

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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HAZELWOOD, A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE by Hazel Mortimer Hyde

What a magic place! Hazelwood may have been named for the bushy clumps of hazel nut shrubs. It is a place often explored by a Dixon boy named Ronald Reagan. He wrote of Mrs. Charles Walgreen, its owner, for the cover of her 1963 autobiography, NEVER A DULL DAY, "As warm and captivating as its author, there is a little something for everyone, just as there has been a great deal of something for all who have been so fortunate as to cross her path."

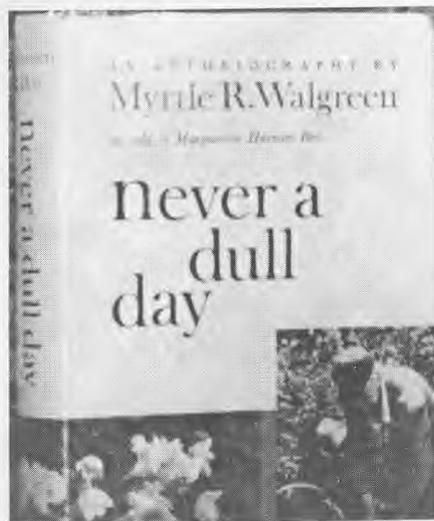
Fortunate is a fine word for a meeting with Mrs. Myrtle Walgreen. I remember seeing her coming toward me in a motorized golf cart with a camera in her hand on one tour day at Hazelwood. She stopped with a warm smile and pointed at my camera, a German-made Exacta. She had one just like it, only newer. We chatted for several minutes about our shared interest in Photography, and especially of trying to capture nature and flower pictures. We rambled on happily about our fascination with cameras and flower gardening before she excused herself to give attention to some of the younger guests on her unique Rock River estate.

As I wandered into the Lincoln Cabin, I remembered that I hadn't told Myrtle Walgreen that I was a Lincoln collector in a limited way. A person could have visited with this vivacious woman on many different subjects for hours.

In her book, Mrs. Walgreen told about people she had become acquainted with. In 1932 the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Church met at Dixon and someone called to see if the Walgreens could house about seven of the ministers. She wrote, "One man was Charles Goff, later my pas-

Hazel Mortimer Hyde





Cover of Book by
Mrs. Myrtle Walgreen

tor at the Chicago Temple..." By 1963 Dr. Goff had left Court Street Methodist Church, where I had enjoyed his sermons from the choir stalls, beginning in 1936. One of my mother's and my birthday "treats" was to attend services at Chicago Temple, shake hands with Dr. Goff, then eat somewhere and enjoy a White Sox game with our friends Dr. Will and Mabel Medaris. Of Myrtle, Dr. Charles R. Goff wrote, "I have known this amazing woman for more than thirty years and was her pastor for the major part of that time."

Other friends share my reading interests and often point out books I might enjoy. It was Mrs. W. Ashton Johnson (Mabel) who introduced me to MEMOIRS OF A NATURALIST and provided the stimulus that resulted in a slide program on the adventures and life of Herbert L. Stoddard, Rockford's own naturalist. And, NEVER A DULL DAY gives accounts of Myrtle Walgreen's lectures about nature and flowers, with slides. At one time she had sixteen different slide-lecture programs prepared.

Mrs. Walgreen's autobiography was brought to my attention by Mrs. Leo Nelson (Lois), who may have the most important collection of books and data of the Rockford, Winnebago, and Rock River area of any local person. Memories of at least two Hazelwood Garden Walks sprang to mind.

Always with a notebook in my pocket and often with a camera in my hand, I try to capture and relive shining moments and recreate lovely places. The date was Friday, May 18, 1956, almost twenty-five years ago. The Illinois State Historical Society was meeting in Dixon. Some of the pupils at Washington Junior High School had articles published in ILLINOIS HISTORY MAGAZINE, then called the ILLINOIS JUNIOR HISTORIAN. Linda Sandwick and Diane Clark had both won Governor's Awards and Linda's parents had taken the girls and me to Springfield for the ceremonies provided



