

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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A ROCK RIVER INDUSTRY OF THE EARLY 1900's by Hazel M. Hyde

It was reading Jonathan Raban's 1981 book: Old Glory, An American Voyage that reminded me that I had planned to write about Clams and Clamming. It may set some people humming, "It Was a Real Nice Clambake" from the Musical "Carrousel". In my case it brought to mind a long talk with a man and his wife who were displaying shells. He told about Clamming near Rockton on Rock River. His wife, who writes poetry that is published at times in Rockford Register Star, even promised that she would write an article. He had participated in Clamming while young and described it vividly. The names have disappeared into the limbo of slips of paper carefully placed where they would be easy to find. His collection had shells of many sizes and varieties but the clam shells were the most interesting.

Jonathan Raban's story of his trip alone in a small boat on the Mississippi is fascinating. A stop at Muscatine, Iowa, revealed a recently repainted sign "J and K Pearl Button Company." Raban decided that all in all, Muscatine, appeared to be a nineteenth century river town that was in remarkably good working order. Inquiry confirmed that there were in fact three button factories. Buttons were big in Muscatine. He said he thought to himself, Muscatine had failed "to grasp the basic principles that should have insured its decline. To go on making buttons was to fly impertinently in the face of history. What did these dodos think they were doing?" He goes on to say he didn't find the right moment to "tell people that their town was a hopeless anachronism and should by rights be dead."

"The button factory", this Englishman exploring the Mississippi because he was charmed by Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer's story and wanted to see it all for himself, "was gaunt and stooped; four narrow stories of dripping brick (it was raining) and cross-eyed windows. Inside it was a vertical maze of machinery linked by steep wooden stairways with gangs of women in head scarves doing peculiar things to bits of plastic. It did not, as I had hoped, make buttons of Mississippi clam shells anymore; that had stopped in the 1930's. Nevertheless, the building had managed to keep in touch with its past. Most of what was happening now inside was a simple extension of the old techniques of making pearl buttons from clam shells, and it had stayed in the same German family since it had started.

"The whole process of button making was nicely contained and comprehensible. It started at the bottom of the factory, and rose, machine by machine, to the top. On the first floor, the liquid plastic was poured into an oil drum, mixed with dye and hardener, and slopped into a centrifuge like a big spin-dryer, where it was whirled around until it formed an even, translucent sheet of soft rubbery stuff. It was passed to a machine that punched it into a thousand or

belt into an oven where they were baked hard; then they were cooled and sent on up to the next floor. Here more machines drilled needle holes in them and carved patterns on their fronts and backs. They were polished in a tumbling vat of wooden shoe pegs, and on the top floor they were sorted into cardboard boxes... I would never have guessed that such a quantity of technology and expertise had gone into the making of every button on my shirtfront.

"And that's what you used to do with clams?" I said...

"Yep, Only they did it all by hand then"....

"But how did you manage to stay in business when almost every other button factory on the river has been closed for years?"

"I dunno," he said, "I guess buttons just run in the blood." (End quote)

In making shell buttons, rough blanks are cut from the shells and ground smooth by grindstones. Holes are drilled in the buttons. Then they are polished, sorted, and sewed on cards ready for sale.

Buttons are made in various shapes and sizes and of different materials, depending upon the use for which they are intended. More than 15,000,000,000 buttons are produced each year. The United States makes approximately 80 per cent of this number. Many are made of plastic, mussel shells, glass, vegetable, ivory, and metals.

Curiosity about the clam itself sent me to the encyclopedia and I have paraphrased the knowledge obtained there. A protective shell covers the soft body of the animal we call a clam. The edible animals live on the bottoms of oceans, lakes, and streams in many parts of the world. Tiny water plants and animals called plankton form their food supply. A large organ called a foot is used by the clam to burrow into sand or mud. Their shell is made up of two sections called valves which are fastened together with a ligament that makes a kind of hinge. There are growth lines on the valve showing how the shell was enlarged over a period of time. There is a mantle or fleshy part of the body that secretes the material that makes up the shell. The space between the main body of the clam and the mantle with its shell is called the mantle cavity. The clam has gills that hang into the mantle cavity.

