

Nuggets of History

Supplementary Pages

Summer, 1986

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND HOMES IN DANGER City Council Considers Plan

A plan allowing property owners at the edge of a historic district to easily secede from the district is being advanced by some residents and civic leaders. This would be a way to appease owners not wishing to comply with the guidelines set forth for historic districts.

The pressure for such a plan has come from a small group of property owners in the Brown's Hills-Knightsville Historic District. Although there have been two or three instances of short delays suffered by owners who have requested permission to change their type of siding, the greatest amount of pressure is in behalf of two pieces of property on North Second Street which are desired for a parking lot.

The two historic homes located on the property are those at 946 and 1010 North Second Street. The home at 946 North Second was built in 1915 for C. J. Lundberg, president of the Cooperative Furniture Company. The architect was Frank Carpenter, and it was designed as a French country manor. The exterior has been unchanged through the years. Of special interest is the green tile used extensively around and above the windows and

946 North Second Street
Built for C. J. Lundberg in 1915



doors. The same tile is used for the floor of the entry hall and foyer, and around the living room fireplace. The home is listed on the Illinois Historic Structures Survey.

The unusual 2½-story home at 1010 North Second was built in 1908 for Oscar and Eva Wigell, who previously lived at 524 College Avenue. Mr. Wigell operated a piano and organ store at 107 West State Street. The Wigells remained at 1010 North Second until about 1923, when the house was acquired by Frederick and Edith Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell was

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LET'S HEAR IT FOR MAYME BURNS!
by Hazel M. Hyde

The Irish Patch, which some say was bordered by West State, Winnebago, Cedar and Avon Streets and including Short Horsman, produced some worth citizens for this community. One of these was Miss Mary Burns, known to her friends as Mayme Burns. She was warm, witty, and loyal to her friends and her principles. She taught at Montague School, 1306 South Court Street, at the corner of Montague and Court Streets in one of Rockford's old historic districts known as South Rockford. She was assistant principal with Mrs. Anna B. Dexter as principal. (See NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Vol IV No 3, March-April, 1967, pp 2-3, "Montague School- Its Past and Present", by Jeffrey Harris for a picture of Montague School, built 1883, remodeled 1911 and 1928 and replaced by a new building named Martin Luther King School). Sixth grade homeroom was Mayme's special responsibility.

Miss Burns had charge of the Boy Patrol. They stood at corners and watched for the safety of pupils in crossing such busy streets as Montague and Winnebago. She was Irish through and through and had a great sense of humor. She managed the patrol with a firm hand and had an uncanny sense of "fitness". We had a good-looking Black boy, taller and stronger than most of his age. He liked to wear a bright sash around his waist in 1936 when that had not quite "caught on" in Rockford. There was a bit of a swagger when he walked. You had to like him, but he could be a bit of a discipline problem if you did not understand him. I mention his name, Richard Strickland, because I want to compliment him on the way he handled being head of the Boy Patrol. Here was a boy who might have been a trouble maker, who appeared to adore "Miss Burns" and she always "stood up" for Richard.

One day when I was teaching at Montague, I stepped off the bus into a world of ice at the corner across from the school. Richard took my arm, smiled, and helped me across the street. From that day I saw the fine side of Richard's personality. Miss Burns was always fair and honest in her judgments and in selecting those who could handle responsibility.

Mayme Burns told me, "a new-comer to Rockford" many interesting stories about the Irish boys meeting the Swedes from the East Side of the River at Morgan Street and Nelson Bridges and winning some of the fights that "just happened".

It was she who told me that the Irish came before the great influx of Italians. Many people held the Irish in low esteem and she felt the prejudice and lack of social acceptance as a girl. There were jokes about Irish washer-women. People held sterotype ideas about Irish drinking. Of course many of the Irish were Catholic and attended St. Mary's Catholic Church. I first heard the terms "shanty

Irish" and "lace curtain Irish".

It was from Bertha McGuire that I learned about the Men and Boys Chorus at St. Mary's Catholic Church. She was the music teacher at Montague and also director of this superb singing group. Of course Bertha was Irish. She talked about St. Mary's Church and I never thought to ask her if she had lived in The Irish Patch. The Italian families were then in the majority in South Rockford and many of them attended St. Anthony Catholic Church.

