

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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BURNS CLUB PICNICS

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Early Scottish settlers in Rockford founded the Rockford Burns Club in 1858 to commemorate the centennial of Robert Burns' birth and to perpetuate the Scottish heritage in their new homeland. The Club celebrated Burns' birthday every January with a festive banquet, and its members enjoyed good fellowship on other occasions, but several years passed before they added another regular event, a summer picnic open to all members of the community.

The surviving record does not tell us when the Rockford Burns Club held its first summer picnic. It was probably sometime in the wake of the Civil War. The first one we know of occurred on August 13, 1874, but we do not know where it was held. By the time the club laid plans for its 1875 picnic near "the (Milner's) Stone Quarry" (sic), the occasion was referred to as the "annual picnic," and it was decided "to exceed anything before attempted." Milner's Stone Quarry was about four miles upstream from the city on the west bank of the Rock River. The 1875 picnic, held on August 19, was open to "all friends of the club." The arrangements included hiring Dedrickson's band, acquiring lumber for a dance floor and screening bids for the construction of a bandstand. In addition to publicity, the club had to arrange for transportation to the site, boats for use in the flooded quarry, and prizes for the scheduled games and contests. Two new games were added to the schedule, "hop, step and leap" and an old man's race, and for the first time there was sword dance competition for the men and Highland fling competition for the ladies. Meeting minutes after the event suggest that the "old man's race" was not held, but the picnic games did include such traditional Scottish contests as throwing the hammer and putting the stone. An unnamed piper received five dollars for his services, and when the books were balanced, the picnic profit was \$78.30.

In a short time these regular outings became a major social event for the Rockford community. The 1876 picnic was held near Caledonia, and the *Rockford Register* reported that six carloads of "jolly Scotchmen" left the Kenosha depot at 8:30 a.m. on August 25, with another train making the half-hour trip at eleven o'clock. With those who came by train or with their own "teams," over 1,000 attended. For the next two years the Resort House, formerly the Rosendahl Water Cure House, north of Rockford was the site of the annual Burns Club picnics. The steamer *Hindoo* made hourly trips up the river to the picnic grounds. Since the Resort House was on the east bank of the river, those who came by wagon from the west were ferried across in two boats provided by the club. It was also arranged that the 11:00 a.m. train from Argyle and Caledonia would make a special stop, as would a return run at four o'clock. The attendance during these years steadily increased, until what was perhaps the acme of Burns Club picnics in 1879.

Returning to Milner's Stone Quarry that year, the club picnic reached a scale, given the population of the day, that is difficult to envision over a century later. This time it was the steamer *Transit* that made regular runs up and down the Rock River to the picnic site. Boats had

to ferry across those from the countryside east of Rockford. The Register recorded that 400 teams were also involved in bringing about 2,000 picnickers to the quarry grounds. Some wagons were obviously left on the east bank, but can you imagine two "parking lots" filled with 400 teams of horses? Admission to the picnic was seventy-five cents, plus any fare one might have had to pay on the Transit. At the time the population of Rockford was approaching 13,000, so one can see that the Burns Club picnic served a significant number of community members.

A few traditional speeches followed the mid-day meal to inaugurate the day's program. The Rev. J. K. Fowler of the Presbyterian Church, who had been a speaker at the Rockford Burns' Day banquet the previous year, praised the club for honoring Robert Burns, who despite his personal faults and much indecent poetry, was gifted and democratic. He explained Burns' profligate themes as being influenced by the tastes of his day and concluded with the assertion that it is really the high moral tone and deep religious faith of Scotland that is honored when one honors Burns. Such convoluted logic may have been acceptable in late nineteenth century Rockford, but maybe it was not, for the next two speeches were not nearly as puritanical. E. W. Blaisdell, a local attorney, paid tribute to Robert Burns for his populist sympathies and credited him as being the creator of the Scottish spirit. William Marshall, another attorney, challenged Blaisdell's thesis, arguing that Burns reflected the spirit of Scotland but did not create it. He went on to trace Scotland's development, praising Scottish industry and frugality in particular.

