

## NUGGETS of HISTORY

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### THE STORY OF A FORGOTTEN CEMETERY

By William J. Condon

I doubt if many people have ever noticed the little cemetery located about one mile south of the Kishwaukee Forest Preserve on the west side of Mulford Road. It is situated within the barnyard of the Swenson farm, and many of the tombstones are broken or overturned. There is no fence to guard the cemetery from livestock, and therefore it is hard to determine what the exact boundaries were.

It apparently was a burial ground created during the cholera epidemic of the early 1850s. Evidence of this is indicated by the fact that eight people died within one week, most of whom were children. Upon looking into this matter further, I found a sketch of this cemetery in the County Recorder's office. It was laid out to accommodate 36 graves, how many of which were filled no one knows. No other information accompanied the sketch so it cannot be ascertained if a cemetery association was actually created or if any fee was charged when a grave was purchased.

The earliest record of ownership traces back to March 16, 1846, when James and Mary Bennett acknowledged sale of this certain parcel of land and other acreage to T.S., A.C. and William Powell. On March 20, 1850, William Powell and wife Julia A. sold their interest in the land outright to Adonijah C. Powell. Thus, Adonijah Powell became the owner at this time and held it until he and his wife Celestia sold it to Thomas W. Evans on November 4, 1864.

It was Powell, though, who actually dedicated a portion of the east half, northeast quarter of section 28, township 43, range 2 as a burial ground. This information is con-



tained in Winnebago County records according to a statement made by a Justice of the Peace, F. H. Maxwell. He certified that Adonijah C. Powell appeared before him acknowledging ownership of this parcel and that he had dedicated a portion of it for a burial ground and caused the same to be surveyed, laid out, and plotted for no purpose other than as a burial ground. This was given under hand and seal at Rockford on December 27, 1859. On the same day, J. S. Remington, County Surveyor, certified that he had staked out and surveyed a burial ground for the parcel mentioned above.

Apparently this plot was not known or officially certified as a burial ground when the cholera epidemic was at its peak since most of the people buried there died prior to 1859 when A. C. Powell acknowledged ownership of this land.

The epidemic probably swept through so quickly that survivors were left without a burial place. Powell apparently agreed to let part of his land holdings be used for this purpose even though it was never officially proclaimed to be a cemetery until he notified the Justice of the Peace in 1859. It is logical that the Powell family owned the land at that time since there was once a school at the corner of the next crossroad to the south called Powell School.

As an indication of how quickly the cholera epidemic swept through this early-day settlement, Mrs. Olive Baxter, 46, wife of David, and her 11-year-old son, Rinaldo, died September 29, 1851, one day after a daughter, 20-year-old Cynthia, had expired. Theodore S. Powell (brother of Adonijah) also died on September 28, 1851. So at least four of the settlers in the district at the time died within two days. Emma, one-year-old daughter of W. and M. Hinkley, died September 23, 1851; Asa, son of N. G. and M. Baxter, also is believed to have died about the same time, although only the year 1851 is legible on the stone. An



11-month-old daughter of the Baxter's, name obliterated, died on September 30, and Warren Follett, age 36, died on October 6, 1851.

Other stones include: Andrew R., son of G. N. and R. Crane, died June 29, 1846, age 5 months, 15 days; Isaiah Cartright died March 13, 1849; Abram Witter, age 59, died December 22, 1853, and his wife Laura, age 75, died March 10, 1871. Their daughter Maranda died September 22, 1852, at the age of 22. Mrs. Witter was the last person to be buried here as far as one can tell, while the death in 1846 was the earliest. Thus, the cemetery actually existed for only 25 years. The oldest person buried here was Mary Nicholson, wife of Nathan Nicholson, who succumbed at the age of 86 on August 5, 1855.

These were the days of the epitaph as indicated on the tombstone marking on the grave of 5-month-old Andrew Crane. It reads as follows: "Sleep on sweet babe and take thy rest, God called thee home, He thought it best."

As recently as 1939 people had been visiting the cemetery in an effort to locate departed friends and relatives. The Swenson family has owned the property since 1916, although a son, Arthur, who still operates the farm, cannot recollect a great deal of the history of this forgotten cemetery.

It is interesting to visit the quaint little burial plot although it is very easy to pass up as one travels south on Mulford Road. One has to look very closely, but upon close examination the few stones may be recognized.