There are several kinds you will meet in the market. Soft-shell clams are popular for steaming fried clams, clam-chowder, and clam broth. Hard-shell clams are called "quahogs" in New England, "clams" in much of the East, or "round clams" or "little necks" in the south. There are three sizes; large "chowder-clams", medium "cherry stones" and small "littlenecks". Pacific-coast clams include the butter, littleneck, razor, and one-and-a-half pound pismos up to giant six pound goeducks.

But to continue with the anatomy of the clam, which for many years was as foreign to me as some exotic tropical fruit, there are two openings at the back end called siphons which allow water filled with food and oxygen to pass into the mantle cavity through the ventral (lower) siphon, and out again through the dorsal (upper) siphon. The clam's

blood circulates through the gills, takes oxygen from the water, and gives off carbon dioxide. Tiny hairs on the gills fan the food particles to a small mouth and into the stomach. The food is digested in the stomach and passes into the intestine where most of it is absorbed. The clam has a heart and blood vessels. Other places in which the blood circulates are called sinuses.

Clams are valuable as food. The Indian name "quahog" is sometimes given to the hard-shell clam. This clam was used as wampum (money) by the Indians.

Born in Kansas and spending my early years in the middle west, sea foods were not a regular part of our diet. I had never seen steamed clams until we took a trip to Seattle. We went across the bay to a salmon bake and it was great fun to see the out-door baking ovens. Before we went inside to eat the salmon dinner, we were served steamed clams in broth. I managed to eat the clams, clumsily getting them out of the shells. But I didn't know whether you were supposed to eat that liquid or not, so I poured it into a clump of grass.

Steamed Clams. Use about 1 quart soft-shell clams in shell per person. Scrub under running cold water until free of sand. Place in large kettle with a half cup boiling water for each four quarts of clams. Cover; steam until shells just open. Heap clams in each soup dish. Serve with individual paper cups or custard cups of melted butter or margarine with a little lemon juice added. Strain hot broth from kettle through fine cheesecloth; serve in cups with thin slice of lemon floating on top of each. Guests shell each clam, dip into broth, then into butter. Provide paper napkins or bibs.

Similar to the clam is the mussel, an animal that also lives in water. Its body is covered with a protective shell made up of two similar pieces called valves. The valves are joined at one point by a hinge, and can be opened and shut. Freshwater mussels live in streams and lakes. When I was a child, I used to collect fresh water mussel shells. Once I made a frame and attached shells to it to surround a picture. Sea mussels live in salt water.

Fresh water mussels are a valuable source of mother-of-pearl, which lines the inside of their shells. Mother-of-pearl is used to make pearl buttons.

Dan Shiaras wrote an interesting article for the Sunday Register-Star, in January of 1982, on "Clamming". It contained his memories of fishing for the perfect pearl on the Rock River during the early 1900's. He stated that the Rock River pearl was considered by pearl experts to be the most beautiful pearl in the United States. A gentleman from Dixon had claimed he saw Rock River pearls on display in the downtown showroom windows of Tiffany's. A Rockford pearl buyer is reputed to have given a Dixon man \$1,200 for a Rock River pearl. A 16-grain pearl find would bring \$400 and that was enough money at that time to buy a Model-T Ford.

The clams sold as shells rose in price from \$11.00 a ton in 1909 to \$40.00 three years later and more than \$90.00 a ton in 1929. This gave incentive to many young men to build 24-foot long, six-foot wide boats, along with cookers;

and sorting boards necessary to harvest the crop of clams found at the bottom of Rock River. Dan Shiaras went clamming with his grandfather for the first time when he was seven years old. Clam beds were found near Grand Detour.

The cooker was round and made of staves of tongue and grooved wood, with a wooden lid. The bottom was a circular piece of tin. The entire cooker sat on bricks. Clams would steam for about thirty minutes. They they were forked out on a sorting board. In sorting you felt the lip of the shell for a possible pearl, then twisted out the clam meat. The clam meat was put into a large bucket and saved for hog feed. The empty shells were put into a pile to get ready for sale.

A great thrill for Shiaras was when he found a large pearl in a big blueridge clam. It was probably beginner's luck but he began to dream of finding another pearl and how he would spend the money, perhaps he would buy a motor boat. Six days later a pearl buyer from Rockford examined the pearl. His name was Fred Lawrence and he said the pearl was 135 grains and still perfect so he bid \$3,600.00 for it. Dan didn't hesitate in accepting and his hand was shaking as the buyer counted out \$100.00 bills for his pearl. Mr. Lawrence gave him a ride in his Cadillac to the Dixon National Bank.

