

Nuggets of History

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PORTRAIT ARTIST: A WOMAN OF MYSTERY by Hazel M. Hyde

Mystery surrounds much of the work of Mary Carolyn Vaughn, portrait artist in Illinois, mostly along Rock River and near Rockford and Oregon. She was known as Carrie Vaughn but she frequently left her portraits unsigned. She was born September 23, 1838, in Cleveland, Ohio, and possibly died in Winsted, Connecticut about 1891. She never married and after living in Rockford during her youth with her father, Edward Vaughn (1813-1875), and her step-mother, Mary E. (Lewis) Vaughn (1820-1904), she supported herself by her paintings. Her surviving sketch book shows also enchanting views of Rock River and delicate paintings from nature.

An article printed in Kansas City was a eulogy on the life of a respected deceased citizen, Edward Vaughn, about 1879. He had died several years prior to the article which stated he was a time keeper for Ramsey, Millert & Hudson. He had aided in founding the Congregational Church of Kansas City. A portrait by his daughter, Carrie Vaughn, formerly of Chicago, had been placed in Findlays' Art Gallery. One quote, "It is safe to say that as a portrait painter Miss Vaughn has no superior in the West." It spoke of her "most creditable reputation as a portrait painter."

Photographs of Mary Carolyn Vaughn (Carrie) were taken by G. W. Barnes of Rockford, Illinois, and by McPherson Brothers, Photographers, located about 1890 at 307-309 West State Street, Rockford, Illinois. Her great niece has shown interest in learning about these early photographers, since she is engaged in photography as a fine art. Diana Keller lives at 1738 Walnut Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55113. She is presently studying advanced courses connected with photography at the Univeristy of Minnesota.

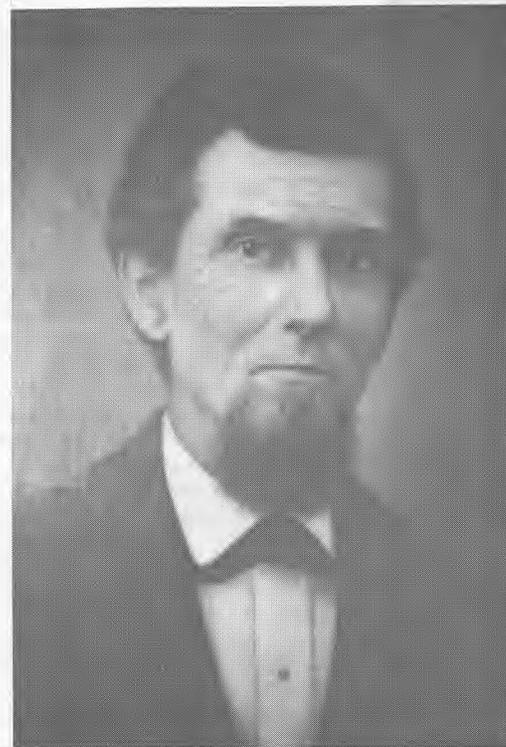
It was a bit unusual for a woman to earn her livelihood as an artist in the 1870's and 1890's. Also most single women were not likely to travel widely. Carrie Vaughn was known in the Oregon to Rockford area as a portrait painter. She usually stayed with the family when one or more paintings were required. This not only gave opportunity for observing and making preliminary sketches of the persons whose portraits were to be painted, but also supplemented her income with room and board for a period of time. Her flower and nature paintings were done in Florida as well as along Rock River and around Rockford.

Since Mary Carolyn's step-sister Etta Mason Vaughn was born in Rockford, Diane assumes that this woman-artist spent her young adult years in Rockford. Among the many portraits still in existence are the portraits of her father and her step-mother, which are in the researcher's parents' home in Los Angeles.