#### DREAMS COME TRUE FOR TWO SOCIETY MEMBERS

By Hazel A. Kluck

It all started about five years ago when my cousin, Erma Richards Grip (formerly of Rockford, and one of our members), sent me a paragraph from an old Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, history book. Written 33 years after our great-grandparents, Daniel and Elizabeth Klock, and their children came from Pennsylvania, first to Ogle County (1858) and then to Stephenson County (1859), this article about St. John's Lutheran Church, Jackson Township, contained the name Daniel Klock. With the help of our student intern at Trinity Lutheran Church and a friend of his in the old "Central Penn" Synod office, we learned the nearest area church was St. Peter's, Red Cross, Pa., and, since they were without a pastor at that time, received the suggestion that we contact the secretary of the congregation, Carl Kahler.

Mr. Kahler's wife answered my letter. Her maiden name was Doris Klock, and she sent all the information her grandfather, Daniel Nathaniel Klock, could offer. This was too much to be coincidence--Daniel was our great-grandfather's name, and Nathaniel, our grandfather's name.

Three years ago Dan and Martha Klock and their son-in-law, Ray Erdman, spent a few hours with my mother and me.

We knew then that Dan was a relative; and after much research on Erma's part, we found that Dan's father and our grandfather were first cousins.

Then came June, 1969, and a planned trip from Pomona, California, to the east coast by Erma's daughter, Diane, and an invitation to "hitch a ride" to Harrisburg and go by bus from there to Northumberland County. Three letters went flying across the country saying, "Yes, thank you," and "I'm coming to Pennsylvania."

In the wee hours of June 24, Erma and four of her children arrived in Rockford. After leaving the two youngest boys with their aunts, the morning of the 25th found Erma and me in the back seat of the convertible with Diane and Bruce sharing the driving. Our dreams were beginning to come true! We were on our way to Pennsylvania, and from Chicago on we were all in new country.

The tollroad follows the old pioneer wagon road quite closely, giving us some idea of the country our ancestors crossed by covered wagon in the 1800s, taking weeks instead of hours. I was able to follow the old wagon trail thanks to an 1852 "geography atlas."

In August, 1839, Lewis and Emily Blackburn Patterson, one set of my great-grandparents, arrived in Winnebago County on their wedding trip from Berea, Ohio, forded the Rock River here, and continued on to Harrison Township where they settled. Great-grandmother Patterson had marked their route on one of the maps in this old book: Berea, Norwalk, Fremont, and Toledo, Ohio; Adrian, Hillsdale, Coldwater, and Sturgis Prairie, Michigan; across the north-west corner of LaGrange County, Indiana, then across Elkhart County, and on through South Bend and LaPorte to the shores of Lake Michigan, then around the end of the lake to Chicago (which great-grandfather thought was too swampy to ever amount to much); almost due west to the Cook-DuPage County line just northeast of Geneva, then northwest through Elgin and Belvidere to Rockford.

The 1892 PORTRAIT AND BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD, WINNEBAGO AND BOONE COUNTIES, ILLINOIS, tells that they "escaped the mud of the Maumee Swamps." As we neared Toledo, the land became "flat as the floor," and eventually I realized that I was seeing the ends of drain tiles protruding into the ditch along the tollroad. This beautiful farmland was the dreaded Maumee Swamps of 1839. In twelve hours we traveled some sixty miles more than the five Pattersons covered by team and wagon in 32 days 130 years ago. The others were Lewis Patterson's mother, Lydia, and her youngest children. Their household goods had been sent on to Chicago via the lakes. Lewis Patterson's father, Jonathan, Jr., and older brother, Almon, had come from Ohio afoot in March and paid their last money to cross the Peconica at Trask's Ferry. Almon Patterson was for many years a physician in Durand.

What would our ancestors think? How many times we asked ourselves this question! Our conclusion was that they would be as confused in our age as we would be in theirs.

Then came the beautiful mountains of Pennsylvania as we headed down the Turnpike toward Harrisburg where I would catch a bus to that part of Pennsylvania where Erma's and

my grandfather, Nathaniel Allison Kluck, was born March 28, 1851, and where the Klock, Adam, Zerbe, and Ferster lines go back to the early mid-1700s, and where our Klock and Adam great-great-grandparents are buried.

