

## NUGGETS of HISTORY

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### A BACKWARD LOOK

By Mrs. Harold B. Hyde

(Continued from last issue)

The Register, dated October 10, 1915, carried large headlines: "Magnificent Gift for Woman's Club"; "Present Site for Club House"; "Daughters of Mrs. Ralph Emerson Offer Property at Church and Park"; "Talcotts Aid"; and "Mesdames William and Wait Talcott Add Adjoining Property to the Generous Gift". Thus beneath five glorious headlines the story appeared telling how we happen to be able to sit comfortably in this clubhouse today.

Imagine opening the newspaper that autumn and reading: "Rockford Woman's Club problem of a permanent home has at last been solved.

"The gift of the property at the corner of North Church & Park Avenue, from Mrs. Ralph Emerson's daughters and their children; and the property adjoining it on the east from Mrs. William A. Talcott and Mrs. Wait Talcott for a building site was announced at the opening reception of the club this afternoon, at the home of the president, Miss Jessie I. Spafford. In addition to the property worth thousands of dollars, the Emerson family will pay two-fifths of the cost of the building provided that the club home be made a memorial to Mrs. Ralph Emerson, founder of the "Argonauts", the influence of which has been inspirational in the work of the later Rockford Woman's Club."

Reading on:

"The Talcott property is given with the proviso that provision be made for the Rockford Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution of which Mrs. William Talcott is regent, and Mrs. Emerson was founder and honorary regent; and also a fire-proof room to be set aside for preservation of works of art and for exhibits of Rockford Arts and Craft Association.

In announcing the gift, Miss Spafford spoke as follows:

"I know that all of you here are most deeply interested in our woman's club and its future. I believe that we are agreed that, however large we may grow in numbers, we shall never be able to accomplish what we should, either for ourselves or for our community, until we have a clubhouse of our own. As a club we shall never be a unit, until, like one big family, we gather around our own hearth stone..."

The Star carried an Article under date October 13, 1915, concerning the anniversary of the arrival of Mrs. Emerson in Rockford.

Mrs. Seely Perry said in part that upon this anniversary of the club, October 12, 1915, they also celebrated the 78th birthday of the Late Mrs. Ralph Emerson and that it was 77 years ago, or about 1838, that her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wait Talcott, Sr., arrived in Rockton to make their home for a time, and later to become identified with the development of Rockford in everything pertaining to its welfare and growth.

Much could be said of the efforts that resulted in the raising of the money.

And the club continued to add to its achievements.

March 4, 1918, the Rockford Woman's Club moved into its present building. The Food Shop was opened as a means of raising money for philanthropic projects.

In 1919 the Rockford Woman's Club provided a matron for the city jail.

In 1922 the club organized the Winnebago County League of Women Voters.

In 1924, Creative Writing Contests were begun by the Literature and Arts Department.

In 1937 Mrs. E. P. Lathrop gave 25 feet north of the building. This was at the same time Mendlessohn Club was given property. In 1938 the club remodeled, built the sun room and the rest of the food shop.

Those of you who walked through the lovely Spafford Home on the Heritage House Tour must have caught a glimpse of the gracious pattern of living Miss Jessie enjoyed there. She had a great interest in her family, and Mrs. Whitlock who is her grand-niece, and her husband, have preserved the charm of the home in which Miss Jessie lived from the time she was two years of age. Her gardening was a great source of joy and spiritual uplift to Miss Spafford, and the greenhouse still exists there. Certainly the Woman's Club Garden Department is carrying on a tradition that would have earned her praise.

This remarkable woman was made in 1944, a vice-president of the bank formerly known as the Third National but now renamed the First National Bank, on East State Street. After her father Amos Spafford had returned from California gold fields, the banking firm of Briggs, Spafford and Penfield was formed in 1854. Mr. Spafford had come to Winnebago County in 1839 from Adams County, New York and had married Elizabeth Burns White from Peterboro, New Hampshire in 1850. In 1864, Mr. Spafford was one of the men who organized the Third National Bank and he remained president until his death in 1897. His son George then succeeded to the presidency and held that post until his death in October, 1943. To Miss Jessie the bank was a major interest and we can be sure she had an important part in the 90th anniversary of its founding. What a sense of history we are able to feel as we literally step back into the time when Miss Jessie was here in this city, yes, even here in our clubhouse, energetically "getting things done!"