Browsing through Mary Carolyn's photography album, it seems possible some Rockford or Oregon residents can identify some of the people. The only one with an identifying note is Major Adam Nase, painted in 1881, who according to The Civil War Dictionary by Boatner, served as a Union Officer in Illinois. This same book mentions Colonel Benjamin Franklin Sheets, whom she painted in 1871, as having served in Illinois. Rockford telephone directory lists only one Nase surname in 1986. A letter from Brice Sheets, former president of Rockford Historical Society, identified Col. Sheets as his great-grandfather.

Since Carrie lived for a time in Chicago, some of the portraits might have been of Chicago residents. The Chicago Historical Society suggested Hill, Petrie, and Stiles might have been from old Chicago families. Some other names include David Strong, Charlie Freeman, Frank and Myrtle Scott, Maude Muller, Harry Farwell, Thomas Potwin, Judge Munson, Carrie Patrick, many others



Edward Vaughn (1813-1875)
Father of Carrie Vaughn.
Portrait painted in 1879.

and in October 1876 Retouched Eagle's Nest. In 1885 she painted Little Ruth Talcott and Little Dennie Talcott. Surely some of these many portraits still exist in some attics or among a family's portraits. Some older people tell that there was an actual eagle's nest in the area now known as Lowden Park, along Rock River.

Deacon David Lewis' obituary, February 25, 1884, stated that he had moved to a wild prairie farm, near present Rockford, when he was 50 years of age, c 1884, from the state of Massachusetts and lived for about twenty years in this area. His daughter was Mary E. Lewis.

Carrie's natural mother, Carolyn D. Dean Vaughn, was born Pompey, New York, January 6, 1816, and died in Brooklyn, Ohio, March 22, 1839. She had married Edward Vaughn in Brunswick, Ohio, August 29, 1837. The artist daughter Mary Carolyn Vaughn (Carrie), was born Cleveland, Ohio, September 23, 1838, and died Winsted, Connecticut, in the 1890's. Little Carrie secured a step-mother when the father married Mary E. Lewis at Buron, on December 9, 1841.

Step-brother Charles Edward Vaughn was born Shullsburg, Wisconsin, May 16, 1843, and died in San Diego, California, September 16, 1922. He was the great-grandfather of Diane Keller, the photographer-writer who is exploring Carrie's life and art. She hopes to find and photograph some of Carrie's paintings. This step-brother was a drummer in



Mary E. (Lewis) Vaughn
(1820-1903), step-mother
of Carrie Vaughn. Por-
trait painted in 1872.

the War Between the States and his drumsticks are preserved in Los Angeles.

Also there is a step-sister, Etta M. Clinton Vaughn, born in Rockford, August 16, 1853, and died in San Diego, December 24, 1947. Carrie would have been about fifteen at the time Etta was born in Rockford.

The keeping of journals or diaries was much practiced in the 1870's and for some years later. A diary of Charles Edward Vaughn mentioned: June 20, 1872, Carrie arrived from Rockford, Illinois; June 20, 1872 Carrie and self went to Kansas City and called at Mr. Lewis' and Mr. Benghaus'; September 7, 1872, Mother, Carrie, Etta, and self took supper and spent the evening at Sam Hudson's; September 17 1872 Carrie went to Kansas City; October 13, 1872 Carrie and self attended Mr. Irving's Church in forenoon; October 15, 1872 Carrie made choice of lots in Jarboe's Addition; October 17, 1872 Grandfather and Grandmother Lewis arrived from Hale, Ogle County, Illinois; November 8 Carrie left for Oregon, Illinois; May 25, 1878 Villa received letter from Sister Carrie, Oregon, Illinois; January 1, 1880 Received letter from Sister Carrie, Winsted, Connecticut. The last entry in diary was dated October 28, 1880.

A letter from Landmarks Commission of Kansas City gave Carrie Vaughn, Artist, residence in Kansas City, Missouri, as 1324 Madison in 1882 and 1883 and Mary Vaugh, widow of Edward, as 1824 Madison in 1883. In 1884

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both were listed at 1820 Madison but in 1885 only Mary Vaughn was listed in Kansas City. Thus according to chief researcher Sherry Piland, Carrie's residency was confined to 1882-1884 in Kansas City. Carrie's ledger ended in 1885. Her sketchbook contains sketches done in Florida in 1886. She is believed to have died at about age 50 which would suggest death about 1888 or 1890.

