

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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THE END OF WORLD WAR II by Robert H. Borden

Thirty-five years ago! Can it really be that long? It seems only yesterday that this writer celebrated his nineteenth birthday, on July 16, 1945, by returning to Pearl Harbor from Okinawa. As tugboats slowly pushed the U.S.S. Auburn into its berth along one of Pearl Harbor's piers, and the crew prepared to see the sights of Honolulu for the first time in several weeks, we wondered, "When will this war be over?" and "Will we really have to invade Japan?"

Little did we know that on that very day an atomic device had been tested in New Mexico which would change the course of history. Even most of the highest officers of the land knew nothing about it yet, and had been preparing for the last phase of World War II, the invasion of Japan. Many calculations were being made as to the numbers of planes and ships needed and how many men would lose their lives.

The war in Europe had ended in May, and on July 21 it was reported that Nuremberg had been selected as the site of the trial of high Nazi officers. The newspaper dispatch spelled it "Nuernberg". Men who had fought in Europe were beginning to return home and the society pages were filled with articles about weddings long delayed by war. Rockfordites were also excited about the "Peaches", our professional girls' baseball team vying for the league title. East High School was getting a new football coach in Steve Polaski, natural gas was being considered to replace coal gas in our gas mains, and a polio epidemic was beginning. On August 2, Major General Claire Chennault, former commander of the U. S. 14th Air Force, predicted that Japan would soon be isolated from the Asiatic mainland, but added that the Japs in Manchuria and northern China might hold out indefinitely. Other stories told us that the Japanese claimed they would fight to the finish, and there were continual reports of the heavy bombing attacks we were afflicting on Japan. Our B-29s had a long list of Japanese cities on their "death list", and these cities were being given "final warnings".

On August 6, 1945, a long-time opponent of America's wars, Senator Hiram W. Johnson of California, passed away at age 79. A former governor of California who had run for Vice President on Teddy Roosevelt's Progressive "Bull Moose" ticket in 1912, Johnson had been outspoken against the United States' entry into World War I, the League of Nations, and the World Court. When it became necessary to lower the draft age to eighteen during World War II, Johnson had told his Senate colleagues, with tears in his eyes, that he opposed "calling children to fight our battles".

What a coincidence that on the very day that Hiram Johnson died, and in the same newspapers, it was announced

that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. "Atomic Bomb Hits Japan" was the banner headline across the front page of the Register-Republic that afternoon. "New Explosive Has Blast as Powerful As 20,000 TNT Tons"; "Truman Says New Weapon Is 2,000 Times More Powerful Than Any Used Before". The next morning, Tuesday, August 7, 1945, the Morning Star's banner headline read "ATOMIC BOMBS DOOM JAPAN", while the A.P. story began "The most terrible destructive force ever harnessed by man --atomic energy-- is now being turned on the islands of Japan by United States bombers. The Japanese face a threat of utter desolation, and their capitulation may be greatly speeded up." The same paper which reported the atomic raid, however, also told of continuing air raids by conventional bombs, such as the report of 580 B-29 Superfortresses dropping 3,850 tons of incendiaries on the industrial cities of Nishinomiya, Maebashi, Imabari, and Saga. And America's exultation was dampened somewhat by the death of Major Richard I. Bong, our greatest fighter pilot of the war, in an explosion of a P-80 jet during a test flight.

The first reports from Japan made no mention of the atomic bomb, merely announcing the end of train service to and from Hiroshima. By August 7, Tokyo was acknowledging that "American atomic bombs descended on Hiroshima by parachute yesterday, exploded before reaching the ground and caused such great devastation..." that authorities had not ascertained the full extent. Apparently the Japanese were not aware at first that only one bomb had caused so much damage.

On August 8, 1945, the banner headline across page one of the Register-Republic announced "REDS ENTER JAP WAR!" and the next day it was announced that "1,000,000 Reds Attacking" and "Roll Into Manchuria At Key Points: Fight Crack Army of Japs". Their helpfulness would have been more appreciated if they had not waited until we had dropped an atomic bomb.

