

NUGGETS of HISTORY

The Bi-Monthly Bulletin of the
ROCKFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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"Slow! - Hut - Two - He - Ho!"

G. L. Nevius Post No. 1 Grand Army of the Republic apparently split their thinning ranks of its fife and drum corps to head several delegations of a state department convention encampment here. The Chicago delegation is shown hoofing it at slow cadence along East State Street back in 1908, '09 or '10. The three musicians were Post No. 1 members.

The 1908 Nevius Post official roster of 1908 stated that over 1500 Civil War veterans had been mustered out by death by the local post since organization. It's charter was received in October of 1866.

MEMBERSHIP
TIME
AGAIN!!

MEMBERSHIP TIME AGAIN!

The 1965 membership drive is on! If the Rockford Historical Society is to succeed and serve our community as we know that it should, it is imperative that we continue to grow.

Rockford has a great history, and our organization is endeavoring to make that history available to the members of the community. As the second largest city in Illinois, should not Rockford have at least the second best historical society in the state?

In a few days we will begin to mail notices to our 1964 members that it is time to pay their 1965 dues. You can save us the time and postage necessary to mail a notice to you if you will send your dues as soon as you have read this article. We will certainly appreciate it.

Make your check payable to The Rockford Historical Society and mail it to Robert H. Borden, Membership Chairman, 1303 Cosper Avenue, Rockford, Illinois 61107. Along with your check, please send a slip of paper giving your name and address. Remember that if you are enrolling as a married couple, the dues are five dollars; for an individual under 65 years of age, it is three dollars; an individual over 65 pays one dollar; and students and childrens dues are fifty cents.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation! Let's make 1965 a great year for The Rockford Historical Society! Mention it to your neighbors and friends. If you enjoy receiving NUGGETS OF HISTORY, show it to others and explain to them that they will receive it six times a year with their membership. Tell them about our other activities, including the barbeque in the summer. Mention to them our hopes for the future, such as establishing a historical museum for Rockford. Let's see if we can't at least double our membership this year!

A CASE OF PIONEER JUSTICE

Before efficient law-enforcement arrived on the frontier, it was often necessary for reputable citizens to provide their own enforcing. Such was the case in the Rock River Valley from 1837 to 1845. Outlaws from the eastern states would settle in a line, forming stations at convenient intervals. A horse stolen at one point could be passed from one homestead to another with none of the outlaws remaining away from home long enough to be suspected.

In 1841 some fifteen citizens organized the Ogle County Regulators, and there were soon hundreds of members in Ogle and Winnebago Counties. They would force known outlaws from their homes, strip them to the waist, and administer an appropriate number of lashes. After a time John Campbell, captain of the Regulators, received a challenge from William Driscoll one of the leaders of a band of outlaws, to have a battle near his home in DeKalb County. Driscoll and his brothers, David, Taylor, and Pierce were sons of John Driscoll, an Ohio outlaw who settled near Kilbuck Creek in Ogle County. When 196 Regulators arrived in DeKalb County, William Driscoll sought the protection of the DeKalb County sheriff, who apparently was unaware of Driscoll's reputation. Campbell, who had led the expedition there, convinced the sheriff that he was protecting the wrong man, whereupon that official gave the Driscolls twenty days to leave the state. For this, the Driscolls determined to murder Campbell. Brother David went to Campbell's farm and shot him on June 27, 1841.

The next day the sheriff of Ogle County arrested John and David Driscoll. A company from Winnebago County captured David's brothers, William and Pierce. On the morning of June 29 a lynching party battered down the jail door and dragged John Driscoll out by the neck. They took him across the river where they were

met by the group which had captured William and Pierce. After a mob court, it was determined that John and William should die. The condemned men begged to be shot rather than hanged, and their desire was granted. After an hour and a half, during which time the prisoners had a chance to confer with ministers and pray for forgiveness, John and William Driscoll were shot by the bullets from more than 50 guns. Their bodies were buried without coffins or shrouds in a grave two and one-half feet deep and four feet wide, their caps drawn over their faces.

Such was pioneer justice that David Driscoll, John Campbell's actual killer, remained free for two years, when he reportedly was killed by a sheriff in Iowa.

- Robert H. Borden

ROCKFORD - YEAR BY YEAR (Continued)

1867 - St. James Catholic Church was dedicated with impressive ceremonies, at which Rev. Fr. J. S. O'Neill was installed as pastor. David Wallach and Isaac Bacharach purchased the H. Wallach block at State and Main Sts., erected during the previous year.