Miss Jessie wore a hat when presiding at Rockford Woman's Club. It was held in place by a hat-pin. Miss Jessie's hats were as much a part of her as her signature.

The Rockford newspaper of December 31, 1924, carried a photograph of the Oliver Dennett Grove portrait of Miss Jessie Spafford. Mr. Grove, an artist of international renown, had opened an exhibit of his work at Belle Keith Gallery in October. While in the city he painted Miss Jessie's portrait, which was given to the club by a group of members. Mrs. L. Harold Clark was in charge of subscriptions for the portrait.

In 1950 Miss Spafford retired from the presidency of Rockford Woman's Club. It was said "Miss Spafford never has wanted anything less than a complete test of her mettle and stamina." And in the Star, "Miss Spafford gave not only herself in the utmost measure, but she knew how to inspire others

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to give generously."

Miss Jessie, who was born here January 3, 1862, lived to the age of 90, going daily to the bank until two weeks before her death, September 23, 1952. The Star wrote, "Occasionally there dwells among us a distinguished man or woman who symbolizes both the era and the community."

Senior Citizens Activity Center property was purchased by Rockford Woman's Club in September, 1961. The Center opened in October with Mrs. Fenton Hazen as the first director. The purpose is to provide an educational, cultural, and community welfare service for its members. It is a place where new skills of recreational and functional value can be learned; an outlet for the members' productive capacities and a place where they can identify themselves.

Membership is open to all men and women over 50 years of age.

Following Miss Jessie I. Spafford, these women have served the club as its president: Mesdames Duncan Stewart, John Parker, Fred Horton, Harold Johnson, Bert Youngquist, Harry F. Carlson, Bruce W. Johnson, Dean A. Olson, and Leland Fetzer.

It has been years since Miss Jessie Spafford stood on the platform or presided at the official board meetings. Each term of office has seen great accomplishments, but these are so recent that they hang in your memories. There have been fifteen presidents in the 75 years we celebrate in this Diamond Jubilee Year.

Programs at Woman's Club have brought world famous men and women to the platform. Miss Jessie Spafford, with a quiet sparkle in her brown eyes, was one of the most attentive of the listeners. Her mind was razor-edge keen and she retained the zest for intellectual stimulation. When she was not extending the horizons of others, she was avidly replenishing her own sources of mental power.

Over the years these are some of the people who came to the platform of the Rockford Theatre: Edna Ferber, Upton Close, Richard Halliburton, Will Durant, Lowell Thomas, Rockwell Kent, Amelia Earhart, Sam Campbell, and Ogden Nash.

From the nods of approval of recollection, it seems you are like the young man who nervously went to the bank to cash his first check. The teller told him he must endorse the check. The young man turned the check over, looked puzzled a minute, and then smiled and wrote, "I heartily endorse this check."

It is because of Miss Jessie that we meet every Tuesday. She said women can't be expected to remember whether it is the second Tuesday or the fourth Tuesday.

The Theatre is such a wonderful part of our clubhouse. When Woman's Club opened in 1918, they had this beautiful theatre. This club brought cultural experiences to Rockford. Besides our own theatre, the club rented the Shrine Temple in the days before Community Concerts.

In the year 1925, these were some of the world famous people who appeared under the auspices of the Rockford Woman's Club: Pavlova and the Russian Ballet, Ruth Denis and Ted Shawn, John McCormick, Madame Schuman Heink, and Will Rogers.

Besides having a resident stock company 1920 to 1928, the Club would schedule in road shows out of New York. It is be-

lieved we were the only woman's club in the country that maintained a commercial theatre.

Some of the seventeen departments have been active since the beginning. American Home was one of these. American Citizenship, too, was one of the original departments. It delved much more into legislation than we do today. Always it proposed city ordinances, such as smoke abatement. They would have "candidates day" so the Woman's Club members could hear these people.

