swedish physician, Dr. Floren believed he had found in the woods several miles north of Rockford, a spring with mineral water containing medicinal qualities. On his advice and under his leadership, a group of Rockford Swedes organized a company and bought the ground in vicinity of the spring. An outstanding gardener was brought over from Sweden and he laid out a remarkably beautiful garden and park. It was modeled after some of the formal parks of Sweden and Europe. An artistic fountain adorned the center of it. A music temple was built along one side. A pathway was laid out to follow Rock River. Shade trees and vines were planted

to adorn both sides and to form a natural roof over the archway.

The bath cure was named Rosendahl. Adornment of the grounds cost \$10,000. The water cure never attained its expected popularity and the project was abandoned when funds ran out. Buildings and grounds were allowed to fall into disrepair.

A write-up in 1886 said: "Although Rosendahl, at one time the most beautiful place in the vicinity of Rockford, now is uncared for and only a few objects here and there tell the story of the former beauty, yet many picnic parties still use the spot and through the park one can hear happy laughter from the throats of young people. Even today many traces of the institution's former beauty can be seen but most of the paths are overgrown and the trail along the river is such a tangle of bushes and vines that it is almost impossible to break one's way through."

Rosendahl in time, became Wilgus Sanitarium and has been a health institution all through the years. The site was offered to Augustana College and Theological Seminary at the time it was contemplating a move from Paxton. The offer was turned down because Rockford did not have rail connections with Minnesota. Instead Augustana College chose a new campus at Rock Island. Rosendahl had been offered to the college free of all incumbrances. Had it been accepted, Augustana College would have been located at Rockford. The college board of directors looked with favor on the Rockford site and offer, but the Minnesota Conference blocked the deal. Minnesotans insisted it be located at some point where there was direct connection with Minnesota.

When the fame of Rosendahl was at it's height, a regular bus service was operated there from the city by John Bennett. The bus was a democrat wago with three seats and without a top.

The bus was reported to have been minus springs, so a ride to Rosendahl was one of many jolts. Most of the patients were women. Among the organizers of the Rosendahl Company were Dr. Floren, The Rev. Gustaf Peters, Pastor of First Lutheran Church, John Nelson, the knitting machine inventor, Jonas Larson, Andrew Hollem, A. P. Nelson, and John Wigell.

- by Herman G. Nelson

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WE REPEAT - WE NEED PICTURES!

Schools, newspapers, industries, churches and other segments of the community should be able to call upon a local historical society for help in the research they may need for some particular project. Pictures depicting "how things were" are particularly desirable. Here's how you can help: take three or four pictures of your own home, regardless of how old or new it may be. Take some pictures of your church, from several angles. Visit the school nearest you and snap a few shots of that. If you know of any buildings in Rockford which you suspect may be razed sometime soon, take pictures of them. When your shots are developed, label them carefully on the backs, including the street addresses, and send to 1303 Cosper Avenue. Include your return address so we know from whence they came. When labelling the prints, please do not press too hard, as the indentation will then show through. If we get a good response, our project is under way!

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THE MANNY CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF HARVESTING MACHINERY (Chapter II)

- by Robert H. Borden

In the very late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, certain men began experimenting with the problem of developing a reaping machine. Credit for introducing a cutter bar with a reciprocating action must be given to Robert Salom of Woburn, Bedfordshire, England, who produced his machine in 1807. This was improved

upon by Henry Ogle of Rennington, England, who in 1822 used Salmon's principles of reciprocating cutter bars, finger guards, and dividers. He combined them with a reel to push the grain against the cutter bar.

One of the earliest reapers invented in the United States seems to be that of James Ten Eyck of Bridgewater, New Jersey, which he patented in 1825. Reapers were later patented by William Manning in 1831, Abram Randall and Obed Hussey in 1833, and Cyrus Hall McCormick in 1834. McCormick later claimed that he had actually invented his machine in 1831. A few years after the earliest American mowers and reapers appeared on the scene, a different kind of harvester was developed. In 1844 a machine called a "header" was invented at Heart Prairie, Wisconsin, a small hamlet approximately ten miles northwest of Elkhorn in Walworth County. The inventor was George Esterly, and although other headers were invented, his seemed to be the most notable. Esterly exhibited his machine at the second annual fair of the Chicago Mechanics Institute in 1848 and won a gold medal by defeating McCormick, his only competitor. Esterly's machine was designed to cut just high enough on the straw so as to take only the heads of grain, which were then carried by two revolving canvasses from the machine into a wagon driven alongside.