Mayme Burns was not a communicant of St. Mary's Catholic Church. Her religious experiences were apparently eclectic, taking the best from various doctrines and churches and drawing her ideas from many sources. Since she was from the North of Ireland, she probably was first an Episcopalian, but she attended a variety of churches including Methodist and even Salvation Army, some of her friends remember. Her influence on the young people who were in her classes either at Montague or later at Washington was profound influence for good. She cultivated a respect for learning.

Clem Burns, who attended St. James Catholic Church, on the East Side of the River, was a local historian. He was more Scotch than Irish but still he had many tales to tell of the Irish Patch. It is a terrible loss that no one taped Mayme's and Clem's recollections. He spoke of Frances Haste, third Ward alderman and the Kennedy family, mentioned in an article in ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR, March 17, 1985, "Patch was Green With Pride". Both he and Mayme spoke of the gardens the Irish had, the gradual "moving out" or the "block busting" when the Irish left South Rockford. Probably the 350 Irish families within sound of St. Mary's Church mentioned in that article is an accurate estimation. Clem could tell tales about the Irish Catholics, and he stressed a love of dancing in some of his old time stories. There is no doubt that these people took their going to confession, sacrificing during Lent, and the attending of Mass seriously. Rockford is losing its "Story Tellers" and it is sad loss.

Mayme always enjoyed St. Patrick's Day. Corn beef and cabbage were popular foods, she said, because they were not as expensive as many foods. Irish potatoes had been a staple of the diet in Ireland by parents or grandparents who continued to use them in their American homes. She lived a contented life. She had many friends. The people whom Mayme called friends found her a loyal and faithful friend.

Later when Washington Junior High School had been built and some grade school classes were added, Mayme came there to teach. She continued her well-known practice of keeping people after school. Her blackboard always had a list of names and amount of time offenders owed. She might give a 30 minute penalty, for example, and perhaps allow the pupil to stay only 15 minutes that night. Then he or she had to come back a second time. Her mathematics were exact, too. If another teacher came into the room after school, she would find the silence practically complete.

The history of Rockford is just not a succession of

events. It is made up of people like "Miss Burns" and the recollections of ethnic groups like the Irish. As Doris Connors remarked, "Mary E. Burns had a fantastic influence!"

WHERE THE VIOLETS GREW; LIFE AT THE COUNTY FARM
by Eva Smith Bahrman Sanborn

(Continued from the Winter Edition, Volume 23, Number 1)

The inmates were quartered on the two wings north and south. There were two floors on each wing with about twenty-four rooms for women and twice that number for men. Most of the rooms were for single occupancy, although some were larger than others. Each could bring some of his or her belongings when they came if they so wished, and many did bring antiques treasured from the past. On each floor was a large sitting room with chairs and benches and a table in the center and on one floor was a handpumped organ.

There were plants and ferns on stands near the picture windows facing the back. The large double doors between the north and south wings could be opened on Sundays for services conducted by ministers from Rockford. There were other special occasions when men and women could enjoy a program together. One of the inmates, Carrie Coonradt, often would play the organ and hymns were sung. Among the men inmates was a man who played the piano and he gave me a few lessons after a fashion and that was all the instruction I ever had.

Many times during the week, armed with books for study, I would go to the upstairs living room to study and perchance to daydream by those picture windows.

Off of the living rooms were the common bathrooms on each floor. There the inmates bathed each week, the more able bodied helping the weaker ones. Daily ablutions were also done here.

There was a breezeway between the front three wings of the building and the back one. On the top floor of this was a glassed in portion known as the TB Ward. Here patients with this malady were kept, being adjacent to the hospital ward where a trained nurse was on 24 hour duty. Special meals were sent up on a dumb waiter as requested, but much of the regular downstairs menu which was wholesome and delicious could be used as hospital fare. TB was known as the "Great White Plague" in those days. Antibiotics were unknown and it was often a killer. Rest and sunshine and wholesome foods were the only known help for TB in those days. This fact led me to choose this as my topic for my thesis when a senior in high school. Those with this malady were isolated in this separate ward. The nurse wore a mask and separate gown when she went in this department. Patients in the other part of the hospital

ward were largely those with broken bones or chronic ailments. Any requiring surgery were removed to city hospitals on the advice of the physician and were treated at no cost.