Lowden's Park, which probably was the site of an eagle's nest many years ago, also has a spring which was made famous by a poem written by Margaret Fuller, who visited the area and wrote the poem "Ganymede". The name comes from a Greek legend and refers to a beautiful youth, the son of Tros, king of Troy. Zeus carried him off to Olympus to succeed Hebe as cupbearer to the gods. Bertel Thorvaldsen used the same tale to make a statue of Ganymede with Roman god Jupiter's eagle. The spring was called by this legendary name.

The Eagle's Nest Colony, located in Lowden's State Park, and noted as an artists' studio for many years, has intrigued many people. Sometimes when we have had a Sunday dinner at Maxon's Manor, near Oregon, Illinois, we decide to take a run-through the Lowden park and walk over to Lorado Taft's Blackhawk statue, which overlooks the river and the valley. The winding drive leads to the statue and a nice parking area. The view of Rock River from that point is fascinating. As we pass the building associated with the art classes from Northern Illinois University for years we have often wondered about the people who have come there to paint over several decades. More recently the Northern Illinois University has used the buildings and area for Outdoor Education Classes. I sat next to a friend at dinner recently who had taken the course in Outdoor Education. She described the beautiful dining room they used and which overlooks the panorama.

In 1898 a group of Chicago artists gathered in what is now Lowden State Park. They formed an association and rented a ten-acre plot from Wallace Heckman on a portion of his estate that overlooked Rock River. Charter members listed in Historic Illinois, August, 1984 included Sculptor Lorado Taft, artists Charles Francis Brown (Taft's brother-in-law), Ralph Clarkson, and Henry B. Fuller, writers Harlin Garland and Horace Spencer Fiske, architects Irving K. and Allen B. Pond, composer Charles Dickinson and J. Spencer Dickerson, secretary of the University of Chicago and editor of the Baptist magazine, The Standard. All were associated professionally with either the Chicago Art Institute or the Art Department of the University of Chicago.

The first summer at Eagle's Nest families pitched tents. Only a modest kitchen was constructed for preparing meals, and it was replaced three years later by a larger kitchen and dining room--the Camp House. Cottages of limestone and wood sprang up, and families retired to their summer homes at the end of the day. Taft and Clarkson had studios there, and because he stayed at camp sometimes through November, Taft's house was the only one with a

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furnace.

Though some of the Eagle's Nest artists worked during the summers (a number of their paintings can be found today in Oregon homes), others devoted themselves to play. "Anyone interested or connected with the arts who happened to be in or near Chicago sooner or later turned up for a weekend," later wrote Elizabeth Dickerson, one of the camp children.

Evelyn R. Moore wrote the article in Historic Illinois and she continued: Although many of the camp structures survive today (1984) (although altered), none are as dramatic as the colossal Indian statue that stands two hundred feet above the Rock River. Lorado Taft contemplated the statue for some time before finding someone to execute it--John Prashun, a sculptor and experienced civil engineer. Some claim the first six foot model was the image of Hamlin Garland. The pose, an Indian with arms folded, was one Taft had often struck as he rested on the bluff. Others including the Sauk and Fox Indians who had gathered there, had done likewise, he thought. Taft did not call the statue "Blackhawk" though that quickly became its popular name. It was unveiled in 1911.

In 1945 a surrounding two hundred acre plot became Lowden State Park, a memorial to Oregon native Frank Lowden, former governor of Illinois. Six years later sixty-six of those acres, including the former camp, were transferred to Northern Illinois University for use as an outdoor education center. She concludes with these words "But the beauty that inspired him (Taft) and other Chicago artists continues to impress visitors who look out over the Rock River near Oregon."