The Register-Republic's banner on Thursday, August 9, screamed "Atom Bomb Blows Nagasaki Off Map", and a U.P. bulletin claimed that "Preliminary reports indicated that the second atomic bomb to be dropped on Japan all but obliterated Nagasaki". Then began a period of impatient waiting. "JAPAN OFFERS TO QUIT" said the Register-Republic on Friday evening, August 10, but readers who were ready to tear up their draft cards or ration books were disappointed as they read further. At first the Japanese offer of surrender was made through Switzerland and Sweden, and various points on both sides had to be clarified. The leaders of the Japanese army still balked at surrendering, but were overruled by Emperor Hirohito.

On Tuesday, August 14, 1945, President Truman announced that Japan had accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. "SECOND WORLD WAR ENDS!" screamed the Morning Star Wednesday morning, continuing "JAPS SURRENDER: GUNS STILLED: M'ARTHUR IS SUPREME COMMANDER". Another article asserted that citizens "JAM STREETS AS 75,000 JOIN TO CHEER VICTORY". "Rockford forgot four years of war weariness

last night to stage the most tumultuous and spontaneous celebration in the city's history as the magic word that the war was over spread like wildfire after four days of nervous tension....Police estimated that at least 75,000 persons jammed the downtown district, starting shortly after the official announcement that Japan had surrendered flashed over newspaper teletype machines and radios at 6 p.m....City fireman had to use an aerial ladder to get to the roof of the county courthouse at 9:15....to extinguish a blazing effigy of Emperor Hirohito, which had been ignited and then hoisted to the top of the building.... Other calls included two to the west end of the State Street bridge where bonfires were ignited; a fire on a bus started by boys who set fire to paper, and a blaze which destroyed the caretaker's shack at the city quarry, 1100 block Horsman Street", mistakenly called Hanson street in the article.

"Wildest Night In City's Life" proclaimed the Register-Republic Wednesday afternoon, and "Thousands Will in Loop When Victory Comes". According to the article, the announcement that the war had ended "touched off the biggest spontaneous celebration in Rockford's history as the city went wild with joy. With automobile horns screaming, men, women and children by the thousands poured into the downtown sections jamming the streets and creating a constant bedlam of noisemaking and paper throwing....The entire police force was on duty and was aided by city firemen and Camp Grant military police. Traffic lights were ignored by the milling crowds and officers had a big assignment in attempting to unsnarl traffic."

President Truman proclaimed that Wednesday, August 15, and Thursday, August 16, were to be legal holidays throughout the United States. The Rockford City Council had previously passed an ordinance that there would be a 24-hour "holiday" for the sale of liquor in taverns and clubs immediately following official announcement of the end of the war against Japan. Mayor C. Henry Bloom personally closed three taverns on East State Street Tuesday night when they failed to shut down in compliance with the city ordinance. The owners of those three bars told the mayor that they were waiting for President Truman's official announcement of V-J Day, but Mayor Bloom said, "They were so noisy they couldn't have heard the President if they had tried." Nevertheless, the owners of those taverns were not prosecuted. However, later in the evening three others were arrested for not obeying the ordinance. The bartender at Swan's Tavern, now the Railroad Avenue Tap at 902 Ninth Street, was arrested at 7:55 p.m., and at 8:55 p.m. the same fate befell the bartender at the Lombardi Club, 209 Olive Street. At 12:30 a.m. on Wednesday detectives Harley Chew and Russell Forson found the bartender at the Blackhawk Tavern, 160 Fifteenth Avenue, still dispensing alcoholic beverages, so he likewise was arrested. Each tavern was allowed to re-open twenty-four hours after it closed, so one that had closed at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday could be back in business at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, but if one had continued to do business until 7 p.m. Tuesday, it had to remain closed until 7

p.m. Wednesday.

Stores, restaurants, offices, business houses and factories in Rockford were closed on Wednesday, August 15, and most of them, with the exception of food and drug stores remained closed on Thursday in accordance with President Truman's proclamation, even though legally the President could enforce his order only in the District of Columbia and other federal territory. Rockford's banks, however, remained open. Bank officials explained that they had not received authorization from the comptroller of the currency in Washington to close their doors. Thousands of Rockford war plant workers began a two-day V-J Day holiday on Wednesday, leaving the factories where for four years they had produced materials which made possible the victory over Japan. Some shops, however, re-opened on Thursday.