Persons from Washington Junior High School who travelled to Hazelwood on May 18, 1956. Standing: Janet Fairbanks, Judy Esterbrook, and Linda Sandwick. Seated: Karen Fagerburg and Miss Hazel Mortimer, Head of Social Studies Department.

by Illinois State Historical Society on Friday, May 11th. Linda had also written another essay on an historical subject that had won third place from Rockford Chapter DAR. After some deliberations with the school principal, John Wise, these students were permitted to attend the State Historical Society Meeting and tour of Hazelwood, the Walgreen estate, at the special invitation of Mrs. Myrtle Walgreen, then in her eighties. Mrs. Esterbrook drove, and the pupils who attended were Linda Sandwick, Diane Clark (who was to read her essay), Judy Esterbrook, Karen Fagerburg, Janet Fairbanks, and of course myself as their teacher. We were a lively, excited group as we drove to Hazelwood.

When you get a group of historians together, someone is always sure to start telling the history of the place. It may have been Dr. Leland Carlson, who had been my history professor and sponsor for my local history thesis at Northwestern, who expounded on Hazelwood's history. He was at that time the President of Rockford College. Since I had taught with his sisters Verna and Vivian, we were by this time on the basis of being friends, rather than simply professor and student. Myrtle Walgreen gives a nice resume of the story of this fine estate in NEVER A DULL DAY.

Charles Walgreen, of Walgreen Drug Company, said to his wife early in their marriage, "Myrtle, when we get



Dr. and Mrs. Charles R. Goff on their
Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary

"\$20,000 in the bank we're going to get a place in the country." It was in 1929, when Myrtle was fifty, that he announced his decision to buy a farm. When Charles was fourteen his parents had moved to Dixon and he had liked Dixon. Her description was, "He had his eye on a particular farm on Rock River just outside the town of Dixon, a heavily-wooded tract of some two hundred and fifty acres with a clearing of perhaps a dozen acres at the top of the bluffs from which one looked up and down the river to a ribbon of green meadow and more woodland. Dixon boys had roamed these woods for a hundred years. Once it had been quite a show place of that section of the state but the manor house had long since burned down and only the great old barn, a log cabin, and some minor buildings remained.

Some of the trees in the clearing were magnificent." She continued with the descriptions of enlarging, building, clearing, and planting they had accomplished over the years.

Alexander Charters, commonly called "Governor" Charters, had come to New York from Ireland but was caught in 1837 in the nationwide panic. He had heard of Dixon's Ferry in Illinois. With his family he traveled by sailing vessel to New Orleans, transhipped to steamboat, headed up the Mississippi and up the Rock River. It was a three-mile wagon ride to the six hundred acres, pre-empted for him by his brother Samuel. On this land there was a substantial log cabin. He became a friend of John Dixon whom Indians called Long White Hair. A local sawmill provided the lumber for the mansion he had built. It was he who named the place Hazelwood in memory of Hazelwood Park in his native Belfast. So, there vanished the legend of its being named for the shrub that grew plentifully in the woods.

Among Mr. Charters' famous guests was William Cullen Bryant who wrote of the estate, "From the door...I surveyed a prospect of exceeding beauty. The windings of the river allowed us a view of its waters...and in one direction a high prairie region was seen above the trees that fringed the course of the river..."

Abraham Lincoln's first visit to Hazelwood was in 1832 when he was off to the Black Hawk War as commander of a company of recruits from Clary Grove. He stayed in the log cabin. His second visit was July 17, 1856.

Next owner was Charles H. Hughes, a banker and state senator. In 1905 he entertained fifty-one state senators from many areas for a weekend. Mrs. Hughes' son-in-law, a Mr. Brewster, was the next owner. After his death the estate stood idle.

When it was purchased by Charles Walgreen, he had a house built at the edge of the cliff where the land dropped to river level, and it was fitted into the contour of the land. Putting up buildings and stocking the farm was finally accomplished. It was Myrtle Walgreen who became the gardener.

A visitor to Hazelwood could profitably take along the autobiography. It would be a great experience to stand in springtime, in May, and look in every direction. Then appreciation of all the work, pride, and love that went into the profusion of bloom and vistas of green would all but overwhelm a person. She tells of planting thousands of daffodil bulbs, the gifts of trees or shrubs that were planted, and the occasional removal of some misplaced or storm-damaged tree or shrub. Mrs. Walgreen learned the correct names of the various flowers, trees, and shrubs and became quite an authority on gardening.

