

Nuggets of History

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MONUMENT TO A HERO By Stuart K. Golding

Colonel Elmer Ellsworth was well known in Rockford. He had come here sometime in 1858 and had trained a company of young men in the Zouave System of military maneuvers, and they became known as the Rockford Grays. Later these men became part of the 11th Illinois Infantry under Colonel Garrett L. Nevius.

Ellsworth had also won the hand of young Carrie Spafford, the daughter of C. H. Spafford, and had left Rockford to study law at the suggestion of Carrie's father. In this he had the help of lawyers in Chicago and Abraham Lincoln in Springfield. His friendship with Lincoln led to his being in the party that went to Washington with the new president after his election.

At the outbreak of the war Ellsworth was authorized to form a regiment from the ranks of the New York City Fire Department, and after an intensive drill period they were



Ellsworth's
Monument

sent to Alexandria, Virginia, to help protect the city of Washington from that direction. When the Colonel saw a Confederate flag on the roof of the Marshall Hotel, he at once went up to pull it down, fearing that the sight of it might cause trouble with his men. As he was descending the stairs, he was shot by the proprietor and thus became the first Union officer to be killed in the war.

Lincoln was shocked when he heard of this death, and insisted that the body lie in state in the White House until its return to Ellsworth's native town of Mechanicville, New York, for burial.

For years the grave of this hero was left unmarked, and it was not until 1873 that this monument was erected to his memory. People from all over the state of New York contributed to it, as well as members of the New York City Fire Department.

Incidentally, Carrie's last letter to him was found on his body when he was killed.

(Photo by Jack R. Brown of Dayton, Ohio.)

ASSISTANT EDITOR APPOINTED

Timothy Borden, known as "Tim" to his friends, has been appointed Assistant Editor of NUGGETS OF HISTORY. Tim is the youngest son of the Editor and a sixth grade student at Jackson School. He has had some experience by editing a little paper of his own called the BROWNS WOODS STAR.

Tim is a fifth generation Rockfordite, being the great-great grandson of Gustaf and Sophia Landstrom, early Swedish immigrants who made their final home at 1410 Rural Street. Another great-great grandparent who spent his last days in Rockford was Swan Magnuson of 2344 19th Avenue.



Tim Borden

Tim's great grandparents were John A. and Hannah Landstrom Borden of 1303 Cospers Avenue, Andrew J. and Agda Rosenquist of 1322 8th Street, Charles A. and Selma Carlson of Sandy Hollow Road, and Herman and Anna Magnuson of 1229 Charles Street.

As Assistant Editor, Tim joins a staff consisting of his father as the Editor, Hazel Hyde as Associate Editor, and Sandy Burlend as Typist. Tim's duties will consist mainly of photography, layout, some typing, and collating the printed papers.

THE HERITAGE OF HORACE BROWN

Horace Brown had a hard time deciding whether or not to settle in Rockford. He first arrived in Winnebago County in 1850 at the age of 26 and purchased 200 acres of land near New Milford, for which he paid \$10 an acre. He then returned to his home town of Springfield, Vermont to be united in marriage to Miss Mary Augusta Thayer, daughter of a farmer for whom he had worked. Brown and his bride then returned to the Rockford area to farm their land.

Apparently Brown was not too interested in farming. He had already left the farm once, in 1845, to engage in the manufacturing of oil cloth at Lansingburg, New York. In 1850 and '51 farm prices were even lower than usual, and after about a year of farming near New Milford, Mr. and Mrs. Brown went back east to Lansingburg where he again tried the oil cloth business; however, they retained ownership of their New Milford farm.

In 1853 the Browns returned to Winnebago County. He sold his New Milford land and entered into a partnership with G. W. Reynolds in the livery business. In 1855 Brown sold out his share of the business and returned to Springfield, Vermont, where he again engaged in farming. He also purchased interest in a saw mill powered by the Black River of Vermont.

In the fall of 1859 Brown again decided to come west. He sold his saw mill and farm lands in Vermont and returned to Rockford. Luke Joslin, an uncle of Mrs. Brown, owned a large tract of land north of what is now Rural Street, and the Browns purchased 44 acres from Joslin. This land came to be known as Park Ridge, but most of it is now known as Brown's Woods.