Dan and his grandfather had accumulated a 90-ton pile of shells. Buyers from several button companies made offers but they settled with Iowa City Pearl and Button Company for \$100.00, the highest price paid for shells in the clamming history. Clamming was done from April until cold weather. The best years were 1909 to 1929 and then the large clam beds disappeared.

The button factories closed in Iowa. He says there is still clamming along the Wisconsin River, near Prairie du Chien. The shells are sent to Tennessee for processing and shipping to Japan.

Is it possible clams would ever again find a home in Rock River?

ARBOR DAY BROUGHT THOUGHTS OF MAUH-NAH-TEE-SEE
By Hazel M. Hyde

When I came to Rockford in 1936, my ear caught the sounds of many Indian place names. Coming from an area where my parents had repeatedly taken me fishing and hunting, so that every stream, whether creek or river, every lake and mound was familiar, it was not strange that I began to search out these places and try to learn their history or the stories connected with them. We started having picnics in forest preserves like Kishwaukee and parks.

Sinnissippi Park with its lovely sunken garden bordered Rock River and it took its name from the Indian word meaning "Clear Flowing". It was the name given to Rock River, which has many serene and beautiful stretches of quietly flowing water.

Pupils in history classes soon began to bring in stories about the first settlers, Germanicus Kent and Thatcher Blanke, accompanied by Lewis Lemon, a black man. The stories of how the Rock River was forded in early days were a good start. The Winnebago Indians of the area had used that ford for many years. There was a street named Winnebago.

Soon classes had discussed the ferry operated by Germanicus Kent and the building of bridges. The tales of the white men who came to trade with the Indians were exciting. Many young people didn't know about Stephen Mack and his Potawatomie princess wife, Hononegah. They could not imagine an Indian encampment at Bird Grove.

Kishwaukee River and Kishwaukee Forest Preserve to be known by the Indian word "keesh-a-wock-quai" which meant "sycamore tree". (See: Virgil J. Vogel: Indian Place Names in Illinois, 1963.) Both Sauk and Potawatomi Indians used the same word for the sycamore tree.

One of the most outstanding reports (See: NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Vol. III, No. 6, September-October 1966, pp. 5-7, was given by Craig Herold. He reported orally and wrote more briefly afterward, "The land on which our house stands and the land around it was originally given to Simon Lecquier, the child of Mauh-Nah-Tee-See, by the United States government. This was on August 1, 1829. Along with the land came a provision which stated that the land could not be sold without the permission of the President of the United States.

"Eleven years later," Craig wrote, "in 1840, Lecquier did sell the land to Daniel Whitney for \$800.00. On August 4, 1840, the sale was approved by President Martin VanBuren ..." Using his parents abstract to their property, he traced the ownership of the land.

In an article entitled "First Deed Entered on Record in Winnebago County" (See NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Vol. VII, No. 5, September-October 1970, pp. 1-2, by Hazel M. Hyde), Catherine Myott, a woman of Indian extraction, conveyed land to Nicholas Boilvin for a sum of \$800.00. Here is a partial quote: "...land which was granted to me by the fifth article of the treaty between the United States and the Winnebago Nation of Indians, made and concluded at Prairie du Chien, on the first day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine (the other sections granted to me having been sold to Henry Gratiot)...."

Catherine Myott, from whom Myott street is named, signed with an X, her mark. It was witnessed by G.W. Dole and Thomas Hartzell. She mentioned friend and relative in speaking of Boilvin.

Attorney L.C. Miller wrote an article, a copy of which was given to me by Mrs. Leo Nelson (Lois), now deceased, after she read my articles about early Winnebago Indians. It was entitled "Mauh-Nah-Tee-See". Mr. Miller's wife, Maida, also had an interest in local history. Some of my information was gleaned from that source.

Winnebago Indians were related to the Sioux. Their

language resembled that of the Sioux in many ways. The area along Rock River would be inviting to Indians who hunted the buffalo, caught fish, and raised corn and squash. One of their important tribal ceremonies was the Medicine Dance. They were friendly to most nearby tribes. Clement V. Burns ("Clem") wrote August 10, 1970, NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Special Tour Issue, pp. 5, "at a point one-half mile past the Trask Bridge is a spot just south of the highway where Burritt, Pecatonica, Durand, and Harrison Townships corner; and just west is the site of a race track of early days, ball diamond, etc.; and across the highway in a grove of trees is the site of Indian encampments for several years after the tribes had migrated northward from Illinois but returned here to made medicine in the land of their fathers."