Welcome news to everyone was the announcement by the Office of Price Administration (O.P.A.) that the rationing of gasoline, canned fruits and vegetables, and fuel oil would be terminated immediately. U.S. Price Administrator Chester Bowles said that meats, fats and oils, butter, shoes and tires would continue to be rationed "until military cutbacks and increased production bring civilian supplies more nearly in balance with civilian demand."

Because of the polio epidemic raging in late summer of 1945, Camp Grant soldiers were not allowed in Rockford, so the announcement of the war's end brought about more thanksgiving than celebration among the camp's soldiers. Col. Forrest W. Edwards, camp commander, issued a proclamation of thanksgiving, and the post chapels were open for those who wished to spend some time in prayer. "Today, we at Camp Grant join the entire nation, the entire world, in thanks that the great war which has taken such a tremendous toll of mankind is over," Col. Edwards said.

During much of the war, Camp Grant, in addition to being a training center, was a prisoner of war camp, housing German soldiers captured in battle. As their own country had already surrendered, these German prisoners seemed glad when the entire conflict was over. One plump German sergeant seemed to express their feelings when he said, "Das Yaps -- neffer vas much goot ennyhows!"

(See photos of celebration on pages 6 and 7)

A BRIEF MUNICIPAL HISTORY OF ROCKFORD
by W. Ashton Johnson
(Concluded from last issue)

Amasa Hutchins, native, ex-sheriff and Civil War veteran, succeeded Mayor Starr in 1893; Edward W. Brown, three terms (1895-1901), whose administration followed the greatest industrial depression era to that time in history, and who earned the respect of the entire community for his skill in administering duties of his office; Amasa Hutchins (2nd term) in 1901; Charles E. Jackson, elected in 1903, appointed the first board of Police and Fire Commissioners,

under a new state law by which authority governing members of these departments was vested in said commission instead of the city council. All police and firemen were given civil service status; Jackson was elected to a second term but was defeated for a third term in 1907 when the Labor Party elected its first mayor, Mark Jardine, a leather maker by trade.

Under a law allowing referendum voting for determining whether a county should abolish saloons or remain legally "wet", the "Dry" forces made a clean sweep of the county in April of 1908. Rev. Frank Sheldon, minister of the First Congregational Church, declared Rockford to be the "largest city in the midwest to vote out the grog shops".

Mayor Jardine won a second term in 1909, reporting that legislation passed during his incumbency had yielded thousands of dollars from public utilities franchise fees. Jardine was defeated in 1911, in a five-cornered race, William W. Bennett, a "dry" advocate, winning with a 399 vote plurality over Swan Widell and over 2 to 1 edge over the Labor Party mayor. Bennett's wife Gertrude was a daughter of former mayor Horace C. Scovill.

Bennett was re-elected over Charles J. Lundberg in the 1913 election, marked by an affirmative vote for allowing theatres to remain open on Sundays. In the year previous, the city had voted for the third time on the Wet and Dry issue, the drys winning again. Mayor Bennett won out over Oscar H. Ogren, Socialist Party candidate, in his bid for a 3rd term in 1915. This election marked the first time women were allowed to vote for mayor of Rockford.

Robert Rew, a distinguished member of the bar association, became Rockford's World War I mayor in 1917, and his term of office was perhaps filled with more headaches, heartaches, and conferences with the military than any other chief executive before or since. Mayor Rew personally bade farewell to all units leaving home for military service, including the National Guard companies H and K, National Army inductees, and Navy enlistees. He became acquainted with each of the six commanders of Camp Grant, the cantonment which trained more than a quarter-million men in 28 months. Rew was re-elected in 1919.

J. Herman Hallstrom, a World War I veteran and student of labor problems, became the post-war executive who had to earn the respect of his political enemies before his council showed him any consideration. During his first term, 1921-23, several of his appointments were tabled for the entire term. When he came up for re-election, a score of political bigwigs who had fought hard for the election of A. J. Anderson over Hallstrom in 1921 complimented Hallstrom on his good judgement and poise under most trying circumstances. He was re-elected in 1923 and 1925, but was defeated in 1927 by Burt M. Allen. Hallstrom returned to office in 1929, and was re-elected in 1931.

