

# NUGGETS of HISTORY

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## ST. STANISLAUS CHURCH

By Robert Grondzki

(Student at Washington Junior High School)

St. Stanislaus Church on Magnolia Street is made of brick and has stained glass windows. It is very pretty inside. The church has a corner stone. The new structure was just built because they tore down the old church. On the top of the building there is a steeple with a cross. The Priest's house is attached to the church and there are evergreens on the outside. On the roof of the school there are four speakers for the bell tones. This church is located on the east side of Rockford at the corner of Buckbee and Magnolia Streets.

The history of this church starts in the time of Bishop Muldoon's early years in Rockford. One of his problems was that of caring for foreign-born Catholics, many of whom did not speak or understand the language of their new land. This was true of the Polish people just as it was with other nationalities.

Father Julius Grezizinski, ordained for the diocese, came to Rockford in 1909 to work among the Polish Catholics, many of whom did not speak or understand English. For three months he worked here, gathering the people together. He arranged for them to attend a regular Sunday Mass of their own at St. James Pro-Cathedral.

The Polish population gradually increased, and by 1911 it became evident that they would soon need a church of their own. In September of that year, Bishop Muldoon purchased two lots at the corner of Buckbee and Magnolia Streets. The following January 12, he called a meeting of the Polish Catholics in the hall of St. James School, at which he told them of his plans for their parish. Another meeting



was held on January 21 to plan for the raising of the necessary funds. Ground was broken on April 6, 1912, for a stucco church, thirty-two by sixty-five feet in size, which was completed early in August.

On the Feast of the Assumption, the new church was dedicated by Bishop Muldoon. Three altars were donated by St. Patrick Parish of Amboy; linens were donated by the Catholic Women's League; and the organ was presented by Father Daniel Feeley, pastor of St. Mary Parish of Durand. A house, located diagonally across Magnolia Street from the church, was purchased in the spring of 1913 for use as a rectory. A parochial school was built in 1923 and classes were started in September, 1924.

Father Clement Kacprzynski, O.F.M. Conv., was appointed pastor on May 24, 1931, and he remained until September, 1939. He was succeeded by Father Appolinoris Paryz, O.F.M. Conv., until his death on January 1, 1942. Father Ladislaus Surak, O.F.M. Conv., served until September, 1942, when he was elected Secretary of Bonaventure Province. Father Camille Marosz, O.F.M. Conv., was pastor until his death on August 29, 1945. Father Sigismund Grochowski, O.F.M. Conv., was pastor until September, 1951, followed by Father Edvard Rupenthal, O.F.M. Conv., until the appointment of the present pastor, Father Roman Malkowski, O.F.M. Conv., in August, 1957.

Under the direction of the Franciscan Fathers, the parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka has prospered. A debt of over \$80,000 was completely liquidated and a building fund of \$200,000 was built up.

When St. Stanislaus Church was established in 1912, the membership consisted of thirty families. It has grown to over 400 families. With the substantial growth and the fact that the old church seated only 170 people, His Excellency Bishop Lane gave permission for the construction of a new church and rectory for St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, May 26, 1959.

Permission was granted to arrange for the tearing down of the old church in July of 1960. On April 23, 1961, His Excellency Bishop Loras T. Lane gave the blessing and presided at the laying of the cornerstone of the new church, erected on the site of the old church.

Dedication of the new St. Stanislaus Church in observation of the Golden Jubilee of the parish was celebrated Sunday, May 27, with a Solemn Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving at 11:45 A. M. by the Most Reverend Loras T. Lane, Bishop of Rockford.

The new church seats 500. A new rectory adjoins the church on the east. The first mass in the new church was celebrated Christmas Eve, 1961. The parish includes

over 700 families with nearly 1,500 persons. Over 200 children attend the parish school, which is staffed by four Sisters of the Congregation of St. Felix. Nine daughters of members of St. Stanislaus parish have become sisters, and the following priests are native to the parish: Father Joseph Rzeszatko and Father Bernard Harezlak, O.F.M.

#### A CENTURY OF CHURCH HISTORY ON WINNEBAGO STREET

By Marlene White and David Lee  
(Continued from preceding issue)

The membership reached its peak in 1922. During the 1930's the movement of people in southwest Rockford caused changes. The Roman Catholic people moved to this part and built their own church, as did the Negro people. With a loss of Protestant families Winnebago Street Methodist Church began to falter, so from 1929 until 1940 the church shared pastors with other Methodist churches. From 1940 to 1946 student pastors served the church. The following six years they shared a pastor with the Burritt Community Church. The years 1952 to 1962 were years of discouragement and even talk of selling the church. But under the encouragement of Dr. M. W. Northfelt, the conference placed the Rev. George Gish, Sr., as a full time pastor to the church. Long hours and hard work by Rev. Gish and the congregation proved successful, and in two years the church began to flourish once more. It was during Rev. Gish's pastorate that the church celebrated its one hundredth anniversary on June 17, 1964.