Attorney Miller wrote, "Mauh-Nah-See" was an attractive and friendly Indian princess. She was of the Winnebago tribe which encamped and roamed the prairies and woodlands in the Rock River and Wisconsin River valleys in Southern Wisconsin, from the encampment of Chief Black Hawk on Rock River, just north of Moline, Illinois, to Green Bay, Wisconsin."

The Mauh-Nah-See Country Club, named for this lovely woman, was the scene on Arbor Day of a gathering of the participants in the Rockford Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution Ceremony of a tree planting in Sissippi Park. A fine, sturdy eight-foot red oak was planted in honor of retiring State Regent of DAR Mrs. Albert Triebel, Jr. In the interlude before going to the park we discussed the name of this beautiful country club.

At Portage, Wisconsin, the Winnebago Indian princess met Mr. Myott, a Frenchman. He had married the Indian mother of Catherine Myott, after whom Myott Avenue in Rockford was named.

Simon Lecuer, A Frenchman who was in the fur trade with John Jacob Astor, married Mauh-Nah-See. As many abstracts attest she and later her son owned most of the land now known as South Rockford. She went with Simon Lecuer to live in the Kent Creek Valley. Myott and his wife Catherine lived in Spring Creek Valley.

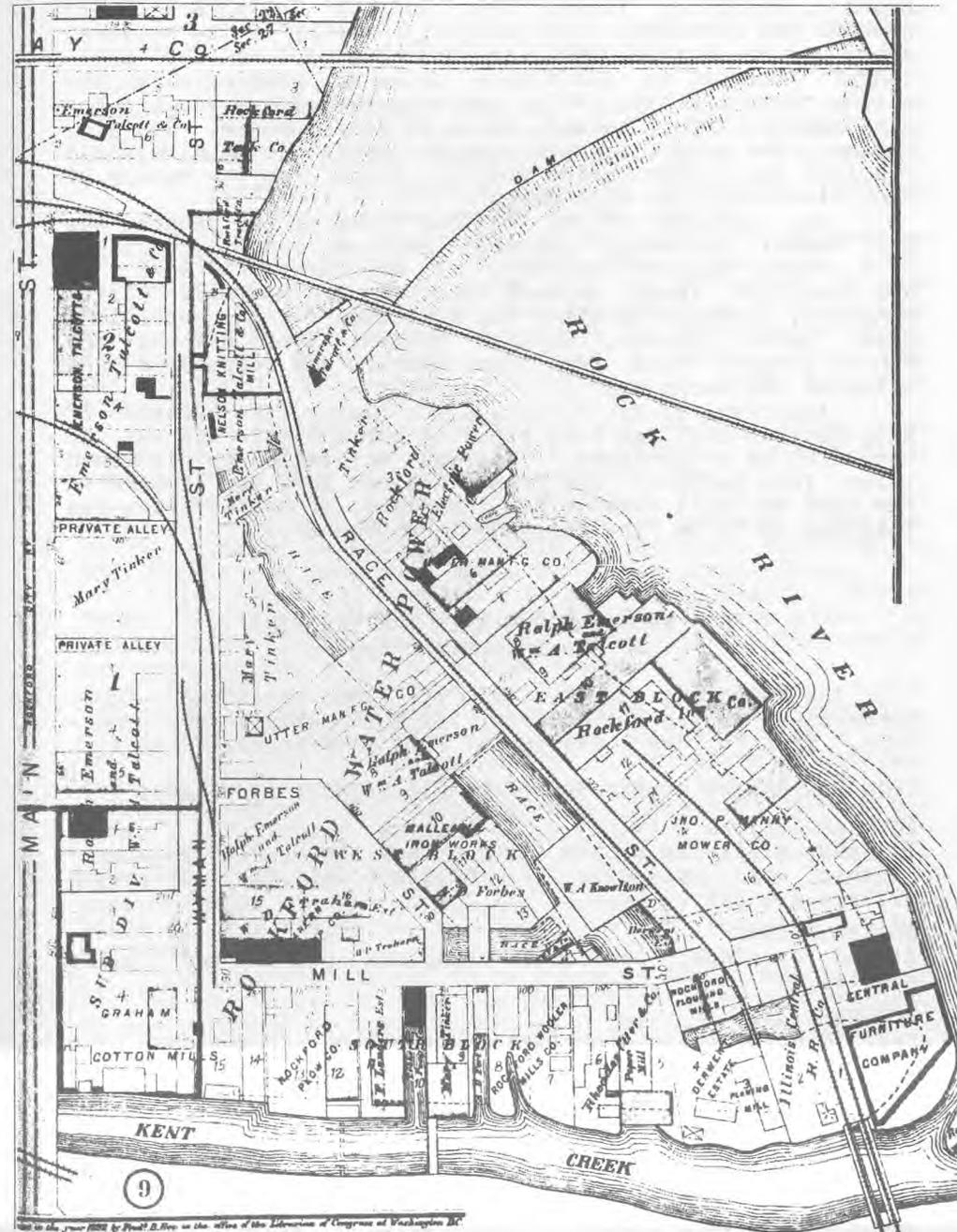
Black Hawk helped to secure land from the government for Mauh-Nah-See's children, Therese, Simon, and James. The land lay south of School Street and West of Rockton Avenue, including the valleys of both branches of Kent Creek.