The closer we got to Harrisburg, the more I wondered if we'd make it by bus time. By my watch, we finally pulled into the bus station two minutes after the bus for Herndon should have pulled out. With the help of Diane, Bruce, and that little angel who must have been perched on my shoulder I dashed through the crowded depot, bought my ticket, grabbed my loose stuff, yelled "See you next week!" and tore down the platform, followed by Bruce with my luggage, to find my bus among a long line of busses just as the driver got on and shut the door. I rapped on the door with my camera, asked breathlessly if this was the "Scranton local," boarded the bus telling the driver that Bruce had my luggage. I emptied my hands and turned in time to reach over the passengers' heads for my attache case and stowed it, my gadget bag, camera, and small packages overhead, just in time to sit down and breathe a sigh of relief as the bus backed away from the platform. All this happened in about five minutes!

The bus route follows the east bank of the picturesque Susquehanna River and is literally lined with historical markers. I couldn't begin to remember all those places that looked so interesting--but I was on the last leg of the trip to Northumberland County.

At the same time, Erma, Diane, and Bruce went on their way to Easton, Pa., where Erma visited some of her Richards relatives and did research on her Richards and Best lines while Diane and Bruce (and my raincoat) went on to New York City and Washington, D. C.

When I arrived in Herndon, as I was asking the driver where I could find a telephone, Dan stepped around the front of the bus. He and Martha were visiting across the street while waiting for me. I looked like a mess and felt like I was in a dream.

The next afternoon my cousin Walter, better known as Wally, came to his folks' to meet me and invited me to go up on "the mountain" to see his "big shovel." I didn't know what it was all about, but I was ready and willing. After supper Dan, Martha, and I picked up Wally and his grandson, Timmy, and took off for "the mountain." Along the highway at Traverton were the old and new breakers of the Treverton Colliery. Then we drove up the mountain through acres and acres of coal mining area. Even though the sun was obliterated by dense haze, the view and colors were beautiful.

Wally's shovel is one of the largest in the area--a huge Bucyrus-Erie electric drag-line shovel which requires two or three men to operate it as they remove the semi-anthracite coal in a strip mine operation on top of "the mountain." I had to get back about 300 feet to get the entire shovel into a picture. The scoop would almost make a single car garage. He also showed me the giant trucks now used instead of the railroad to haul the coal out of the mines. Each truck holds more than a railroad coal car. The

truck tires are over six feet in diameter, dual real wheels but single axle.

The colliery sells much of their "fines" (very fine, almost dust-like coal--some of it reprocessed from slag piles) to DuPont for research and manufacturing. That is history in the making!

Our next stop was the cemetery at St. Peter's Lutheran and Reformed Church, Red Cross, Pa., where our great-great-grandparents, Valentine and Maria Klock, are buried, along with many other relatives. After it was too dark to see anything more at the cemetery, we stopped at the parsonage and picked up the oldest available record book of the Lutheran congregation.

St. Peter's is located on the slope of the mountain at a Y intersection. The congregation is 195 years old, and now occupies its fourth building, built in 1914 of red brick, and almost a miniature of Rockford's old Trinity Church before the north tower was added. One of the most fascinating things about the interior was the chandelier suspended from the center of the ceiling. I wish I knew its history, but it appears to date back to one of their previous buildings. Three heavy handmade rings of polished wood and brass, the largest almost the diameter of a wagon wheel, hold the three tiers of sparkling plain clear glass kerosene lamps which have been electrified.

You, like I did, probably wonder what a Lutheran and Reformed Church is. Originally there were two congregations, Lutheran and Calvinist (Reformed, now United Church of Christ) which alternately used the same facilities. Each was part of a larger parish, with the pastor serving several churches. Even with this arrangement, it became impossible to support two pastors, so they eventually combined, with one pastor serving both denominations at each of two churches. So, if you belong to St. Peter's Church, you are either a Lutheran member or a United Church of Christ member. They have Lutheran services one week and United Church of Christ services the next. Most of the many rural and small town churches I saw were "Lutheran and Reformed."

(To be concluded in next issue)

#### EARLY DAYS IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY

By Billie Whitsitt

(Continued from last issue)

By at least 1836 Midway had become Rockford. According to Charles A. Church, the name was appropriate because, "Upon the site of the present dam was a solid rock bottom, where the water was usually so shallow as to afford easy crossing..."