This story is the direct result of a request for some sources of information sent to me as corresponding secretary of Rockford Historical Society. In the upcoming summer Diana Keller plans to come to this area and try to find some of the paintings done by her relative. Most of the people who love beauty plan to take Highway 2 known as the River Road in summer to see the winding Rock River and the forested areas, then again in the fall when the colors are luminous and bright.

THE HISTORY OF COUNTRY SCHOOLS by Mary LaRuffa and Melissa Wilhelm

The first schools were held in cabins of settlers. The pupils were taught by "wandering teachers whose educational qualifications were the completion of the eighth grade".

Public education in Illinois began when the Land Ordinance of 1785 saved the sixteenth section of every township for schools. In 1825 a law providing free public schooling was passed, and in February, 1855, another school law was passed making it mandatory that communities provide free public schools.

The early schools had no guaranteed salaries for the teachers. They were paid at the end of each month. Their compensation depended upon the income of the students' parents. Some students paid a dollar; others paid two dollars or more per month. The teachers were also compensated with produce, firewood, room and board. Later, school directors were organized to employ the teachers, and salaries were guaranteed. In 1913 Miss Mamie Hogan, the teacher at the Old Stone School near Byron, Illinois, signed a contract paying her thirty-five dollars per month.

The school year had two terms. The summer term lasted from June to August, and the winter term was from November to early March. This arrangement was necessary as the older children were needed at home for planting and harvesting the crop.

Discipline in the schools was often harsh. The children were frequently punished with a ferrule (birch stick used as a whip). Other naughty children had yokes put over their heads and were forced to stand in front of the class. If a pupil failed his lesson, he had to sit on a stool and wear a cone-shaped hat with "dunce" written across it.

Unlike today, a student did not wait for the beginning of a semester or school year to begin school. As soon as a child became six years of age he would begin, even if the school term had begun.

Children shared in the chores. A boy was given the job of fire tender and floor sweeper. He came early in the morning with the wood and had the room well warmed before the other students arrived. He was paid twenty-five cents per week. In her contract, the teacher at the Old Stone School agreed to tend the fire. Two children were given the job of getting water for the day from a neighbor's well. The water was passed out several times during the day. Other jobs were washing the blackboards and filling the ink wells.

Usually the school day began at nine o'clock. The teacher stood at the front entrance and rang a bell. The bell called the students into the schoolhouse. On nice days the flag was raised on the flagpole. When the students entered the school, they hung their coats in the cloakroom and put their lunches on the shelf above their coats. Approximately three minutes after the first bell rang the tardy bell would ring. Then the students would recite the Pledge of Allegiance and a patriotic poem. The teacher read a passage from the Bible.

The teacher began instruction with the youngest children who were called the "A-B-C" class. She proceeded with the children who were in the First Reader, then the Second Reader, and continuing through the grades. These lessons with the teacher included articulation exercises, oral reading, vocabulary, story moralization and discussion. The lessons were always presented at the front of the room.

Reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling were the subjects most emphasized. In the reading class, copies of the New Testament, Weem's LIFE OF WASHINGTON, and Bunyan's PILGRIMS PROGRESS were usually read.

The other textbooks used were MCGUFFEY'S ECLECTIC READER, WEBSTER'S BLUE BACK SPELLER, the MANUAL OF PENMAN-

SHIP, RAY'S NEW ELEMENTARY, ROBINSON'S INTERMEDIATE READER, GREENE'S GRAMMAR, GUYOT'S ELEMENTARY GEOGRAPHY, and GULICK HYGIENE SERIES. The schools did not provide the textbooks. Students purchased them at stores, from the school board, by mail order, or from older students who were through with them. Students at Old Stone School bought their books at a local drug store.

At recess the children organized their own games. Some popular games played were Hop-Scotch, Blind Man's Bluff, Follow the Leader, Hide and Seek, I Spy, and Drop the Handkerchief. During the winter they sledded and skated.

Old Stone School was originally located in District No. 97 on Town Line Road near Byron. It was named Old Stone School because the original structure, built around 1857, was made from stone. It burned to the ground in 1902. A year later, a frame school was built to take its place, and it kept the same name. The school closed in 1946 at the end of the winter term.