1868 - Winnebago County Agricultural Society acquired additional acreage north of their original property, part of which being bisected by winding Kent creek. Giles C. Herd was president, while George Haskell continued to serve as secretary-treasurer.

1869 - John Nelson, immigrant youth of 22 when he arrived from Sweden in 1852, invented a portable knitting machine for household use. His son, William and a friend, Frank Brown took to the road with ten machines and before the year elapsed had disposed of more than a hundred of the models. Birth of Rockford's furniture industry was mentioned in the Register-Gazette

when Adrew C. Johnson and Jomas P. Anderson opened a 3-story factory in the water power district.

1870 - The first Swedish Literary Society formed here was in permanent quarters in a hall at 303-05 East State Street. The second business structure erected following the Civil War was Masonic Hall Building at 317-21 West State Street, where Carson, Pirie & Scott is now located.

1871 - Among the active lodges and social societies were several Masonic chapters; Rockford Lodge No. 102; Star in the East Lodge, No. 155; E. F. W. Ellis Lodge, No. 633; Winnebago Chapter No. 25, R.A.M.; Sinnissippi Council No. 30, R. & S. Masons. Independent Order of Good Templars, organized in 1866 was housed in its own building at S. Main and Kent Streets. Members had a high reputation for "reclaiming many men from inebriety", the daily paper reported.

1872 - John Barnes, who had driven into town on a threshing machine of his own invention, reported good business enroute to Rockford, having stopped to thresh at a dozen northern Illinois farms.

1873 - Charles I. Horsman erected a 4-story business block at 306-10 West State, adjacent to the Porter Drug Store corner property. Faced with stone, it boasted of an "English basement."

1874 - Amos Woodward, one of the city's pioneer inventors, perfected a speed control governor and opened a shop for their manufacture on the banks of Kent Creek, just east of South Main St. The Rockford Watch Company began manufacture of time pieces with Levi Rhoades, H. W. Price and H. P. Holland as officers. Two of Mr. Holland's nephews, Hunter H. and Guy Cutting, and Charles Liomin were among the

first watchmakers hired.

1875 - Elisha L. Kirk filed an injunction against the city council waterworks committee to restrain it from further expansion of the pumping system. The proceedings resulted in denial of the plaintiff's action. It was ruled that there was sufficient pressure for the city's needs in normal times, but "not when firemen were busy extinguishing fires."

1876 - The Rockford Silver Plate Company launched the year before, got under full production, another infant industry started by enthusiastic backers following the 1871 panic. The firm continued to find ready sale for its plated ware for nearly 40 years before R. W. Sheets took over as the Sheets Rockford Silver Plate in 1913.

(To be continued.)

More than 110 enthusiastic members and friends enjoyed Dick and Dorothy Corrigan's "Along Rock River" illustrated lecture before the holidays. If you liked the program, tell your friends. The spring open meeting will be another pleasant and instructive surprise.

History in the making: Landscaping the new park site along U. S. 20 in preparation for another public golf course. It will be ready - it is expected - in 1966 or early '67.

Who knows the history of an abandoned cemetery along the State Line Road that leads one into a north-south highway through Belvidere. It hasn't been used as burial ground for at least 50 years.

PIONEER LUMBERMAN

The Northwest corner of South First and Grove Streets was the location Seely Perry chose for his home in 1871. Perry, a prominent lumber merchant in Rockford from 1852 until 1900, was born in 1822 in Massachusetts. After graduating from Union College in 1845, he taught school in Kentucky for four years. In 1849 he went to Rockton, Illinois, where he taught school for two more years, coming to Rockford in 1851. After teaching a preparatory school for young men in the First Methodist Church, Mr. Perry turned to the lumber business.

During his business years, Perry had several different partners. At various times the firm was known as Grove and Perry, Regan and Perry, Perry and Lake, Perry and Lakin, and Perry and Reber. For many years the lumber yard was at the southeast corner of East State and Kishwaukee Streets. When the Rockford Lumber and Fuel Company organized in 1890, Seely Perry was chosen president and remained in that capacity until his death. He also served one term as mayor of the city (1858-1859), three years as an alderman, a member of the first library board, and was for several years president of the school board.

Mr. Perry's first wife passed away in 1874. In 1876 he married Miss Marie Thompson, who became the mother of Mrs. Walter Forbes. After Mr. Perry died in 1900, the home on South First Street became the residence of Roland H. Shumway who continued to live there until about 1925. The house was razed last year along with the other historic homes in the same block.

- Robert H. Borden

Rockford Historical Society
(Non-Profit Organization)

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