Public Health Department has a long record of activities in getting things done. They worked for getting drops put in to the eyes of newborn babies. We are told that in 1918 women wore high shoes. It began to be stylish to wear low shoes. The Woman's Club had a nurse come to tell the ladies they could wear wool stockings so they wouldn't take cold. Also low shoes would make them have strong ankles.

The work of all these departments is fascinating but it is hard to pour seventy-five years of history into a capsule.

This concludes today's study and I must express my gratitude to Mrs. Harold Johnson, general chairman of the 75th Jubilee events, for making considerable material available. I am proud to be a member of Rockford Woman's Club. Some famous person has said, "The past is but the prelude!" Rockford Woman's Club has a proud heritage but we now look to the future!

OUR ROCKFORD COLLEGE  
By W. Ashton Johnson  
(Continued from last issue)

Miss Julia H. Gulliver succeeded Miss Reynolds in 1902 and remained as the administrative head for seventeen years. A freshman social society - The Tolo Club - was organized during the early years of her residency. Men who were on the Rockford College "approved list" were required to bring character references from a board member, a well known neighbor, or their minister before paying court to a young woman student. Miss Gulliver established a rigid rule regarding "lights out" on school nights, but four times a year formal dancing parties brought college men from nearby Beloit, Madison, Evanston and Chicago. Comparatively few of the students' dates were "town men". Enrollment averaged 250 boarding students and between 40 and 50 day students, following World War I years.

Dr. Maddox Expands Curriculum. Dr. William A. Maddox became the first male president of the local school in 1919. During his 14 years of service, the Music, Speech and English departments were expanded and enrollment reached a new high. Dr. Maddox and Prof. Alfred Wilgeroth, head of the college music department, met tragic deaths in 1933 while enroute to an educational conference down state.

Dr. Gordon Keith Chalmers proved an able successor to Dr. Maddox. He remained here but three years before accepting the presidency of an Ohio college.

The college board reverted to a woman president when



choosing his successor in 1934, Dr. Mary Ashby Cheek. Construction of a new dormitory and the Jewett Science building, were evidences of progress during Dr. Cheek's term of office.

In 1954, the first graduate of Rockford high school ascended to the college presidency, this being Dr. Leland Carlson, who had earned his doctorate at Chicago University. In the presence of an assemblage of over a thousand alumnae, faculty members, old classmates and friends, Dr. Carlson was inducted into office at the Second Congregational Church.

In the spring of 1956, the board of trustees voted unanimously to sanction Dr. Carlson's suggestion that the college open its doors to male students. The transition from the young women's seminary and then a girls' college brought a marked increase in enrollment in September of that year. Expansion of the evening school and summer day sessions resulted in a total enrollment exceeding 700. Previously, when the bursar's office reported 275 dormitory students and 100 day students the officers were well pleased. Dr. Carlson was untiring in his efforts to broaden the scope of his school through personal appearances at alumna banquets, commencement programs and educational conclaves. So great were the demands on his time that he tired and submitted his resignation to the trustees in 1959 to do research study and return to teaching. While his predecessor, Dr. Mary Ashby Cheek, had bettered the relationship between school and Rockford, Carlson traveled far afield in voicing the advantages of the college.

More of the home town flavor was injected into the administration of the college with induction ceremonies attending the inauguration of Dr. John A. Howard. The present incumbent in the president's chair knew our city from childhood, his mother's family, the Charles Sacketts, being third generation Rockfordites.

Since 1960 the spacious acreage on East State, beyond Alpine road has become Rockford college campus in reality. Dormitories, halls of learning, and classrooms, library,



chapel, physical education gymnasium and athletic field are scheduled for service in another year.

Pioneer Speech Center. Pioneering in the field of speech re-education for children afflicted with cerebral palsy, cleft palates, and hearing defects, brought national recognition to the College between the years of 1944 and 1961.

Rockford College Speech Center, authorized by the Division of Services, University of Illinois Medical School, was launched through the energies of two educators, Dr. Mary Ashby Cheek, president of the school, and Dr. Mildred Freburg Berry. Dr. Berry had been a consultant for the University bureau at speech re-education out-patient clinics. Her suggestion of launching summer clinic of six weeks met with Dr. Cheek's enthusiastic approval. Correspondence between the college and the university leaders culminated in appropriation of special education funds and allocation to the clinic in Rockford.