Horace Brown was first listed in the Rockford City Directory in 1859, at which time his residence was given as "s s Beloit n of Greemount, e s" which meant that he lived on the south side of the Beloit Road north of Greenmount Street on the east side. The Beloit Road was the name by which North Second Street was known until about 1877. Most Rockford residents probably think of North Second Street as a north-south thoroughfare, but the map of the city indicates that between Oakland Avenue and Sinnissippi Park it runs from east-northeast to west-southwest; hence the location of Brown's home being given as the "south side" of the



Horace Brown

road.

In the 1866 City Directory, Brown was listed as a "farmer, w s Prospect st, e s". As there were no streets between North Second and Prospect in his area at that time, this description was probably accurate enough, but all evidence seems to indicate that the Brown home was always closer to Second Street than to Prospect, and it is doubtful that Brown's land extended quite as far as Prospect Street.

In 1869 Brown was listed as a lawyer living on Third Street. This may have been an error, as city directories are not infallible; it is the only year he was listed as a lawyer, and neither his obituaries nor his biographical sketch in an 1892 book said anything about his ever having studied law. However, "reading law" and passing the bar examination was not too great a task in those days for one of reasonable intelligence, and this could help to explain his ability to obtain his later positions in business. As to the address, it is possible they may have been temporarily living on Third Street while their new home was under construction.

When the Rockford National Bank was organized in May, 1871, Horace Brown became the vice president, and remained in that position until succeeding to the presidency in 1903 when Gilbert Woodruff died. He was one of the founders of the Forest City Insurance Company, serving as vice president for several years and at times as treasurer, and was the last of its original board of directors. He was also one of the organizers of the Insurance Company of the State of Illinois and served as its president during the earlier

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Horace Brown's Home

years of its existence. When the Skandia Furniture Company was founded in 1889, Brown became its first president. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were members of the First Congregational Church, which was located on Walnut Street between Kishwaukee and South Third Streets.

One son and two daughters were born to the Browns. William Thayer Brown was born March 2, 1854, at which time the family was living on North Main Street. On August 24, 1875, he married Mary Spalding of Byron, a sister of Albert G. Spalding, the great pitcher of the Rockford Forest City baseball team who later pitched for Boston and Chicago teams. Spalding and his brother, J. W. Spalding, formed the A. G. Spalding Company, producers of sporting equipment, and William T. Brown was treasurer of the firm at the time of his death on May 7, 1916.

Alice Brown, born in Springfield, Vermont, on April 28 1856, was the Browns' second child. She married Duncan H. Ferguson, son of the Duncan Ferguson who had served as mayor as well as many other public positions. Alice died on March 23, 1890, leaving one son, Donald Brown Ferguson. The Browns' youngest child, Carrie, was born July 27, 1860. On April 10, 1885, while "under a temporary mental cloud" she walked into Rock River and was drowned. Mrs. Brown was preceded in death by all three of her children.

The Browns were also blest with five grandchildren. Horace, William, Irene and Elizabeth Brown were the children of the William T. Browns, and Donald B. Ferguson was the son of Duncan H. and Alice (Brown) Ferguson.

Donald B. Ferguson was the only grandchild of the Browns to settle in Rockford. He was only eight days old when his mother, Alice Brown Ferguson, died. His father later re-married, and about 1902 the family returned to Rockford from Denver, where they had lived for several years. During his high school years Donald lived in his grandparents' home at 1037 North Second Street, although his father and step mother were living on the west side.

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He studied civil engineering at Yale University, and served with the army on the Mexican border in 1916.

Donald Ferguson married Elspeth Robinson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry H. Robinson, about 1915. He served as an army officer in the First World War, and on his return from war service he started the Ferguson Construction Company, specializing in bridge-building but also engaging in other engineering work. The present bridges at Fifteenth Avenue and at Auburn Street were erected by Ferguson's firm.

Ferguson also subdivided his grandfather's old farm, creating the beautiful residential area known as Brown's Woods. Hilly, wooded mostly with large old oak trees, it became one of the most desired neighborhoods in the city, with such picturesque street names as Ridgewood Road, Brown Hills Road, Brown Hills Court, Overlook Road, and Brownwood Drive. Ferguson himself built his home at 1033 North Second Street, just south of his grandparents' residence.

Apparently the old Horace Brown home was torn down sometime about 1925. The City Directories of 1923, 1924, and 1925 listed it as "Vacant", and by 1926 it was not listed at all. Beginning in 1927, Carl L. Mattison was living at 1039 North Second Street, so evidently Horace Brown's house had been razed to make way for Mattison's new English-style residence.

GOODYEAR ASA SANFORD
By Steve Faherty

Goodyear Asa Sanford was born at Hamden, Connecticut, in August of 1814. In 1835 he left his home town and went to Kaneland, Illinois. After a year in Kaneland, Mr. Sanford moved to Rockford.