The other lower two floors on the back wing were occupied by mental patients behind heavily screened windows in separate cells. At the end of the wing were heavily screened in porches where the less violent were allowed to exercise and sun themselves. In a few more years all charity mental patients would be removed to Elgin to the institution there -- The TB patients to the sanitarium on Parkview. But in early days this was free at the County Farm.

I have always enjoyed older folks and my years among them at an early age enhanced this feeling and perhaps initiated it. I particularly frequented the women's wards and became acquainted personally with each and every woman. There was Mrs. Orr, an Irish lady, of about 90 years who could tell fortunes by palm reading, tea leaves, cards or apple peelings. While I still don't actually believe in say of this, I reflect on the fact that she saw the letter S as the first initial of the last name of my husband. At that time I felt that I would never marry as my name was Smith. Later when I married Blaine Bahrman I dismissed the idea entirely--but as you see I ended up by marrying Walter Sanborn, so what do you think? She also told me that I would have three children which has come to pass in my three daughters. Well, one can make anything of such things as one wishes. When one is young, one is impressionable.

There was Lettie Smith, an unmarried lady of uncertain years, who was a devout Christian, and would say of her conversion, "I used to be on the other side and now I am on the other side." When I got married she gave me a genuine cut glass sugar bowl, which I believe now is in the possession of one of my daughters, if not left at the church when I moved from Superior, Wisconsin.

Elaine Bickford had been put into the home at an early age because she had a cleft palate. There were apparently no interested relatives or friends and her education had been neglected.

A woman of immense proportions was Ella Milledge. She had a propensity for much eating. During garden season she enjoyed eating two or three large raw cucumbers at one sitting, skins and all. I remember many others.

The lower basement floor which was under the entire building was reached at the front by a stairway at the rear of the first floor hall from the superintendent's apartment. There were other stairways from the inmates quarters and three exits on ground level. On the basement level of the front wings were many storerooms off of a locked hall. There was a larger one which was kept locked because in it were kept staples such as flour, sugar, crackers by the barrel, cases of cookies such as maryanns, frosted creams, gingersnaps and lemon crisps. In spite of all the good home cooking I remember as a child, I enjoyed these store bought cookies. Everything was bought in quantities and

stored in this huge storeroom.

Across from the Storeroom was a bakery with ovens which would accommodate a hundred loaves of bread at a time. Bread was made several times a week and all was kneaded by hand. Some of this kneading was done by the hands of hired help and some by the hands of willing and able inmates. The bread was set the evening before it was to be baked. Early risers formed it into loaves to rise for baking.

The kitchen was immense with coal ranges along one side and cupboards for dishes, benches and tables for work space and a pump and a sink. This sink was a smaller one for the upstairs dishes, the larger sink being part of the women's dining room where most of the dishes were washed. From the kitchen to the left were smaller rooms, one for washing of hands, others were storage rooms.

Off the kitchen also was a pantry with more dishes for upstairs use, shelves, benches, a coffee grinder, and a refrigerator cooled with ice from the icehouse. There some food was prepared for upstairs use although most food from the common pot was shared by all in the building.

Leading off from the kitchen were two dining rooms--one for men and the other for women. Tables were set to accommodate ten each. There were five tables for men and three or four for women, as I remember. At the sound of an electric bell a five minute warning was given and five minutes later all were seated at tables and food was served family style. There was always meat once a day and potatoes and vegetables in large bowls. Desserts were simple during the week and might consist of cookies, sauces or puddings but on Sunday there might be pie--mostly made by mother who was a great pie-maker in her day. My mother often whipped up a batch of doughnuts fried in lard and my father used to say they were not fit to eat until at least a day old.

On Sundays there was chicken often served with dumplings and lots of gravy. My father used to say, "I don't care much for chicken--just give me a leg and a wing and a hunk of the breast and help himself to the gizzard.