C. Henry Bloom, who had earned the name of "watchdog of the city treasury" as a veteran alderman, succeeded Hallstrom to the mayoralty in 1933. As a standard bearer

(Continued on page 8)

As Rockford Celebrated End of Jap War



State and Main Intersection was the mecca for all celebrants and they started gathering within minutes after President Truman announced Japan's surrender.



Grinning servicemen were happy targets for all merry-makers.



Rockford war workers, who contributed much to the arsenal for victorious democracies, flash big smiles as they participate in the peace parade. (Register-Republic photos.)



This impromptu "dance" was one of many staged in the loop as Rockford welcomed return of peace.

for the Progressive Party, mainly made up of a large Labor group, Bloom found rough sailing, as had Hallstrom in his first term. Winning re-election in 1935, he was defeated in 1937 by former probate clerk Charles F. Brown. Despite a creditable administration for four years, the Bloom Labor-Progressive wing proved too strong for the Brown followers. (Brown was the first Rockford mayor to have a four year term.) C. Henry Bloom went back into office in 1941 with a Council which was rather evenly balanced, and remained in office for twelve more years, at which time he withdrew his candidacy in favor of a former council colleague, Milton A. Lundstrom.

Mayor Lundstrom's four years in office (1953-57) were marked by many street improvements, several rejections of proposed legislation by a council having an independent majority, and a balanced treasury throughout his term. Benjamin T. Schleicher assumed the mayoral gavel in 1957, and was re-elected in 1961, 1965, and 1969, finally losing to Robert McGaw in 1973.

FROM VÄSTERGÖTLAND TO ROCKFORD A Swedish Love Story

From Åsarp, Älvsborgslän, Sweden, came the two young lovers in 1883 -- Andrew Johanson and Agda Maria Paulina Lundstedt. Andrew, born August 18, 1859, was from common stock, a carpenter and cabinetmaker, but Agda, born April 16, 1861, was of aristocratic heritage. Andrew's father was caretaker and his mother the maid on the estate of Agda's family.

Located on Highway 46 about midway between Falköping and Ulricehamn in Västergötland, Åsarp is seldom shown on the map of Sweden found in a world atlas. Agda was actually born at Timmele, then known as Timmelhed, a few miles to the south, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Karl Peter Lundstedt, but she spent much of her youth on the country estate of her uncle and aunt, the Friggaråkers, near Åsarp.

Agda's family was not too pleased upon discovering that she was keeping company with the caretaker's son. A married sister was already living in Chicago, so it was arranged that 22-year-old Agda would make the voyage and live with her. It was to be done very quickly and quietly, but somehow Andrew was not fooled. Unknown to Agda's family, he booked passage on the next ship.

After docking in New York and being processed with the other immigrants, they set out for Illinois. Agda's destination was Chicago, to live with sister Selma. When Andrew arrived, he continued westward to Rockford, where two of his older sisters had already settled.

Known as Anders in his native land, Andrew was the son



Andrew John and Agda Maria Paulina Lundstedt Rosenquist

of Johannes and Kajsa Anderson. According to Swedish custom at that time, his surname became Johanson --- son of Johannes. Upon arriving at Rockford, he decided to follow in the steps of thousands of his fellow Swedes, and change his name; he became Andrew John Rosenquist.

Many Swedish immigrants entered the carpenter's trade, which Andrew had learned in Sweden, but he soon found that the need for stonemasons and bricklayers was greater in 1883 than the demand for woodworkers. So Rosenquist became a mason-bricklayer, finding the pay to be higher and the outside work agreeable. He wrote to Agda, and late in 1883 she left her sister's Chicago home for Rockford, finding a job as maid in the Pierpont home, 3320 West State Street.

Both Andrew and Agda joined First Lutheran Church on January 6, 1884, transferring from the church in Åsarp. They waited several months, however, before getting married. They had decided to have a double wedding with Andrew's niece, Amanda Valentine, and her fiance, a Mr. Steelquist. They finally became man and wife on October 1, 1884.

Mr. and Mrs. Rosenquist lived in various rented quarters for a few years, most of that period in the 1000 block of Fifth Avenue. Their first child was a daughter, Esther Marie, born September 5, 1885. A son, Arthur Herbert, was



Two views of the Rosenquist home at 1322 Eighth Street

born February 1, 1890. On January 11, 1890, the Rosenquists purchased Lot 10 in Block 10 of Woodruff's Addition. Located on the east side of Eighth Street near Thirteenth Avenue, it cost them \$500.

