

## NUGGETS of HISTORY

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### CHANDLER STARR MILLER, AN APPRECIATION

By Mrs. Harold B. Hyde

"Rockford is a good place to live. I'll never leave it to find a home in some other place," were the last words Chandler Miller spoke as we chatted at the Rockford Historical Society picnic, Sunday, August 15, at Alpine Park. Here was a real supporter of the activities of our historical society. He had been a vice president, long time board member, and had served on the Old Families Committee. His death on the following Saturday morning is a great loss. To have called him friend was a privilege. To have worked with him on the board and in committee was a pleasure.

Old Families Committee is presently chaired by Mrs. Ruth Lunde and Mrs. Louise Carlin, but Chan Miller gave it a guiding influence. The group met several times in the Miller home at 206 Franklin Place. He took responsibility for getting the group together. Sitting in a living room with heirlooms from the Chandler Starr home and the Frisbie home, a real sense of Rockford history surrounded us. In a friendly way he spoke of these treasures and allowed us to touch and enjoy priceless possessions. (See: "A House With White Col-



Chandler Starr Miller

Two views of Miller home at 206 Franklin Place



umns", Vol VI No 6, Nov-Dec 1969 of NUGGETS).

Chandler Miller was a great grandson of Rockford's pioneer banker Melancthon Starr and Lt. Col E. F. W. Ellis, a Rockford lawyer and banker, killed in the Civil War at Shiloh, while leading the 15th Illinois Regiment.

He was the grandson of Mrs. Chandler Starr, who founded Rockford Mendelssohn Club and was a long time president. His own absorption with opera paralleled my husband's and my interest and we were looking forward to comparing impressions after seeing and hearing the performances at the Lyric Opera in Chicago. He was a board member of Rockford Chamber Orchestra and Vice President of the Civic Orchestra Association, the governing body of Rockford Symphony. He was on the music committee of Second Congregational Church.

Mr. Miller was the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Smith Miller and his mother, Norma Starr Miller, had been active in the cultural life of our city.

Chandler Starr Miller, a graduate of Princeton University, was a retired office of Barber-Colman Company, with which he had been associated for thirty-five years.

His loss will be felt on the many boards he served. Some of these groups were United Fund Board, Boys Farm School Board, Treasurer of Rockford Cultural Council, member University Club and Rockford Country Club.

His wife is the former Frances Frisbie, and they had two children, a daughter, Mrs. J. Robert Kirkwood, and a son, L. A. Frisbie Miller. Mrs. Miller shared her husband's interests in preserving the old. She said as we sat in her home, several years ago, in answer to a question concerning the many heirlooms, "We both belong to families that never threw anything away." She was expressing her deep involvement with those things that time has rendered priceless and endowed with a sense of history.

## PIONEERS TRAVEL TO ILLINOIS

By R. E. Hoisington

At the time Illinois became a state in 1818 its population was pretty much concentrated in the central and southern parts. These people had generally come in from Indiana and Kentucky and the method of travel was on foot, horseback or by wagon. After the Black Hawk War a flood of immigration came to the northern part of Illinois, and there was a wide variety of means of transportation. Many still came by Conestoga wagon across or from Indiana. From the east the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes were commonly used, some going all the way to Chicago, some leaving the boat at Detroit and going overland from there. In the book "They Broke the Prairie", a history of Galesburg and Knox County, is told the story of a group which tried to come all the way by canal boat. The boat was outfitted on the Erie Canal near Utica, New York, was towed by horses to Lake Erie where the passengers and belongings were transferred to a steamer which was to tow the canal boat to Cleveland. Because of a storm the tow was cut loose and when the passengers arrived in Cleveland, they had to wait for their craft to be found and brought in to them. At that time the Erie and Ohio Canal crossed the state, following the Cuyahoga, the Muskingum and the Scioto rivers. Through innumerable locks, they finally reached the Ohio and at Cincinnati the boat was fitted with a propeller, driven by a horse on a treadmill. Down the Ohio and up the Mississippi they were plagued by continual trouble with this arrangement, and when they turned up the Illinois they were glad to be taken in tow by a steamboat which took them up river to within twenty miles of Peoria. Here, completely worn out, they sent to Galesburg and a rescue party came with wagons to take them the last forty miles of their journey of two thousand. Air line distance was a thousand miles.