Artists have come to Hazelwood to sketch and paint. Some were famous like Frank Dudley, noted for his Dune paintings. Amateurs also got out brush and paint box, camp stool, and easel. Certainly painting in such surroundings must have been a tremendous challenge and inspiration.

My own parents had regularly taken me to many wooded areas and carefully taught me the common names of birds and flowers. It was a real joy to see many wild flowers at

Hazelwood as well as the cultivated flowers such as tree peonies.

"On May 2, 1933," Myrtle Walgreen wrote, "I made a list of wild flowers found in our woods; their names are poetry, their histories are Indian lore, their beauty the elusive stuff of early American dreams.

"Toothwort, purple violet, dog-tooth violet, yellow violet, bellwort, Indian tobacco, anemone, bloodwort, hepatica, buttercup, spring beauty, wake robin, white trillium, wild ginger, Dutchman's breeches, wild phlox, blue bells, blue coshosh, May apple, columbine, shooting star, scilla, squirrel corn.

"I learned their life stories, seeds to seedpod. Within a decade we had no secrets from each other. To be adopted by wild flowers is something like a river for a foster mother."

JOHN BROWN AND HENRY O. BROWN OF ROCKFORD AND ROCKTON

By Margaret Burrows Eldridge

In Rockford Public Library, on the north wall of the Local History and Genealogical Records Room is a framed picture. Very little information is available on the lives of some of these men. A careful research has brought some data on one family represented by Henry O. Brown.

While copying inscriptions from the stones at Rockton Cemetery for Rockford Chapter DAR Genealogical Records Committee, some pieces of the picture emerged. Consulting family records and data on the stones, a bit of local history came to life. Using some of the skills encouraged and developed in the Genealogy Workshop of Rockford Chapter DAR, conducted annually by Mrs. J. Warren Rowland, a chapter of family history has been expanded.

ROCKTON CEMETERY, ROCKTON, ILLINOIS

Rockton Cemetery is located on West Street in Rockton, Illinois. The old section of the cemetery is bordered by a river race on the West side, Rock River on the north side, the railroad tracks on the south side and Grove Street on the east side. The entrance to the new section is located on the west side of West Street.

"Rockton Cemetery:

At the town meeting in the spring of 1857, a committee was appointed to select a site and purchase grounds for a cemetery not to exceed ten acres. Said committee consisted of William Halley, Samuel Talcott, C. C. Smith, Henry Shibley and Joseph G. Veness. The present site was selected and purchased of Wait Talcott at a cost of \$870. The cost of surveying the same by Thomas J.L. Remington, was \$45.91."

Taken from The History of Rockton, by Edson I. Carr.

John Brown, buried in Rockton Cemetery, Rockton,

Illinois, pensioner of War of 1812 (Pension #15,356), served from Madison, New York.

The Bible of John Brown is in the possession of his great, great, great, granddaughter, Mrs. Arvel E. Eldridge, 2302 Harlem Crest Road, Loves Park, Illinois, 61111. A record of Henry O. Brown is contained in the Bible:

"John Brown, I was espoused to my wife
Clarissa Fulsom (Melson?) Oct. 14, 1802
Hiram Brown Sept. 23, 1803
Harlow W. Brown July 30, 1809
Henry O. Brown Aug. 18, 1912"

Hiram Brown, oldest son of John Brown, was found in the 1850 Census in Town of Albany, Green County, Wisconsin. Living with him at this time was brother Harlow W. Brown. Later the town of Afton, Wisconsin, was built on the farm of Hiram Brown.

HENRY O. BROWN

Taken from The History of Rockton, by Edson I. Carr, p. 78

"Henry O. Brown was one the 1842 settlers. He carried on a store here for a number of years, which was located on the Newell corner. He built the brick house as a residence which was subsequently sold to Charles Griffin. He was a member of the Congregational Church and served both as clerk and trustee. He also was interested in school matters and was one of the directors of some time. About 1866, he moved to Rockford and died there.