I never knew spring chickens were edible until I was twelve years old. Our neighbors on the next farm were the Johns, college graduates, and farmed on a scientific basis. They asked for my help in preparing supper for a large crowd. Over I went and much to my surprise the lady of the house was cutting up chicken, dusting it with flour and putting it into the frying pan where in no time it seemed it emerged golden brown, crusty and delicious. On our farm before coming to the County Farm I suspect my mother took a hen somewhat past her maximum laying age or prone to set on a dozen eggs and just quit laying. My Father wielded the axe and we all hid until the plucking and cleaning came. Then my mother beat all records in preparing the chicken for the pot. Some of the chickens would be filled with stuffing and roasted in the oven of the old fashioned cookstove. No modern convenience could ever produce such flavor, aroma, and downright good eating.

At Christmas a goose might get similar treatment or perchance a brace of ducks. In season rabbits or fish caught in the neighborhood added variety to the menu. Luscious roasts of pork and beef, chops or steaks, home smoked hams and bacon, head cheese, spareribs, served with sauerkraut and sausage grown and seasoned with home-grown sage were other additions. The sausage was kept all winter by frying it in cakes and immersing it in hot lard and allowing it to harden in a cold place. Eggs were preserved in huge jars containing something called water glass. Salt herring and mackerel were purchased in kegs from Booth Fisheries and sometimes served at breakfast cooked in milk and accompanied by boiled potatoes.

My mother, farm born and of pioneer stock, never quite wanted to play the lady at the head of the place and more often than not she was found downstairs, not only to oversee but to actually join in the work. Her experienced hands turned out cakes, pies and cookies which to this day are remembered by her grandchildren. Those brown molasses cookies and those generous sugar cookies topped with a raisin I never could quite duplicate. I did learn to cook from her but the results that she obtained by using a pinch of this and "about so much" of that were hard to follow. She never seemed to have a failure. Her apple pies were famous and once in later years when my husband remarked, "Your pies are almost as good as your mother used to make", I felt highly complimented. Her loaves of bread were something to talk about and we all liked the "heel" with some home made butter, also an accomplishment of hers. Right fresh from the oven this was a treat fit for the gods.

The storerooms were always filled with canned fruits and vegetables. Some also were dried such as dried apples and corn. The root cellar was filled with potatoes and other root vegetables, such as carrots, might be buried in sand. Beets were pickled and made a colorful addition to any menu.

Fresh milk was always available and buttermilk after churning, not the kind that we get now called "cultured", but the real thing, sweet and creamy with specks of butter floating on top. My husband in later years used to tell the story of when the minister came to call just as a lady was finishing churning. She treated him to buttermilk telling him to drink all he wanted because what was left they just gave to the pigs anyway. This was partially true, but we often had pancakes made with buttermilk and to this day, I find there are not better pancakes than buttermilk pancakes.

On Mondays huge kettles of vegetable soup were made as well as enormous pans of baked beans generously flavored with molasses and salt pork. We all looked forward to this Monday fare, although it meant laundry and work.

Adjacent to the kitchen was the laundry with its huge tubs and hand wringers. There was a steam room for drying on rainy days as Monday was always wash day rain or shine. All hands and all able inmates were up bright and early. The clothes had been soaked overnight and after being wash-

ed on the board were put in copper boilers for boiling. The steam room was entirely filled with pipes and when the steam was turned on the clothes were dried. On sunny days long lines could be seen flopping in the outdoor sunshine.

In the twelve years that I lived at the County Farm many changes took place, not only in my life but in methods and ways things were done. Whereas I had seen my first automobile (horseless carriage) when we lived on Tate Road, my father purchased his first car when we were at the County Farm. The first car that I had seen was like a buggy in construction with a stick shift and had to be cranked by hand as all early cars were. The driver was dressed with a cap, goggles and duster needed because the dust of the country roads enshrouded it in a cloud. I stood amazed at the sight scarcely believing this strange apparition.