But none of these routes was more interesting than that taken by my maternal grandfather, James Monroe Clayton. As a young man he had been employed by Colonel Dauphin Brown in western Massachusetts and when Col. Brown decided to migrate to Illinois, he cast in his lot with him. On April 2, 1837, he left his home in company of Col. Brown, his son Albert F. Brown and two others. From Hartford on the Hudson they traveled by water to New York, took a ship to Philadelphia, and then began their most unusual method of travel. Passage from Philadelphia to Pittsburg was by canal boat, even over the rugged Appalachian ridges found in Pennsylvania. The boats were loaded on railway cars at Philadelphia, hauled to Columbia on the Susquehanna River, then unloaded to travel a winding route by water on that river and the Juniata. At Hollidaysburg, near Altoona, a 1400 foot ridge prevented any further travel by water. Again the boats were put on wheels and pulled by cable up five prepared inclined planes to the top. Passing through a short tunnel there, they were then lowered over five other inclines to the head-waters of the Conemaugh River when took them to Pittsburgh. A reservoir built in the mountains above Johnstown to furnish water for the canal in times of low water was responsible for the celebrated Johns-

town flood many years later.

The building of a railroad over the mountains a few years later eliminated the need for this unusual device and it was discontinued. Charles Dickens in a book about his American travels tells of a ride over the mountains in this way.

From Pittsburg the party went down the Ohio by steamer to the Mississippi, upstream to the Illinois and then up to Peoria where Col. Brown rented a team of horses and they drove to Dixon, arriving on May 2, a journey of exactly one month. Mr. Clayton worked at Dixon for six weeks, then moved to Bloomington which was later named Byron. He operated the ferry across Rock River there during the season of 1839, hired out to Issac Norton in 1840, married daughter Harriet Norton in 1841 and entered a claim on government land in Marion Township near what is now Stillman Valley. He is said to have witnessed the execution of the infamous Driscolls as a constable. He lived to the age of 88, dying on November 6, 1902.

EVERY MAN HAS A STORY  
By Hazel M. Hyde  
(continued from last issue)

"Mechanics Company was the place I got a job. They made drill presses but they also made tools, chisels, and pliers. Even after the fire I've got some of the tools they made. Eagle Claw Wrench Company made the tools. That first day they made me sit down and wait awhile, though. I told Superintendent Olson, who did the hiring that I had met his son who worked at Sword Brothers and he had told me they often needed a man. You can't imagine how good it sounded when he said, 'I can use you.' He asked, 'Ever been in a machine shop?' I told him I never had but I would learn. He said, 'Come tomorrow. The pay will be \$2.50 a day.' Esther was just as happy as I was because we could live on that."

In the Rockford Morning Star May 20, 1934, there was a brief summary of Mechanics Company. The Mechanics Company, it stated, was the forerunner of Mechanics Universal Joint Company. In 1890 it had been organized by Levin Faust, F. W. Lindgren, Gust A. Dahlen, and C. J. Forsberg. For three years the company had done repair work and jobbing. Mr. Faust perfected a drill press which they manufactured. In 1910 a line of hardware tools had been added. Then Mechanics Company began to manufacture the Rockford truck. Only twenty trucks were produced but the company continued to produce automotive parts. All of this was background for understanding the story of one man working for the concern. I was seeing the industry not from the viewpoint of an inventor and organizer like Levin Faust or of a president of Mechanics Universal Joint Division, Mr. Arch A. Warner, or his predecessor Mr. Emil Trainer, or of Harry L. Emerson, general man-

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Goranson's Last Day on the Job



ager and president of Rockford Clutch, or the President of Borg-Warner, Roy C. Ingersoll, but from the standpoint of a worker and one who obviously took pride in his work.

Al continued, "After three months they made me a foreman in the Mechanics machine company, and gave me a quarter raise. I had never seen a drill press before. I had to grind drills and one man was showing me the wrong way to grind the drills. There was another man who spoke Swedish and I asked him about it. He gave me some drill stubs and asked me to grind them and then show them to him. It was right after that I got that foreman job. I picked up the ways to do things mostly by myself. It was about 1912 when I left Mechanics and went away from Rockford for about four weeks.

"There was a new plant for Chevrolet motors in Flint Michigan. I got a job there but Esther was pregnant and didn't want to move. Even after Helen was born, we decided Rockford was a better place for us.

"Maybe you aren't interested in all the places I worked. It was the 6th day of September in 1916 that I started at Rockford Drill. After working on different drills and machines, I was promoted on January 1st, 1917, to be foreman with fifteen men under my direction."

"You must have had a way of getting along with people," I suggested.

"That might be. Yesterday, September 8th, 1970, I got a letter from Oscar Schnigg who had gone to Sweden. He had worked for me and he wrote: 'In 1927 Oscar Anderson worked for you, Al, and he said you was the best boss he ever had.'" There was a picture enclosed of the two of them together.

"At Rockford Drilling Machine I promoted the Rockford Drilling Machine Employee Association in 1929. I also promoted the Rockford Drilling Machine Employees Credit Union

Mr. and Mrs. Goranson



in March 1939 and was granted book number one, and I still have this book. You may call Mr. Rogger Greene, President of Rockford Clutch at present, and he will give you any information you may want.