In 1846 one of these headers was purchased by Pells Manny of Waddam's Grove, who, together with his son John H. Manny, used it during the 1847 harvest. In the October issue of the PRAIRIE FARMER for that year, the younger Manny published a letter in which he told about the many advantages of harvesting with a header, among them being the elimination of raking and binding, and the benefit to be derived by leaving the straw on the field for fertilizing the soil. He claimed that he had cut approximately two hundred acres of grain in twelve days, which

would be an average of more than sixteen and one-half acres per day. (To be continued)

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#### FOLKS LIKE NAMES

- by Dorisann Nielsen

It may be true as we suggested in a previous issue that institutions thrive on number designations but it should be added that people like names. Probably no sooner than the first numbers were assigned to Winnebago County School Districts, residents began to call the school by names. Names generally came from early settlers, school board members, land donors or sometimes from familiar locations. In many cases, the writer has found reasons for choices have long been forgotten. Some names are amusing. On US 51, north of Roscoe there was a school called "Windy Peak". West of Durand was "Vinegar Hill" while the site in front of Harlem's junior high building and old school house was known as "Free Soil School". "Sanitarium School" was on present Rockford Country Club property. Near Pecatonica a school was termed "The Red Brick School House" in Civil War days.

Names of early pioneers were used in the cases of Blake, Hoisington, Gunsaulus (spelling from old record book), Stephan Mack and several others. Some district changed names to honor later citizens. These included John T. Buckbee, M. C. (old Starkey school); Harry Morris (Ogilby); Lincoln Park expansion units named for veteran teacher, Ellen Stiles); and former principal William Dennis. Some names remain as mysteries. For instance a Durand area school was called "Church-ill", in another location the name was "Church Hill". In a letter received during the 1962 research on early school districts, an aged woman from Harrison wrote about her farm being on the "Mud Hollow District". Who knows where that school was located?



## ROCKFORD - YEAR by YEAR

1846

Rockford and Rockton resolved to launch fund drives for the construction of a building to house a young women's seminary. The Congregational and Presbyterian church council voted thumbs down on the Rockton project. The reason - "your town is too close to Beloit and the newly launched men's college."

1847

Messra Aratus Kent, early day Unitarian theologian, W. Wilcox, Wait Talcott and E. H. Potter, were among the 15 incorporators of the Rockford Female Seminary Association. These men sent for and hired Miss Anna Sill as principal. Her assistants were the Misses Hannah and Eliza Richards. First recitations were held in the former court house structure on North First Street.

1848

The Rockford Free Press launched publication as a "Free Soil" or "Barner-burner" organ. The paper staggered along almost weekly until 1850. The presidential election brought the following vote trend in Winnebago County: Whigs - 866, Democrats - 240, Free Soilers - 807, Total of 1913 votes.

1849

County spring election followed national trend, resulting in victory for Whigs - 842 to 815, local Democrats running a close second. Excessive costs caused dropping of the "Plank Road" project that would have connected Chicago and Rockford by "modern" highway.

1850

Town's steady growth and a change in the state constitution caused changing county government to a more adequate function. The Board of Commissioners received a change of name to "County Supervisors", David Weld becoming its first chairman. Each township in the county was represented by one supervisor.

1851

A special election was held to determine whether municipal government should or should not change

charter from town plan to a city government. Resulting was a special election favoring city operation. The city plan won a majority of votes cast on January 3, 1852. An April, 1852, election ratified the action of the special voting three months earlier.

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Associate Editor Herman G. Nelson's first bit of writing since his serious illness of last June appears in this issue. When mailed in this week he added a P.S: "I'm getting back to normal slowly but surely."

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This edition of "Nuggets" has been printed by Mrs. Lois Marander. Hope you like the improved appearance.  
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Call the secretary if you want a copy sent to a prospective member.

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Mrs. Dorisanne Nielsen will be lost as an associate editor with this issue. The Rev. Richard, their two children and the cats move to Elkhart, Indiana, October 1st, where a new Congregational charge awaits them. The editorial staff wishes them Godspeed in their new undertakings.

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(Non-Profit Organization)

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should be directed to the  
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