Named director of the clinic, Dr. Berry utilized college staff as her faculty the first two years of operation. It was headed by Dr. Cheek, chief of administration; Dr. Mary V. Braginton, academic dean and faculty chairman on graduate study; Miss Irene Clayton, recreational director, and the college dietary staff. Sixty two boys and girls from all sections of Illinois and perhaps 15 day pupils from the local area, enrolled in the first year's experimental clinic. The results were satisfying; funds were provided for hiring of graduate therapists, two staff nurses for the 3 to 6-year olds, a staff physician and junior assistants.

Since her retirement in June of 1961 Dr. Berry has experienced a six month tour of teaching duty in Turkey, enjoying her third Fulbright Grant for foreign study and teaching.

The Two Doctors Cavan. Dr. Ruth Shonle Cavan, Jane Adams professor of Sociology, is probably one of the most respected criminologists in the nation. Besides possessing a higher learning, she has found time to author 12 books on



crime, juvenile delinquency, family, and old age patterns.

Dr. Cavan has been busy since her retirement in 1962, having written two new textbooks. They are: "Juvenile Delinquency," (1963) and "Readings in Juvenile Delinquency," (1964). A revision of an earlier work, "Marriage and Family in the Modern World," occupied her time until she accepted a one-year appointment as visiting professor of Sociology at Northern Illinois University.

Following graduate study at Chicago University where she earned three degrees, the Ph. B., N. A., and Ph. D., Mrs. Cavan launched her research and teaching career. In 1927 she married Dr. Jordan T. Cavan, who was teaching Education at Rockford College. Dr. Jordan retired to Emeritus Professor of education status in 1960. They have one daughter, Anna-Lee, (Mrs. D. E. Bruer) whose activities include rearing three lively children.

During various summer sessions, Dr. Ruth has enjoyed short term teaching at Washington University, St. Louis, University of Michigan, and Utah State University and a winter term at Penn State University, Pennsylvania. She has served on several University of Chicago research programs, the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (1930), the American Council on Education, and the Social Science Research Council.

Many summers of travel through Europe have allowed the Cavans to attend international seminars on Criminology, Prison Reform and Education. On one occasion in the 1950's the two Cavans - Drs. Jordan and Ruth - held audience with Marshall Tito, who made it understood that "I want you to know that I do not subscribe to many of the Russian Bolshevik interpretations of Communism."

Dr. Jordan Cavan's tenure. During Jordan Cavan's long career as a professor of education at the oldest women's college in the midwest, he acquired the reputation of teaching "must" courses. If an undergraduate aspired to teach or follow a social science career, a Cavan lecture course was an important step toward a diploma and degree. Dr. Jordan



toiled tirelessly during the regimes of Dr. Maddox, Dr. Mary Ashby Cheek, Dr. Leland Carlson and Dr. John A. Howard.

During the administration of Dr. Carlson, the college became co-educational. Among the new added features to the study curriculum was the planned expansion of an adult education department and watched it increase in enrollment to more than 700 students in day and evening classes.

The male of the species Cavan holds his final degree from the University of Chicago, the Ph. D.

The summer of 1964 found the Cavans for the second time members of Prof. Detrick's bus tour party through the southwest for visits to the Pueblos and ruins of ancient cliff dwellings. Rockford College students accompanied them on a summer school credit basis.

Jane Addams and Other Alumna. Among the scores of prominent graduates of Rockford College the name of Miss Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House, heads the list. A member of the class of 1882, she devoted her entire post-college years to social service and helping the under privileged. Miss Addams was the recipient of four honorary degrees and was honored with a Nobel Peace prize in 1931. She was the author of several literary works-"Democracy and Social Ethics," "Spirit of Youth and the City Streets," "Twenty Years at Hull house," and "Peace and Bread in Time of War" among them. A movement crystallized in 1962 resulted in the restoration of Hull House at a new site as a memorial to Miss Addams, internationally known humanitarian.

(To be concluded in next issue)

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