"You may think it strange that all those years I never took to drinking and never went with the wrong gangs. In Joliet the saloons served free meals of ham and roast beef with beer a nickle. The bar-tender knew I would always have milk and never change my mind. Later I went to Chicago to big meetings but I never drank but little, never enough to lose self control. Since I stayed sober the fellows always wanted me to drive.

"At the building of our new church, Shepherd of the Valley, I served on the Building Committee. I always belonged to a number of Swedish Clubs, Polish Falcons and other clubs would give me free tickets when they had sauerkraut and Polish sausage. I don't belong to those clubs so much any more since I retired. One club we had was the Hungry Eight, that met once a month since 1910. All they do is eat. They put a bottle on the table and if you feel like it you can have a drink. Dinner is at 7:00 P.M. I always liked to eat, you know. Oh, I belonged to the Odd Fellows. I never sang but I was always a member of Sveas Soner, Lyran, and Chorus of Svithod. Rockford was good to me and I can't kick on Rockford. I made my way myself; I didn't have any pull."

"You worked for Rockford Clutch at the time of your retirement, didn't you?"

"Yes, I retired in March 1958. I worked for Rockford Clutch for 41 years (1916-1958). Do you have time for me to tell you about making clutches for tanks in World War II?" And I nodded as he continued, "Well, I estimated the labor and we got the job. I sat up past one o'clock estimating. We made General Sherman and Amphibian tanks. There were close tolerances. We had little photostatic copies and I had to use a magnifying glass. We wrote: Please send working prints. In six weeks after the estimate, we got the or-

The officers of the Woman's Bowling League of the RIAA (Rockford Industrial Athletic Association) with Al Goranson, who founded the league. Jack Rinaldo, seated at the left is President of RIAA. Shirley Steffa seated next to Al is 1970-1971 President of RIAA Woman's Bowling League. Other officers are Dolores Choppi, vice president; Pat Pettigrew, secretary; Edrie Lake, treasurer; and Joyce Shoemaker, sergeant-at-arms. Picture made May 4, 1971



der. After that we got the prints and some of the dimensions had to be changed. Have you heard of Berwick, Pa., and their engineering? The tanks would be assembled there in the American Car and Foundry Company. Our company made an appointment for Mr. E. C. Shields, Vice President in charge of all sales, and me to go there to set some revisions. Imagine how I felt. I was not an engineer, you know. We went to their drafting room where there were 150 men sitting around at work.

"In came five government engineers. Mr. Shields said I was the one who wanted the changes and he left me with these men. I told them what I wanted and listened to them. We asked for several changes and came out with about half the changes we requested. Someone had told Mr. Shields it was a foolish trip as they would never accept changes, but they were very reasonable.

"We dealt next with Racine Steel Castings. We had never Machined steel castings here. I'm the guy--don't blame anyone else. Racine made the patterns so we went to Racine and met their officials and their pattern maker. That day I was terribly sick but I had to go to Racine so I laid on pillows all the trip. I saw that their president was nice looking and sharp. I told him what we wanted. There was 1/2 inch finish to machine off and correct the warp conditions. Freeburg, the pattern maker, and I convinced him. After that I

## Neighborhood Children Visiting the Goransons



made a guage to check them--if too far out we put it into a press and straightened the casting. I told them that the most I would allow was 1/4 to 3/8 inch. Why should we pay freight on extra steel to Rockford? Why should we pay extra labor for our men to machine it off? I've got pictures of those castings and a picture that shows the guage I made being used. You know I had most of my shop pictures in the garage when it burned and only a few were saved."

Al picked up his tools and prepared to go home. "Wait," I said, "there are about three more questions."

"Did you operate the farm you owned on Camp Rotary Road while you were working at Rockford Clutch?"

"No, we lived on the farm and we sure enjoyed it. We rented it to Mr. Morris Calhoon and moved to town. About six years later Mr. Calhoon bought the farm and then he sold it to a developer for a trailer camp at a profit over what he paid. I don't feel bad about that. I got a fair price."

"Next question--When I was at your 80th birthday party at the Shepherd of the Valley Church on Sunday, March 8, 1970 you received recognition from two groups. Why did the Woman's Industrial League honor you?"

"Oh, I helped organize the Woman's Industrial Bowling League about 1940. I was president of the Men's Industrial League for nine years. They always have me at the Women's Industrial League Banquets, each year. I'll have to bring down my scrapbook of pictures showing the banquets. One of them has a big sign 'Twenty-five Years of Winning' and a picture of Doris Mortenson (now Mrs. Edward Rathke) and me."  
(To be concluded in next issue)

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