The first car my father bought--you guessed it-- was a Model T. Ford. One day he went downtown and came back with his purchase. He had no instructions except what he got at the garage where he bought the car. He came driving it home, proud as punch. "Would you like a ride?" he asked my mother, who as usual was dressed in her gingham dress. She said she couldn't go, dressed as she was, but he urged her and I followed along. He headed straight back down towards town. Just before we came to Harlem Boulevard something governing the steering broke and out of control the car went into a telephone pole, much to the embarrassment of my mother. And so the garage was called and we were taken home and thus ended my first ride in a car.

Later my father was to own a Studebaker, a seven seater, with two extra seats that folded down in the back when not in use. Upon acquiring this he decided someone beside himself should learn to drive and for some reason I was chosen. I was seventeen at the time and from then on throughout my life I drove a car whenever we had one to drive. Blaine and I did not have one when we were first married. I never did take a driver's test--as first one didn't even need a license to drive.

Having a car enabled us to go many places. When Ringling Brothers Circus came to town we all piled in and went to town to see the parade. This was quite an event as in those days practically everything was included in the parade--cages of animals, elephants and clowns ending with a calliope. There was a marching band heading the procession and everything was very colorful.

Also we would go each year to the fair at Elkhorn--taking out lunch and making a day of it. There were the usual exhibits, the carnival atmosphere, and best of all were the horse races. The driver sat on a sulky pulled by the horse. Of course the races were not as fast as those on today's race tracks.

At the ends of each year came Christmas, enjoyed by the inmates and our family alike. There would be a program of carol singing. Presents were distributed to all. My moth-

er would make aprons for each of the women. They were all given candy and perhaps an orange. Handkerchieves were also given--the large red or blue bandana type used by farmers for the men. I used to fashion homemade Christmas cards to give to the women. There were cookies and special foods for all. All were given some new articles of clothing. Christmas in those days was simple but enjoyable. Popcorn balls made from home grown popcorn, popped in a big iron kettle were favorites.

Intervening years from 1911 to 1915 saw me in high school at Old Rockford High where I made my timid debut at the age of twelve years. I was in later years described by a former classmate as "a shy, shrinking violet" in those days. Something must have happened to change this description entirely, although inwardly I still think of myself as a shy person. I managed to do very well to the point of graduation in June 1915, with four years of quiet study. Living in the country I could not attend social events and my younger age made it unimportant that I do so.

Two important events stand out in my mind aside from school activities as happening during this time of my life. The first was the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. There were no radios or TV's in those days--no pictures of on the spot news. When anything startling happened newsboys were soon out on the streets shouting "X--tra X--tra paper" and selling these with available details. In this instance the whole front page contained only two words inches high in large black letters, "TITANIC SINKS" and one was left to imagine what the scene must have been. In later years the story has been portrayed in the movies and it may have happened as shown, according to stories by survivors.

The other event which at the time perhaps passed unnoticed and especially by me, was the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria which triggered events culminating in World War I, which was to forever change the lives of all and of me in particular.

On June 17, 1915, graduation of my high school class took place on a very warm night at the old Coliseum. Our class was distinguished by being the first class to wear caps and gowns and also because of the pageant we put on at Sinnissippi Park depicting the early history of Rockford. On that warm night we were uncomfortable. Those seated at the back of the platform were more fortunate as cold drinks were passed up during the somewhat long and boring ordeal. In the fall of 1915 I set out for DeKalb where the old Normal School offered a two year course for teachers. All classes were held in what was known then as "The Castle on the Hill" and became Altgeld Hall. I went on a scholarship offered by the county for prospective teachers plus money borrowed from my sister Mabel. Although board and room were only five dollars per week, plus taking one's turn waiting on table, when I graduated in 1917, my first teaching job paid only sixty-five dollars per month and I owed Mabel a whole year's wages.

I spent two of the most happy years of my life at DeKalb as I made many new friends and my whole outlook on

life changed. I stayed at Williston Hall which was the first dormitory on the campus and opened in the fall of 1915. The first night there the beds had not arrived and we slept on the floor. The first floor had only a few rooms for residents, the rest being occupied by a future library, the housekeeper's and matron's rooms, the office, the living room, the dining room and a room where food to be served was sent up. Opposite the entrance was an elevator one could take to the second and third floor. The first floor "bunch" at Williston Hall started a round robin letter in 1917 which is still going. It started with twelve and the number has been reduced to six.