John Brown, the father of Henry O. Brown, was quite an old man when he settled in Rockton in 1842. He came from Madison, N.Y. and was a pensioner of the war of 1812. He died in Rockton, Sept. 29, 1861.

Mack was elected associate justice in 1849, and held the office as long as he lived. He appointed the first township treasurer of the school fund, and at this time Wait Talcott, Henry O. Brown and William Halley were township trustees." p. 10-11

Obituary from Rockford Newspaper:

Brown-At his residence in this city, February 27, 1875, of typhoid pneumonia, Mr. Henry O. Brown, in his 63rd year. Deceased was born in the town of Madison, N.Y. August 18, 1812. With his family he moved to Beloit, Wis., in the fall of 1840 where he taught school for a time, and subsequently settled at Rockton in this county. In 1856, Mr. Brown entered the service of Talcott, Emerson & Co., when the "Reaper" (Death) "who puts his sickle in the fields of life and mows his thousands." garnered this good man with the others.

That he has gone to that rest which remainth for the-redeemed, none that knew him could doubt. A kind husband and father, as he always has been, his departure leaves sorrowing hearts in his own family whose anguish only the sympathy of friends and the enduring love of the Savior can assume.

Of late years Mr. Brown and his family resided in this city, where he has been known as an upright, Christian Man, and respected by all who knew him. His funeral took

place from his late residence on North West Street, Sunday.

Family Records:

Henry O. Brown born Madison, N.Y. attended Oberlin College in Ohio, where on 19 September, 1838 in Geauga Co., Ohio, he married Miranda Whipple.

Henry O. Brown has two infant children buried in Rockton Cemetery.

1. Edward F. Brown (infant)
2. John E. Brown (infant)
3. Henry Whipple Brown b. 4 Dec. 1841 Afton, Wis.
d. 27 Feb. 1907 Rockford, Ill.
m. Emeline Amelia Hall of
East Dubuque, Ill.
Both buried Greenwood Cemetery Rockford, Illinois.

Henry Whipple Brown, the son of Henry O. served in the Civil War. Served as Private in 72 Ill. Inft. Enlisted 14 Nov. 1864 to serve 1 year. Discharged 23 May 1865 at Springfield, Ill. He was an early pioneer to Nebraska, where he was first elected County Judge of Furnas Co., Nebraska and Justice of the Peace.

Returning to Rockford with his wife and eight of their nine children. He lived there until his death in 1907.

4. Mary M. Brown b. Rockton, Illinois
m. Nelson Smith in Rockford, Ill.
then moved to California

John Brown, father of Henry O. Brown, was the son of John Brown and Hannah Davis both of Somers, Conn. John and Hannah m. 9 Nov 1772.

Grandson of Alexander Brown and Grace Kibbe, both of Somers, Conn. m. 18 April 1745.

Great-grandson of John and Jane Brown
(From Vital Records at State Library in Connecticut)

Hanging in the Local History and Genealogical Records Room of Rockford Public Library, Rockford, Illinois is a picture of Henry O. Brown, the great, great grandfather of Mrs. Arvel Eldridge, who copies the inscriptions from the stones in Rockton Cemetery.

MAN WHO NAMED THE TOWN
(Reprinted from THE ROCKFORD REGISTER-GAZETTE Historical, Biographical, Industrial Edition, December 16, 1904)

How many persons in Rockford know how the city received its name? How many of the present generation ever heard of the man who named it? The purpose of this article is to

answer these questions. The story has been often told, but it will bear repetition.

Rockford was first known as Midway, so called by Germanicus Kent, the founder of the city. This name, which is said to have been proposed by Mrs. Kent, was suggested by the fact that the settlement was about half way from Chicago to Galena. "Midway, Rock River, Jo Daviess County, Illinois, June 17, 1835," is the name and date Mr. Kent gives in a letter to a friend. The law of 1836, which established the state road, referred to "Midway, at the ford on Rock River."

Under date of October 17, 1837, Mr. Kent writes a letter from "Rockford." The settlement was therefore known as Midway from one to three years. It is said "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;" but it is doubtful if the ambitious young community would have become the commercial and education center of the Rock River valley, handicapped by the primitive name of Midway. The original proprietors seem to have early come to this conclusion.