Mauh-Nah-See migrated north with the Winnebago tribe, with a sad farewell to her children and the lush wooded area along Rock River. Simon, her son, owned the land upon which Germanicus Kent and Thatcher Blake founded the city of Rockford.

Another village called Winnebago was platted by Nicholas Boilvin on the 637 acres west of the river belonging to Catherine Myott. Thus the Indians played a part in the legends and facts concerning the early beginnings of Rockford.

Catherine Myott was also helped by Black Hawk in securing the tract of land a mile wide, lying along Auburn

This map shows part of the land that at one time was owned by "Simeon Lecier" child of Mauh-Nah-See (a Winnebago Indian Woman). In Tinker Topics #1 we gave some information in regard to this property. Note how many of these tracts of land were at one time owned by Mary Manny Tinker.



Map of the year 1858 by Fred B. Rose in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington DC.

Street and Spring Creek Road, from Parkview Avenue on the east side of Rock River to Huffman Boulevard, west of the river. North Second Street Road was known as Indian Trail.

No Indian visitors attended the ceremony in Sinnissippi Park, at the left of the Park Administration Building. Mrs. Frank B. Morrison, former first lady of Nebraska when her husband was governor, and presently Member of the National Arbor Day Foundation, give an Arbor Day speech. She challenged Rockford to plant more trees in keeping with the title "forest City". While she sketched with words the beginnings of Arbor Day and spoke of its founder, Sterling Morton, the over a hundred people seated in chairs could overlook the former Indian Trail. Below ran the waters of Rock River with its wild ducks.

The organizer of the various items of the program was Mrs. Wendell Galloway, formerly Barbara Bennett, daughter of a former mayor of Rockford. It was due to the work of her committee (Mmes. Raymond Aten, Thomas Horrall, Milton Mahlburg, Lawrence Wendland and hostesses for the reception; Mmes. James Johnson, Maynard Bender, Albert Coxhead and Mahlon Linder) that Park Board members had cooperated and attended the ceremony.

According to Mr. Miller, Simon Lecuer, the husband of Mauh-Nah-Tee-See, was very proud of her and said she was as beautiful as a gooddess. She was enthralled by his French tales from Europe. Her French husband took her aboard a fur boat to sail away to his homeland. Mauh-Nah-Tee-See imagined it to be "The Happy Hunting Ground".

IN ROCKFORD THE ARTS ARE THRIVING BY Hazel Mortimer Hyde

The Museum is yours...Claim it! Thus reads one flyer concerning Burpee Art Gallery, 737 North Main Street, Rockford. Then follows a listing of some advantages (quote)!

JOIN BURPEE ART MUSEUM TODAY AND CLAIM THESE PRIVILEGES...

FREE ADMISSIONS

You may visit the museum free at any time. With your membership card, you gain free admission into the Greenwich Village Art Fair.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Attend openings, previews, champagne picnic and family parties.

LECTURES

Hear distinguished scholars and speakers from around the world discussing topics from art history to watercolor techniques.