By the following spring, 1835, easy crossing was to be necessary if Kent and Blake were to visit with their closest neighbors, for Daniel Shaw Haight came from Geneva

(though he originally was from New York) to stake a claim on the east side. He then brought his family from Geneva, setting up housekeeping in a tent under a tree, while he built a cabin. A few weeks later Kent brought his family from Galena. Coming with Kent was a young negro man, described by Church in this manner:

"Only one man ever lived in Winnebago County as a slave. His name was Lewis Kent, although he was known as Lewis Lemon. In 1829 when Germanicus Kent was a citizen of Alabama, he purchased of Orrin Lemon a colored boy named Lewis. He was born in North Carolina, and had been taken by his master to Alabama. He was about seventeen years old at the time he was sold to Mr. Kent for \$450 in cash. When Mr. Kent decided to move north, he proposed to sell Lewis; but the colored man preferred his old master. Mr. Kent made an agreement with Lewis when they arrived at St. Louis. It was in substance that Lewis should pay him for his freedom at the expiration of six years and seven months, the sum of \$800, with ten per cent. interest. Lewis obtained his freedom, however, in four years and four months."

Kent and Haight and their families, with the help of Thatcher Blake, Lewis Lemon, and several hired men began the work of developing a village. Church says:

"...the business of the settlement during the first years included a general store, a blacksmith shop, sawmill, a primitive hotel, a crude system of banking, and mail facilities of a private sort. All these were under the general proprietorship of Mr. Kent."

There is considerable doubt that "all these were under the general proprietorship of Mr. Kent." Haight owned part of Rockford House, a small hotel built in 1837; he built the first public post office, and the first court was held in his own home, and "the first building erected for the use of courts, religious meetings, etc., was built by Daniel S. Haight in the summer of 1838, on the southeast corner of Market and Madison Street." Haight was the first sheriff and the first postmaster, and his name is listed often as involved in one venture or another.

Both Kent and Haight brought strength and ingenuity and permanence to Rockford, and yet in a few years both men loaded themselves and their families into the conveyances of the day and left the town they had helped build.

It is not hard to understand Mr. Kent's reason for going. Church says of him, referring to the panic of 1837:

"Mr. Kent was poorly prepared for the storm. His ready capital had become poorly exhausted, and he was now in debt for money, merchandise and property. His goods had been sold on credit, and collections were impossible. His property was depreciated and unsalable, and embarrassment and failure were unavoidable. Mr. Kent made the best settlement possible under the circumstances, and honestly surrendered everything. His capital which he brought with him, his building and improvements, his plans and preparations, and even his prospects were gone; . . . and so in 1844 he bade . . . farewell and went to Virginia . . . where he died . . .

. in 1862. This man will stand forever in the history of Rockford, in point of time and early events. In his character and life there are elements that arrest and fix attention and which merit grateful remembrance. Kent school, . . . Kent's Creek and Kent Street are named in his honor."

Why did Haight leave? He did not have Kent's reason of bankruptcy, in fact he seemed to have thrived, yet in the winter of 1847-48 he, too, left Rockford. There is another interesting question to speculate upon: though Haight was as active and involved as Kent in the early life of Rockford, there is not one single structure or landmark that stands in his remembrance today. Neither did Church have the eloquent remarks for Haight which he wrote in such flowery style for Kent.

(Editor's note: Probably Haight Park, located on East Jefferson Street between First and Second Streets, is named after Daniel S. Haight.)

It is really difficult to say why Haight left Rockford, but the beginning of a conjecture might be found in an article published in a magazine, FOREST AND STREAM, written by Alexander Miller, an attorney in Pittsburg. No date for the article is known. Mr. Miller, as a young man, had been in Rockford for several months in 1838. He had come with his brothers who were to run Washington House, a new hotel. Miller had nothing to occupy himself while waiting to return east, so he wandered around the little village talking to people. He wrote:

"At the time of my arrival in Rockford two rival villages were competing for supremacy, and for the location of the county court house and other public buildings, one on the east and the other on the west bank of Rock river. The proposer of the proposed site on the east bank was one Haight; of the west bank the firm of Kent & Brinkerhoff. After a long and angry controversy the county seat was finally located on the west side of the river."

It was several years before that long and angry controversy came to its conclusion.

The conjecture from Miller's remarks might be that Haight's battle for the jail and court house was too fierce, that the enemies he made were too many and too influential. He had gone to great pains to see that the early post office and the first court were on the east side. It is possible that when he saw that the status and power provided by these institutions had been taken from him, he moved from Rockford hoping to find a town where he might have renewed influence.

(To be continued in next issue)

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