Dr. Josiah C. Goodhue christened the village with a better name. The circumstances are as follows: Daniel S. Haight, Germanicus Kent, William H. Gilman of Belvidere, John P. Chapin and Ebenezer Peck of Chicago, and Stephen



DR. JOSIAH C. GOODHUE.
Who gave the city of Rockford its Name.



EBENEZER PECK.
Present at the conference held in Chicago in the summer of 1835, when name of village was changed from Midway to Rockford.

Edgel, later of St. Louis, met at Dr. Goodhue's office on Lake Street in Chicago, to name the claim, or mill privilege, which they hoped at some time would become a town. "Midway," though an appropriate name, was not in favor. Various names were suggested and rejected, until Dr. Goodhue said: "Why not call it Rockford, from the splendid rock bottom ford on the river there?" The suggestion seemed an inspiration, and was at once unanimously adopted, and from that day to this, Dr. Goodhue has been given the credit of

the present name. The date of this christening is uncertain. Mr. Thurston says it occurred in the summer of 1835; but the statute of January, 1836, still designated it Midway. News traveled slowly, however, in those days; and possibly the solons at Vandalia had not learned of the change.

Dr. Josiah C. Goodhue came to Rockford with his family in 1838. He had attained some distinction before he became a citizen of this county. He was a native of Vermont, was graduated from the school of medicine at Yale, and began practice in St. Thomas, Upper Canada, in 1824. Dr. Goodhue emigrated from Canada to Chicago in 1835, and was thus the first resident physician in that city outside the garrison of Fort Dearborn. When Chicago was incorporated as a city in 1837, Dr. Goodhue was elected the first alderman from the first ward. There were six wards in the city at that time. William B. Ogden was chosen the first mayor in that year. Dr. Goodhue designed the first city seal of Chicago, and it became known as his little baby. He was quite proud of his offspring. The doctor was one of a committee appointed to solicit subscriptions for the first railroad chartered to run from the city, the Galena & Chicago Union.

In his practice Dr. Goodhue was associated with Dr. Daniel Brainerd. Their office was on Lake Street, near the old Tremont house. John Wentworth and Ebenezer Peck were engaged in the practice of law in the same building. Dr. Goodhue was one of the men who drew the act of incorporation for Rush Medical College, and was a member of the first board of trustees.

Dr. Goodhue's first house in Rockford was what was then known as the "ball alley" on the site of Max Hoppe's bottling works. His later home was on the site of the watch factory, and the house was moved away when the factory was built.

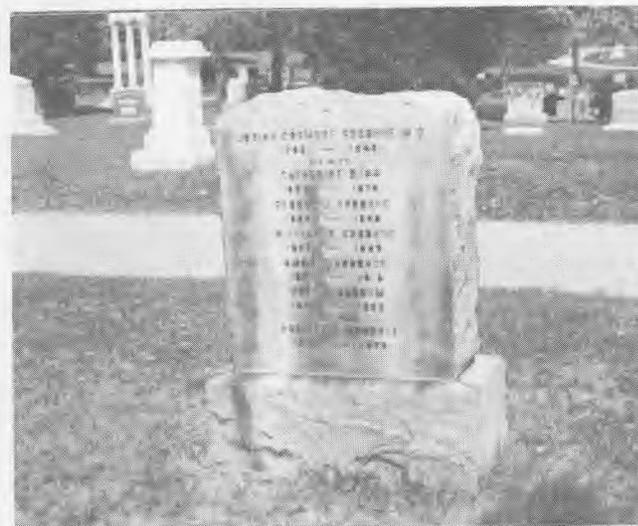
Dr. Goodhue is said to have taken the skull from the body of Big Thunder, the Indian chief, whose resting place was on the court house mound in Belvidere. Big Thunder was a noted character among the Pottawatomies. His name may have been suggested, according to Indian fashion, by his heavy, rolling voice. His burial place was selected on the highest point of ground. No grave was dug. The chief was wrapped in his blankets, and seated on a rude bench, with his feet resting on an Indian rug. His face was turned toward the west, where he expected a great battle to be fought between his tribe and another. A palisade, made of split white ash logs, from which the bark had been peeled, was placed around his body, and covered with bark. The battle which Big Thunder looked for never came; and his war-spirit never re-animated his mouldering clay and joined in the victorious whoop of his braves over their vanquished foes. The Indians, as they passed the coop of their fallen chief, would throw tobacco into his lap, and Simon P. Doty, an early settler, during a torturing tobacco famine, would systematically purloin the weed from Big Thunder. In those days Belvidere was on the stage road from Chicago to Galena and Big Thunder became the prey of relic hunters. His skull found its way by Dr. Goodhue into Rush Medical col-