TRAVEL

Receive reduced rates for museum-sponsored excursions.

MAILINGS

Remain informed through free copies of the Burpee Art Museum catalog and free quarterly newsletters. Use the discount

on subscription rate to ART IN AMERICA.

LIBRARY

Study, research or just browse through periodicals and books in the museum library.

MUSEUM SHOP

Find the extraordinary in the Museum Shop and receive discounts on all museum gift shop purchases.

MUSEUM CLASSES

Receive reduced tuition fees for Burpee Art Museum art classes. Instruction is offered to both children and adults using the unique resource of the museum environment.

A portfolio of printed material containing pictures was placed at my disposal by Mr. Martin DeWitt.

Heritage Walk was a part of the Rockford celebration of National Historical Preservation Week, May 9-15, 1982. Participation came in the form of a newly created, 30 page booklet. This self-guided tour was intended to focus upon some of the major historic structures in downtown Rockford. Complete with photographs, the book provides architectural and historic information significant to each structure identified.

Urban Playground groups from all over Rockford came to the Art Gallery in June for a workshop. Some of their murals can be seen in certain places downtown.

Docents are trained to properly explain the art treasures to visitors and groups from the schools. "Museum-in-the-Schools" workshops are held to introduce teachers to the educational program. There are Young Artist Shows.

To mention all donations is an impossibility. Wooden Touch Studio designed and crafted a display case given by Miss Maureen Fisher to house the Paperweight Collection of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Fisher.

George J. Robertson's, "View on Kent Creek, "1849, oil on canvas was the gift of Mrs. Ralph C. Root. Hobnella, Gay's Shepherd Week, 1783, by James Northcote, was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton R. Gaylord. "Priestess of Madagascar", 1914, oil on board by Hovsep, was the gift of Mrs. George E. Roper. This painting moved me deeply, perhaps because I am studying Chinese brush painting, but mostly because of the enigmatic quality of the Oriental personality which comes across strongly. Pushman went to China to steep himself in the color and mystery of the Orient. In Paris he was trained in the tradition of Romantic-Realism. He lived 1877-1965.

"Rediscovery" Gallery Guide concerns the permanent collection at Burpee and its re-evaluation after restoration. It was prepared by Tracy Winkler and Patricia Schueller.

In 1834, George S. Haskell obtained 146 acres of land, part of which the museum stands on, from the government for \$182.16. Mr. Haskell sold the lot to Seth E. Whitman, who in turn sold the land to New Yorker, John S. Coleman in 1850. Coleman, a banker, erected his house in 1852.

Burpee Art Museum, you read in one or more of the folders, is located on North Main Street. Constructed by

local craftsmen in native timber and limestone, the Italianate villa is ideally situated in a park-like setting along the west bank overlooking the scenic Rock River. The building itself has eighteen inch limestone walls which provide a solid foundation for the structure.

In 1864 the Rockford industrialist John P. Manny purchased the house and property from its original owner John S. Coleman for \$15,000. Colonel William Nelson became the owner of the estate in 1890, and remained so until 1935 when Harry Burpee purchased the house and land for \$20,000.

Harry and Della Burpee had decided to provide for an art gallery in their will. When the opportunity for preserving this beautiful property and utilizing it for the nucleus of a gallery presented itself, they acted. They created a trust fund for the maintenance of the property. Remodeling the building into an art museum began in early 1936.

When the remodeling was finished in March, 1936, the first exhibit was by Dale Nichols, a rather well-known Chicago artist of that day.

Paintings from the past, acquired in the early days become historical documents. The history of the development of art in the United States is delineated in the film presentation used for lectures about the museum. But also the history of the growth of culture and art appreciation in Rockford shows a step by step progression.

Brief articles about Burpee Art Museum (with pictures) appeared in NUGGETS OF HISTORY: Vol. VI No. 6, Nov.-Dec., 1969 p. 1 "A Costly House" and was a reprint from 1890 Rockford Daily Register and it tells of Will Nelson buying the John P. Manny Homestead: Vol. XI No. 2 March-April, 1974, tells of the home being built by John S. Coleman about 1852 and later purchased by John P. Manny.