The exterior of Old Stone School was painted white, and it had a belfry. There were windows on both sides and a small front porch.

The interior of the school had stationary and portable blackboards, desks, a recitation bench, dunce stool, bookcase, ferrules and container, a forty-five star flag, a coal or wood burning stove, water bucket, dipper, and kerosene lanterns which were used when town meetings were held in the school building at night. Pictures of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, the Constitution and other pictures from that era decorated the walls. Two map cases hung above the blackboard. The Old Stone School, in comparison with other schools of that era, was very well equipped.

The building was moved to the Children's Farm in 1971 and has served as an "educational time machine" for the Rockford School District. In 1977 the school was moved to



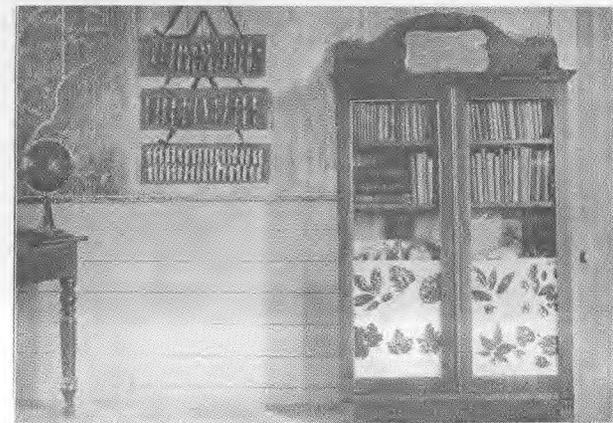
Old Stone School, Midway Village, Drawing by Harriett Biester; Reproduced courtesy of Rockford Museum Center

Midway Village, Rockford Museum Center. The school now offers classes, giving teachers the opportunity to take their students back in time to the late 1800 and early 1900 school days.

ABBIE JEWETT CRAIG, ELEVENTH COUNTY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT
 (Most of the information for the following article was obtained from HISTORICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ILLINOIS AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY, Vol. II (1916) by Charles A. Church and THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY by Charles Espy)

The youngest of six children, Abbie Jewett Craig was born in 1864 to John Randolph and Elizabeth Gilmour Jewett on a farm near Harrison, Illinois. John Jewett came to Winnebago County from Genesee County, N. Y., in 1838, and was an intimate friend of Stephen Mack, Winnebago County's first settler. Mrs. Craig's mother, Elizabeth Gilmour Jewett, was a native of Kentucky who was brought to Winnebago County by her parents in the early 1840s. The family first settled in Roscoe Township, and later moved to Harrison, where Elizabeth taught school for a while in a log school house south of the town. During that time she met and married Mr. Jewett.

Handicapped by a delicate physique which prevented her from attending school away from home, Abbie Jewett studied mostly with private teachers, but when she did attend the Harrison School, she won high honors for scholarship and was given a scholarship to Becker's Business College. At the age of sixteen she received a teacher's certificate and began teaching. Shortly afterward she was



District 32, Winnebago County, Ill., June, 1903, Mrs. Abbie Jewett Craig, Teacher. Books put in by proceeds of Social. Library Case as a premium earned by children selling soap. Specimens of wood, leaves and seeds collected by the children.



DISTRICT 32, SHIRLAND SCHOOL, Miss Abbie Jewett Craig, teacher. Three windows have woven wire screen with wild grapevines growing as here shown.

granted a first grade certificate, one of only two held by teachers in the northern part of the county at that time. She also attended the DeKalb Normal School, now known as Northern Illinois University.

In 1885 Abbie Jewett was united in marriage to Robert Burns Craig at the Jewett home in Harrison. Mr. Craig had come to Harrison from Camden, N. Y., in 1880. He studied law in the office of Frost and McEvoy and was admitted to the bar in 1889. He then practiced law in Rockford, but died in 1898.