Sanford and John Platt were in the mercantile business in a store located on the bank of the Rock River near Elm Street. In February of 1837 Sanford traveled to New Haven, Connecticut, where he married Miss Elizabeth Bassett. He brought her back to Rockford that same year and they settled in a little house on Main Street. They had one child, but he died while still an infant. The Sanfords later built a large home on Mound Avenue (Now Indian Terrace), which stood there until the early 1950s.

Mr. Sanford retired from the mercantile business with Mr. Platt, and then served one term as deputy sheriff; he was elected sheriff for two terms. He also served as a school director from 1845 to 1847.

When Sanford entered the banking business in 1855, the name of his firm was Dickerman & Wheeler. This later became the Second National Bank, in which Sanford started as a cashier and eventually became president.

Mr. Sanford was very active in the church. He was one of the first members of the Congregational Church in Rock-

ford, where he was a generous giver and was regarded as a pillar in the church. In the early days when there were no church buildings in the city, Sanford was one of the people who attended worship in a portion of a log cabin in South Rockford. He remained very active in business until he was about 80 years old. He died on March 16, 1894.

PHILANDER KNAPPEN, CHARLES LATIMER
AND THE ELECTION
By Billie Whitsitt

John Thurston wrote that several of the men who worked on THE ROCKFORD STAR roomed at Rockford House. Perhaps Philander Knappen, editor of the STAR, was one of them, dodging the talon that dripped from the candle of John or his younger brother as he showed him up to his bed. Rockford had changed since Haight and Kent had put up their log cabins only a few years before. Stagecoaches came through from Chicago to Galena three times a week; the cabins had disappeared to be replaced by frame and brick homes, and a few small churches and private schools indicated that there was an interest in learning.

Knappen seems a more complex man than his competitor, B. J. Gray, editor of the ROCK RIVER EXPRESS. Knappen's interests were both broader and more extreme. He was an ardent Democrat, a pious fundamentalist Christian, strongly pro-temperance, a firm believer in an education for every one, and he seemed inordinately afraid of Indians. He really may not have been afraid of them as much as choosing them as a target of the times. Both papers carried occasional news items of the Indians around the county, but Knappen was more flamboyant than Gray in his new approach. As an example:

"Are the South aware of the policy which Mr. Daniel Webster proposes in relation to the Florida Indians if Gen. Harrison comes into power? . . . he complains of the policy of the administration in removing the Florida Indians, and says that the Whigs will give them annuities and let them remain where they are . . . pay the Seminole Indians for remaining where they are, and leave the settlers on the frontier to the scalping knife."

The above were not the words of Knappen but copied from some other paper which he did not bother to identify.

The following is an item Knappen used from the ILLINOIS FREE TRADER:

"FLORIDA. - The Indians of this peninsular seem to become more formidable every day. Hardly a week passes without new reports of murder and rapine committed by the, and their numbers are shown to be greater than many have supposed. A correspondent of the NEW YORK AMERICAN writes from St. Augustine on the 22d of September:

'We hear of them supplying themselves with ammunition at the Keys, driving of cattle from the neighborhood. . . , firing on the express rider . . . , the accounts which are

pouring in of the merciless destruction of human life in that district, are such as are calculated to make the cheek grow pale."

(Continued in next issue)

THE LYRAN SINGING SOCIETY
By Colleen Collins
(Concluded from last issue)

Incorporation papers were issued by the State of Illinois to the Lyran Swedish Singing Society on January 21, 1895. Incorporators were Charles Samuelson, Edward Carlson, and Albert Enquist. The Lyran Society was and still is one of the most influential organizations within the AUSS (American Union of Swedish Singers). Some of the members date back as far as World War I. Through the years there have been twenty-seven presidents: Charles Samuelson, Frank Shelain, Al Abrahamson, Edward Carlson, John Erickson, John A. Croon, Abel Erickson, Algo Bjork, Charles Bogren, Casper Hallberg, Charles Johnson, Alf Carlson, Albin Stolgren, Malcolm Blank, C. T. Blomquist, Ernest Erickson, John E. Carlson, Axel Ney, Ralph Olson, Howard Anderson, Carl Swanborg, George W. Nelson, Richard Johnson, George W. Nelson, Harold Johnson, Charles Lignell, and



Edward Anderson. One of the most well-known singers in this organization is City Clerk Ray Olson, who has been a member for many years.

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