Andrew John Rosenquist was more than a good stonemason and bricklayer. Having learned the carpentry trade in Sweden, he now proceeded to build his own house. Before the year was over, their new home was finished at 1308 Eighth Street. In 1894, when the numbering system was altered throughout Rockford, their address was changed to 1322 Eighth Street.

A second daughter, Effie Adeline Victoria, was born on May 21, 1892, and the family was complete. Andrew continued to work with stone and brick, becoming well-known for his imaginative masonry work. When the grand pavilion was to be constructed in Sinnissippi Park, he was chosen to do the masonry, helped only by a "tender" who brought him the stones and mortar as he needed them. He joined the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union of America, Union No. 31, in August of 1900. His 1921 union card, still in the family's possession, is signed by J. H. Hallstrom, then union president and later mayor of Rockford.

During the winters, when the temperatures dropped to a level which would not allow mortar to harden properly, bricklayers and masons would be out of work for several weeks. Andrew usually found employment in a local furniture factory for the winter, but at times he worked at Rockford Drop Forge Co., Ninth Street at Twentieth Avenue, or at Rockford Manufacturing Company, 1800 Fourteenth Avenue (now Broadway).



Grand Pavilion at Sinnissippi Park, Recently Replaced by the Administration Building

The three Rosenquist children all lived to adulthood, which was somewhat uncommon in a day when child mortality was high. Esther, the oldest, became a teacher at the old Marsh School, located at the southwest corner of Eighth Street and Second Avenue. She transferred to P. A. Peterson School when it opened in 1912. Arthur worked at several furniture and piano factories as a machine operator, trimmer, cabinetmaker, and upholsterer. Among his employers through the years were Kurtz-Seeburg (later Kurtz Action and still later Thayer Action and Wood & Brooks), Haddorff Piano, Forest City Phonograph, Novelty Furniture, Rockford Cabinet, and Landstrom Furniture, but in 1937 he began a twenty-one year career at Barber-Colman Company. Effie Rosenquist became a teacher at Brown School, which was located at the northwest corner of Eighth Street and Sixteenth Avenue, and on June 28, 1924, was married to Hjalmar R. Borden.

Andrew J. Rosenquist became known among Rockford contractors as the best bricklayer in town, especially skilled at fancy imaginative brickwork. The late Harold E. Berg once said, "Mr. Rosenquist taught me all I knew about laying bricks." Berg, later with Commercial Mortgage and Finance Co., said that Rosenquist was the specialist at building fancy fireplaces and other ornate brickwork; his employers seldom put him to work on ordinary brick walls, but instead he went from building to building under construction and did only the specialty work. When his daughter Effie married Hjalmar R. Borden in 1924, Mr. Rosenquist built the elaborate fireplace, porch pillars, and fireplace



Standing: Esther, Arthur, and
Effie Rosenquist.
Seated: Andrew and Agda

Agda Lundstedt Rosenquist the
summer before her death

chimney on their home at 1321 Cospers Avenue.

In the days before Social Security and generous pension systems, a working man seldom was able to save or invest enough money to retire. As long as he remained healthy, he worked. Andrew J. Rosenquist worked literally all his life. His last employer was Linden & Sons, 1110 Tenth Street. In 1930 they were adding an addition to their office building. Rosenquist had passed his seventieth birthday the previous August, but he continued to lay brick. On May 8, 1930, he fell from the scaffold at the Linden office, fracturing a vertebra in his neck. The extent of his injury was not known at first. His fellow workmen took him to Swedish-American Hospital, where he walked in unassisted. X-rays, however, located the broken vertebra, and he spent the next twenty days in suffering, which finally ended with his death on May 28, 1930. His funeral was held Saturday, May 31, and he was buried in Scandinavian Cemetery, near his little grandson, Donald M. Borden, who had died about a year earlier.

Mrs. Rosenquist continued to live in the family home, revered by her grandchildren who fondly referred to her as "Grandma Rose". Almost twelve years after the death of her husband, Agda Lundstedt Rosenquist died April 28, 1942, at the age of 81. On Thursday, April 30, she was laid to rest beside her beloved Andrew.

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