The Director/Curator of Burpee Art Museum/Rockford Art Museum is young, personable, and enthusiastic about his job. He has an extensive background in art and art history. With a group of artists he can discuss composition, color, form, techniques if they desire. With the historic-minded, he can speak of the various periods of painting as primitive, renaissance, impressionistic, and others. Mr. DeWitt has a Master of Fine Arts degree from Illinois Normal University. He has studied in New York and Brooklyn Museum under a Beckman Fellowship in Painting. He also is an artist and has had many exhibits. He can trace our local history as shown by the acquisition of art treasures. He came back to us from New York. He had previously served from January 1980 to October 1981 in Rockford and he resumed his work here in April 1982.

Mr. Martin DeWitt bends his material to suit the interest of the group he is addressing. Hours have been spent in taking slides that will pique the interest of different groups with varying tastes. When speaking before a Literature and Arts Department of Rockford Womans' Club, he pulled out all the stops to praise the efforts of those women who established Rockford Womans' Club. We were sitting in Belle Keith Art Gallery while he spoke of the foresight in 10



Hazel M. Hyde



Mrs. Leslie Geddes (Mildred) who participated in Adopt-A-Picture program



Martin DeWitt

making that room a place to exhibit local artists' works. He showed a slide of a Belle Keith painting and indicated a painting of hers belonging to the Womans' Club. "Home Views", 1892, oil on canvas, is one of the works of Belle Emerson Keith (1865-1950) and was a gift of Mrs. E.P. Lathrop. Mrs. Keith had studied in Europe and in Boston with Edmund Tarbell and John Singer Sargent. She was the first president of Rockford Art Association. His enthusiasm about the early collections of paintings donated to Burpee Art Gallery was only a trifle greater than his commendation of the exhibits of five paintings by notable painters in that very room.

Pictures on the screen showed such paintings as Rudolph Ingerle's "Salt of the Earth" given to Burpee Art Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Geddes. It has recently been restored through the Museum's "Adopt-A-Painting" Program by Mrs. Geddes. Why must paintings be restored? Due to lack of temperature control, pictures expand with heat and contract with cold. Storage space has not been adequate to prevent a type of mold to form on some paintings. Dust and age have dulled the colors of some of the permanent holdings. Without restoration their value is almost non-existent. With careful, expert attention some of these paintings have been re-appraised at many thousands of dollars.

Martin DeWitt has given attention to arousing interest in obtaining the services of a skilled conservator. Faye Wrubel, of Chicago tests a small area of the surface to determine what solution and the exact strength to be used in this work. The restored work shines again as when new.

With some surprise, we saw how competently used his slides to delineate the historic development of paintings that show the development of our country. He had been assigned the topic, "Fostering Patriotism Through Art" by the chairman of the American Heritage Group of Rockford Chapter

Daughter of the American Revolution. Starting with the reasons an artist choses to create he listed: for self expression, for understanding of his own urges and desires, and for communication. He then proceeded to show step by step with the use of pertinent slides our artistic development alongside our historic changes and events.

Looking around at the Heritage Group, a person could see that while the number present was small, each one was a person with special interest in restoration as concerned Rockford or the dispensing of knowledge concerning Rockford History. There was the associate editor of NUGGETS OF HISTORY, the historian of Rockford Chapter DAR whose primary concern is the marking of historic houses and places, a dues-paying member of Restoration-Education Group, and others who were intensely interested. These were the same people who accepted the open invitation to Burpee Art Gallery of Restoration Education when they honored the members of the Commission that decides which places shall be placed on the State Historical Register. Voting was just beginning and those slides were most enlightening. It gives a greater depth to understanding what elements of architecture, age, historic significance must be considered.

Culture came to Rockford through the foresight of its very early families. They built elegant homes and many of them lived in a gracious manner. They treasured art, music, and other things of the good life. Harry and Della Burpee deserve our gratitude for providing the community with an excellent museum for displaying works of art and for preserving an example of the architecture of Rockford's early days. Periodically there are rumors of tearing down this beautiful and historic building in order to have more modern facilities. The setting of the museum with its spacious grounds is beautiful and the panoramic view of Rock River is a definite bonus. Early families that had become affluent purchased and donated fine paintings. Important exhibits were brought to Rockford and people were privileged to view these, earlier in Belle Keith Art Gallery of Rockford Woman's Club and in later years at Burpee Art Gallery. The arts give a decided uplift to the human spirit. Fortunate is the community where the arts are cherished.

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