The Rev. Gish left in 1965, and the pulpit is now filled by Pastor William G. Myers. The members are looking forward to the next one hundred years! A new sanctuary will be built where the former one stood for so many years. At present the congregation is meeting in the Booker T. Washington Center.

#### THE HOUSE ON COREY'S BLUFF HILL

By Rose Garcia  
(Student at Washington Junior High School)

As I was walking one day, I came across a very interesting house. It looked quite old, but well-kept. The house is on Corey's Bluff Hill and its address is 2717 South Main Street in Rockford. A sweet old lady lives there now. Her name is Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson. I asked her a couple of questions and I found out the house has a fascinating heritage. It was originally built in the latter part of the nineteenth century and



is about 95 years old. It is a charming brown house. It is not a mansion, but it is not a small house either. It is wonderfully surrounded by pretty flowers and has trees in the back.

A woman named Elizabeth owned the house until 1910. Then, Mr. Ralph Wilson and his wife Elizabeth lived in it until the death of Mr. Wilson in 1963. Up to now Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson lives there and has a well-managed Pet Salon. She loves animals and many people are glad to have her care for their pets.

GOODYEAR ASA SANFORD'S HOUSE,  
INDIAN TERRACE, NOW VANISHED

By Timothy Wehrle

(Student at Washington Junior High School)

The quaint old Sanford home, which formerly stood at 505 North Main, is no longer standing. A short stretch of street bears this lovely name, once used to designate a lovely old house. The house had board and batten siding, windowed cupola, fanciful eave brackets, and other details of nineteenth century architecture.

Several decades ago the more than one hundred year old Sanford house was acquired by a prominent business and civic leader, Mr. Ralph Hinchliff. Indian Terrace was the private home of the Hinchliffs. This house, which was standing in 1948, was a show place of Rockford. With the aid of decorators the Hinchliff's collections of art objects, antiques, and travel mementoes were placed in keeping with the decor of the house itself. Many prized family heirlooms were part of the furnishings. Mr. Hinchliff's ancestors were



said to have come over on the "Mayflower" and some of the family objects were very old and precious.

Among the many social events at the Hinchliff home on Indian Terrace was a Daughters of American Revolution George Washington Tea. Music furnished by a Rockford String Trio composed of Mrs. Ralph Hall, violinist, Mrs. Arthur Gage, cellist, and Mrs. Robert Kirkpatrick, pianist. Rockford Register-Republic, February 23, 1948, showed these ladies in colonial costumes as they performed Civil War and Revolutionary War music. Also pictured were some of the handsome furnishings, notably a handsome grandfather clock and a unique rose jar. In one of the several newspaper photographs was one of Mrs. Nancy Garcia-Mora, daughter of Mrs. Ralph Hinchliff. The photographs showed an authentic mid-Victorian atmosphere and period decorations were in evidence.

The forty-eighth annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society met in Rockford. They were entertained by the Hinchliffs and heard the story of this remarkable restoration and toured the rooms.

Goodyear Asa Sanford built this house in 1847. It was constructed by Sanford and his cousin, Worcester A. Dickerman. Its name was derived from an Indian mound on the tract of land on which the estate, Indian Terrace, was located. Many social affairs were held here by the Sanfords. The first was a house warming party and dinner in 1847. The first literary circle, the Monday Group, was formed in this house in 1877 by the second Mrs. Sanford. Goodyear Sanford had two hobbies -- animal pets and flower gardens.

The Indian Terrace estate was shaded by numerous old maples, elms, and catalpas. Sanford's old Scottish gardener drew up his garden plan. Mr. Hinchliff was able to restore the so-called "congress boot" design of the garden and rebuild the curious serpentine wall along one side of it. The Hinchliffs added a guest house for their many house guests, including their daughter who

spent some summers in Rockford, and this building is still standing at the northeast corner of North Main Street and Indian Terrace.

ONE OF THE FAMILY  
By Denise Sanders  
(Student at Washington Junior High School)

This house, located at 2324 South Main Street, was



passed down through the family until May of 1966. It was built in 1911 by Mr. Oscar Eck. Mr. Eck lived in this house for 52 years and then he died from old age and illnesses. While he was ill, his nephew, Mr. Ralph La Forge, paid all of his doctor bills and upkeep; so when Mr. Eck died, Mr. La Forge inherited the house.

A few months after that, Mr. La Forge sold the house to his brother-in-law who was Mr. Pellin. Mr. Aldo Pellin rented the house out for one year and then, for the next three years, lived in it with his family. Then, in May of 1966, Mr. Pellin sold this house to Mrs. Julia Crane, who is a widow.