lege, and it was probably destroyed in the great fire of 1871.

Dr. Goodhue's death was the result of an accident on the night of Dec. 31, 1847. He was called to make a professional call and fell into a well.

Dr. Goodhue was an interesting and eccentric character, and his interesting career is traditional to this day. He was the father of thirteen children. Mrs. Hoyt Barnum of Thomas Street, Rockford, and Mrs. C. F. Holland of Chicago, widow of John A. Holland, are daughters.

Ebenezer Peck, early lawyer, was born in Portland, Maine, May 22, 1805; received an academical education, studied law and was admitted to the bar in Canada in 1827. He was twice elected to the provincial parliament and made king's counsel in 1833; came to Illinois in 1835, settling in Chicago; served in the state senate (1838-40), and in the house (1840-60); was also clerk of the supreme court (1841-45), reporter of supreme court decisions (1849-63), and a member of the constitutional convention of 1869-70. Mr. Peck was an intimate personal friend of Abraham Lincoln by whom he was appointed a member of the court of claims, at Washington, serving until 1875. He died May 25, 1881.



A photo of Dr. Goodhue's monument in Cedar Bluff Cemetery. On the night of December 31, 1847, he was called to visit a member of the Richard Stiles family on West State Street Road. After caring for his patient, he gave a neighbor, Mrs. Stoughton, a ride to her nearby farm in his buggy. He accompanied her to the farmhouse. The night was dark, and when returning to his buggy, he fell into a new well which had not yet been finished and was not covered or enclosed. He was rescued from the well but died a short time later.

TIES WITH THE PRESENT

To Perpetuate the Memory and Spirit of Revolutionary Men and Women---Excerpts from the lives of some early Chapter Regents and their Revolutionary Ancestors.

A Speech by Hazel M. Hyde for Rockford Chapter DAR

Imagine yourself a newcomer in Rockford and a very recent member of several of the most desirable women's organizations. Certain names are mentioned in these groups as founders, presidents, or leaders, and these early persons' names tend to be repeated as outstanding in several groups.

Rockford Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution was fortunate in having a very intelligent group of women who became its charter members. And the first regents were very capable and patriotic women who were dedicated to perpetuating the memory and spirit of the men and women of the American Revolution.

ADELINE ELIZABETH TALCOTT EMERSON, the daughter of Wait Talcott, was the first regent of Rockford Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. She became a charter member of the chapter on the record of her great grandfather William Talcott.

During the summer of 1894, Mrs. Ralph Emerson was instrumental in the formation of the Rockford Chapter, according to the history of the chapter read on the 50th Anniversary occasion. A number of women thought to be eligible for DAR were invited to meet Mrs. Abby Spaulding Brown who spoke about forming a new chapter. By August 1894 the twelve necessary members had their papers and October 23, 1894, saw Rockford Chapter DAR become the fifth chapter in the state with the national number of 102.

The first meeting, however, was called by Mrs. Emerson, October 19th, 1894, and commemorated the surrender of Cornwallis. Meetings were held in members' homes on dates of historic significance. Mrs. Carrie S. Brett, later a regent, was secretary and her minutes gave graphic accounts of early meetings.

On January 3, 1895, Mrs. Ralph Emerson, the regent, entertained eighty prospective members at a reception or tea in her home. August 21, 1980, saw a revival of the membership tea idea with a meeting in Rockford Museum Center and the entire Board at hostesses.

(Continued in next issue)

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