The nickname of Bubs was acquired and at various reunions the girls would say "I was bubbling over all the time" so you see I must have changed since high school. We had to be in our rooms at 7:30 each night and 10:30 on weekends. The only exception was when there was an event at the college such as a dance or a game. Often on Saturday afternoon we would attend a silent movie which cost ten cents. I enjoyed Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford, and the Prince of Graustark. On nice days we would take walks in the country, on one occasion we waded to Malta, which was the nearest village.

During my time at DeKalb the famous election was held where Hughes was declared the winner over Woodrow Wilson for the presidency. Due to lack of communication, California and some western states had not been heard from, so the next morning we awoke to the realization that it was Woodrow Wilson who had actually been elected. In later years almost the same thing happened when Truman won over Dewey.

Another event happened when I was in college which not only changed the course of history but affected my whole future. World War I was declared and we were in it. It was to have been a war to end all wars but actually it was only the beginning. There has been world conflict ever since.

After graduating in 1917 I taught at the old Montague School in South Rockford for two years and two years at Westview then located on North Main and within walking distance of the County Farm where I stayed. This was good especially in winter where I had previously had to wade through snowdrifts to get to the street car line and to transfer to the South Main Street car. These were fun years of my life. I met and made many new friends and we had fun times together. Often at parties at the County Farm we would gather around the piano and sing songs or drink cocoa from tall mugs. The first in the cook stove had to be kept alive to heat this. There were picnics and even a weekend at Lake Mills, chaperoned, of course.

Because of World War I, I met my husband to be, Blaine Bahrman, on the day he was discharged from Camp Grant. While stationed there he became acquainted with the



Old Poor Farm. The insane were confined in caged porches. Ca. 1900.

Glenny Family whom he had met at church and had shared Sunday dinners with them. While Blaine was in France serving with the 13th Engineers for the duration of the war, my sister Mabel had married Clinton Glenny. Blaine spent a few days at the Glennys after he was discharged.

My father, having four girls and no sons, wanted to meet this soldier who had been in a far part of the world. He insisted on the whole family going over to the Glennys to meet him. My first sight of Blaine was not an inspiring one. He lay stretched on the couch with a severe headache. He looked as though he had indeed been through a war. Years afterward he asked me if it had been love at first sight and I assured him it certainly had not. But after he left Rockford and after some months of correspondence and brief visits back and forth, including one to Skandia, Michigan, to meet his folks, we became engaged in August of 1920.

In those days it was customary for the man to ask the parents for their daughter's hand. It was a mighty nervous young man who confronted my father in his office and popped the question. He had asked me three times before I said yes. My father referred him to my mother who was across the hall and had just put a record on our victrola. It happened to be "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" and that song tugs at my heartstrings to this day. There were some tears, some asking us to delay the wedding, which we actually did until the following June 8, 1921.

So that is how I became married at the County Farm. One wedding there had preceeded ours. Mabel and Clint had been married there in 1919. Theirs was a larger wedding than mine was to be. Tables were set for 50 the full length of the hall, where a hearty deinner of roast beef was served. Edith made the wedding cake. She was always a good cook and followed in my mother's footsteps in this respect. Edith and George Black were married February 18, 1920, at Court Street Methodist Church--a small wedding.

Our wedding was small--sixteen in all. My two older



West Side of Rock River, near the Poor Farm, ca. 1900.

sisters were pregnant with babies due in July and in no way would they consent to show up at my wedding in such a shape unless I confined it to the immediate family. I added to these two cousins, Alice and Grace, two school-teacher friends, Lil Stibb and Ruth Carlson, and my grandfather. Grandmother was more or less a recluse and did not want to come. So it was a simple affair with my father and mother as witnesses and Rev. Jesse Dancey of Court Street Methodist Church officiating. Blaine and I went down in the morning and had our pictures taken. At high noon the minister came and afterwards we ate our meal at tables in the hall as we had done at Mabel and Clint's wedding.