Mrs. Craig continued to teach in various country schools of the county until 1891, when for about 10 years she devoted her time to her family of two daughters. Her husband's death left her to her own resources, so she again began teaching about 1901. For six years she taught at the Shirland School, during which time the school attracted considerable attention through the "Annual Report of Winnebago County Schools." A collection of work from the school during that time, including hand work and the first articles of sewing done in a one room school in the county, made up quite a large part of the educational exhibit from Winnebago County at the St. Louis World's Fair. Leaving Shirland, Mrs. Craig spent three years teaching in the grade school at South Beloit, the last year as assistant

principal. In the fall of 1911 she entered the Rockford schools and for two years was given special work, at times acting as assistant principal and principal of the ward schools.

At the September session of the county board of supervisors in 1913, Abbie Jewett Craig was selected to fill the vacancy in the office of county superintendent of schools caused by the resignation of Mr. O. J. Kern, the previous superintendent. In November, 1914, the voters of the county endorsed that decision by electing her for four more years by a large majority, and she began the first of three full terms as county superintendent. Mrs. Craig continued publication of the Winnebago County School Annual, which attracted widespread attention and was described as a model superintendent's report by a representative of the National Education Bureau.

From 1926 until her death in 1949 at the age of 84, Mrs. Craig lived in retirement in her apartment at 525 No. Court Street. During part of that time she served as a reader at the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, a congregation which existed from the early 1920s to the late 1930s and shared the old First Congregational building with the Masonic Lodge at 607 Walnut Street. Mrs. Craig was buried in Phillips Cemetery near Rockton.

EARTH OLDER THAN THE SUN
(Reprinted from ROCKFORD DAILY REPUBLIC,
November 13, 1922)

London.-That the earth is older than the present structure of the universe, as now constituted, is the theory held by Prof. A. W. Bickerton, the originator of the theory of the birth of stellar systems and the writer of innumerable books about the "third bodies" born in space by grazing impacts.

Lecturing before the Royal Botanical society, he said that he was strongly inclined to believe that the earth was much older than the sun and much older than the present structure of the universe.

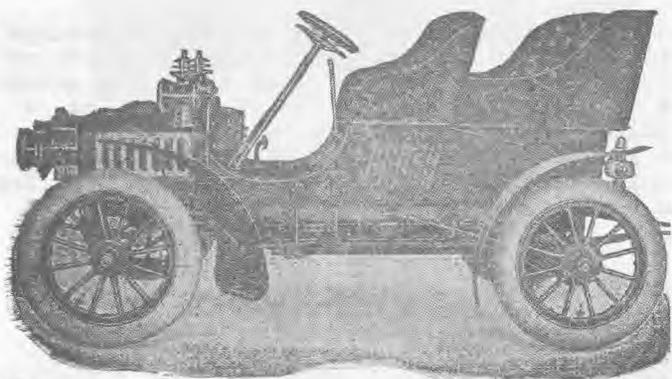
"In my opinion," said Prof. Bickerton, "the sun originated in a collision between two other previously existing bodies, one of which had an enormous number of meteors, planets and other bodies revolving around it. I think that sunspots are probably caused by meteors striking the surface of the sun."

SITE OF THE EARLY FERRY
by Hazel M. Hyde

Germanicus Kent established a ferry at what is now State Street. The ferry was the first mode of transit unless one chose to ford Rock River. Special acts of the

legislature established ferries. The licenses for conducting ferries were under the jurisdiction of the commissioners' courts in organized counties. In the September 1836 session of this court Mr. Kent was authorized to set up and maintain a ferry for the benefit of persons wishing to transport produce and merchandise or merely make the crossing in comfort. The license fee was ten dollars a year. Rates of ferriage were also fixed.

The license was extended for another year in 1837. In the following year a license was issued to Kent and Brinckerhoff to operate the ferry. The rates of ferriage were raised and the license fee changed to twenty dollars a year. Selden M. Church succeeded these gentlemen and continued to operate the business until the first bridge was built.



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Advertisement in Rockford Morning Star, Jan. 20, 1904

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