FIRST EXECUTION OF DEATH PENALTY IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY  
FAMOUS MURDER TRIAL OF THE 1850'S  
By Hazel M. Hyde

Sheriff John F. Taylor was taking Alfred Countryman to jail for alleged cattle stealing, November 11, 1856. As they neared the jail, Countryman broke away from Sheriff Taylor, jumped over a fence on the Elm Street side of the square and fled south toward Kent Creek. When at the corner of Elm and Church Streets, Countryman stopped, turned, drew a concealed pistol and shot the sheriff, who was in hot pursuit.

Sheriff Taylor fell to the ground, dying almost instantly. An alarm was given and a large crowd of citi-

zens took up the search for Countryman.

The escapee was captured in the grove south of Kent's Creek. Extreme excitement was engendered on Rockford streets when the man was brought back in a wagon. Indignant citizens were in a mood to lynch him, but the officers and some prominent citizens persuaded the people to let the law take its course. Countryman was placed in jail until the 1857 February term of Circuit Court.

Judge Benjamin R. Sheldon presided when the case was called in February. The entire afternoon was spent in empanelling a jury. After the jury was sworn in, court was adjourned until nine A.M. Tuesday. The prosecution was conducted by U. D. Meecham, State's Attorney, and William Brown, Esq., and the defense by Attorney Orrin Miller and T. J. Turner, Esq.

On Thursday, February 26, the trial was concluded. The jury returned a verdict of "guilty of murder as charged in the indictment" and Judge Sheldon passed the death sentence.

The judge said in part: "To shoot down a peaceful officer of justice, in the quiet execution of his duty, was a wanton, brutal act, an awful manifestation of an abandoned and malignant heart. In the eye of the law, no crime is more heinous than to slay one of its officers in the discharge of his duty. The law guards with a strong arm its officers when performing its own mandates. Your case is a sad instance of the mischief of the barbarous practice of carrying deadly weapons. If you had not had that weapon of death concealed upon your person, you might have escaped a murderer's doom. In a well-ordered community like this, there is no need, under ordinary circumstances, to carry about such weapons of defense, and when they are carried they are much oftener used as a weapon of offence than defence."

And the sentence was pronounced as follows: "The sentence of the court is, that you, Alfred Countryman, be taken to the jail of this county and detained in close custody until the twenty-seventh day of March instant; that on that day, between the hours of ten in the morning and five in the afternoon, you be taken thence to the place of execution in this county, and there be hung by the neck until you are dead. And may God have mercy on your soul."

The execution took place on the farm owned in 1877 by Samuel I. Church, about two miles west of Rockford. This first execution of the death penalty in Winnebago County was public and the crowd that witnessed it numbered in the thousands, according to H.F. Kett's 1877 account. When Alfred Countryman was pronounced dead, his body was cut down and given to his relatives and friends. (Continued on page eight)

The condemned man wrote the events of his life. Alfred Countryman was born June 28, 1830, in Montgomery County, New York, and his father's family came to Ogle County in 1845 or 1846. At the time of the execution, he was 27 years of age and was survived by a wife and two children.

#### THE GRIP IN THE SCHOOLS

(Reprinted from the February 3, 1890, issue of  
The Rockford Daily Register)

"People make a great deal of sport about the grip," remarked Prof. Walker to a REGISTER reporter to-day, "but I tell you there is nothing funny about it, and they would realize that fact if they had been in my position for the past three weeks and had to fill the vacancies occasioned by the sickness of teachers.

"During the past three weeks we have had forty sick teachers out of school. Of course they were not all sick the same day, but there has been days when seventeen have been unable to attend to their duties, but the average sick list of teachers is from eight to ten a day.

"I never saw such times in my life, and it has kept me on the jump to find substitutes for the sick teachers to take the places of those occupying high grades."

Every teacher in the Hall School has been sick, and six in the Kent School have been obliged to give up their classes for a time.

Mrs. Gauss, principal of the Adams school, has been dangerously ill. She had the grip at first, and last Saturday she was taken with heart failure, and for a time her life was despaired of, but she is better to-day, although it will be a long time before she will be strong enough to attend to her duties.

Miss Mary C. Foot, assistant principal of the Adams School, is also very sick with the grip, and has not been able to teach for nearly a week.

Miss Crumb of Belvidere is taking Mrs. Gauss' place in the 8th grade, and Miss Mary Griggs is taking Miss Foot's place.

Miss Myra Newkirk of the 7th grade has been sick with the grip and erysipelas, and is quite ill. Miss Hattie Gunsolas is taking her place.

(Continued in the next issue)

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