For the last time, the next morning we sat down at breakfast in the dining room. We were planning to take the train to Janesville via Green Bay and thence to Skandia, Michigan, to spend our honeymoon at Blaine's folks, and with his sister Augusta and her family. As I was the first and proved to be the last of our family to leave, one would have thought I was going to the ends of the earth. It also seemed so to me as the first time I went to Superior on a visit the last part of the trip was largely through woods and uninhabited land and I wondered if we would ever emerge to any settlement. On our first trip to Michigan we were finally on a train which consisted of one passenger coach behind a strong of freight cars.

Our hired man of many years was Bert Tibbitts and he remained tearless and philosophical. He said, "You'll be back so I am not saying goodbye." His words proved to be prophetic. Halfway to Janesville the Studebaker broke down and we didn't make the train that day. So the next morning we all sat down again at the breakfast table. Even the hired man admitted he didn't expect us back so soon. We did get to Skandia to be greeted by numerous relatives some of whom were visiting at the time.

Bert, the hired man, was like one of the family and when



Along Rock River, looking north from the "Poor Farm", ca. 1900.

my father left the County farm in 1925 to semi-retire on a small farm of seventeen acres on the corner of Searles and Halsted, he went to work for my sister and her husband, Mabel and Clint Glenny. When unable to work he was kept by the family. His funeral was one he would have been proud to see. Farmers gathered in great numbers. He left his imprint on us all.

My life at the County Farm was ended. I was back to visit once the first year. Blaine started a job with the Metropolitan Life on December 12th which he was to hold until his retirement in January 1985. My days at the County Farm have a dreamlike quality much like the plot of books I read--fairy tales, past Wuthering Heights, to historical novels, and those of a Biblical nature and even detective stories like those of Agatha Christie. My father and mother died in 1958. They almost reached the 65th year of marriage.

Editor's Note: This account of life at the Winnebago County Farm is Part I of an autobiography written for her family but when it was read aloud for American Heritage Committee of Rockford Chapter NSDAR, they had a copy made and sent to a national contest. The other three parts were entitled: B.E.B. and Daughters Three--My Life With Blaine; Divine Revelations--My Life With Walter; and Homeward Bound--Life at Valley View.

 NUGGETS OF HISTORY, published quarterly by the Rockford Historical Society, Rockford, Illinois

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1010 North Second Street
 Built for Oscar and Eva Wigell in 1908



secretary of Rockford Lathe and Drill Company and comptroller of National Lock Company. The Mitchells were followed about 1928 by David Fitzgerald, vice-president of Consolidated Industries, Inc., and his wife Bertha. Consolidated Industries was formed by a merger of Haddorff Piano, Free Sewing Machine, and Landstrom Furniture companies.

Several other families have resided in the two homes over the years. The most recent owners have been Mr. and Mrs. Salvadore Buscemi at 946, and Mr. and Mrs. Roland Miles at

1010. Both families have now sold the homes to the same buyer who hopes to raze the houses for parking. If an ordinance is passed allowing those property owners on the edge of a historic district to withdraw, this property will undoubtedly be the first to do so, as it is at the edge of the district. Two more historic buildings would then fall to the wrecker's ball, as has already happened in so many parts of the city.

Four historic districts have thus far been formed in Rockford. Haight Village and Browns Hills-Knightsville are on the east side, and the Garfield Avenue and Indian Terrace Districts are on the west side. Several other older neighborhoods have been considering the advantages of organizing historic districts. The process is not easy, requiring petitions to be signed and a \$15 fee paid by each property owner. Most residents believe it is worth the trouble, as the benefits far outweigh the inconvenience.

However, there would be no point in having historic districts if individuals would be allowed to withdraw. The idea behind the concept of historic districts is to retain the charm of certain older neighborhoods by preventing property owners from making drastic changes in their property which would alter the appearance of the neighborhood, and spoil what urban sociologists refer to as the "urban fabric". If an individual, who finds that he cannot make some such change, can then withdraw from the district and make the change anyway, the entire concept would be destroyed.