Following the speeches came the traditional contests. Although they never seemed to involve a great number of participants, these games seemed to have attracted considerable attention. The events and the monetary prizes to be given had been cited in the advance publicity, and presumably they drew a large audience. William Prescott, "a tall man from Winnebago," was the dominant athlete on this occasion, winning four out of the five events in which he entered, the hammer throw, putting the stone, the pole vault, and the high leap. He placed second in the long leap, thereby pocketing prize money totaling ten dollars. There were the usual races for young boys and girls, plus a greased pig race for boys under fifteen, in which John Barton readily captured a "not very ambitious" pig and opted to take a two dollar prize rather than the porker. There were some real sharpshooters in the glass ball shoot. Five contestants broke all ten balls, and three of them were still tied after a five-ball shoot-off, splitting ten dollars for first prize. Three others destroyed nine of the original ten balls and were still tied for second place after they each shattered another five. Music and dancing concluded the day's festivities.

The annual Burns Club picnic returned to Milner's Stone Quarry the next year. The Register reported that about 1,500 were present at the height of the day. There were speeches, the usual games (but not the greased pig race), music, and dancing to mark a most successful day for all involved. But the scale of these picnics never quite reached that of 1879 again.

THE WATER POWER

(Continued from last issue)

Three events occurred between 1851 and 1853 to insure Rockford's progress: Rock River was effectually dammed, Rockford was incorporated as a city, and the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad was opened between Chicago and Rockford.

The dam built by the Rock Hydraulic Company had been a makeshift incapable of coping with Rock River. Spring floods battered the structure to pieces and the mills at Rockford were without power. On July 15, 1851, the Rockford Hydraulic Company was succeeded by the Rockford Water Power Company. This firm constructed a permanent dam on the site of the rock ford and dug an L-shaped millrace. The Water Power, as this development was called, attracted many pioneer industrialists to Rockford and the millrace was soon crowded with factories from end to end.

Rockford was incorporated as a city on January 3, 1852. Three months later Willard Wheeler was elected mayor at an annual salary of \$150. Four aldermen, representing each of the city's wards, composed the city council. Among the early acts of this group were ordinances prohibiting nude bathing in the Rock River between sunrise and sunset, forbidding livestock from roaming the streets, and establishing an office of "measures and inspectors" to insure that purveyors of cordwood gave honest quality and good measure.

The first council's main achievement, however, was to obtain permission from the state legislature to bond the city and build a bridge at State Street to replace a ramshackle structure that Derastus Harper had built in 1845. The new covered bridge was completed in 1854 at a cost of \$15,000. It was used until 1871, at which time a civic-conscious press referred to the once-impressive structure as a "five hundred foot livery stable."

After a two-decade struggle against financial handicaps, the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad succeeded in reaching the east bank of the Rock River in 1852. Here it paused for about a year, pending the construction of railroad bridge. Stagecoach lines connected the railhead with points farther west. On August 2, 1852, the "Pioneer", first train to arrive in Rockford, steamed in to the accompaniment of cannonades, clanging bells, and cheering crowds that had gathered from all parts of the region. The "Pioneer" is now preserved as a museum exhibit in Chicago.

The railroad immediately increased the population and industry of Rockford. The first immigrants to arrive at the city by rail (1852) were Swedes who had fled political oppression in their homeland. Legend has it that they bought tickets as far west as the railroad could take them. It is also said that succeeding immigrants arrived at New York, bearing a tag with the inscription, "Kishwaukee Street, U.S.A." A sturdy, hardworking, thrifty people, the Swedes were quick to establish themselves. Their skill in woodworking greatly aided the establishment of furniture manufacturing in Rockford, an industry that added much to the city's stature after the Civil War.

Meanwhile, the Water Power and the manufacturing of farm implements were the economic mainstays of Rockford. No man contributed more to the establishment of the latter industry than John H. Manny, of Amsterdam, New York. At the age of twenty-seven Manny had perfected a reaper that



J. H. MANNY'S REAPER AND MOWER WORKS.
 Reproduced from an interesting old poster, dated 1860.

showed great merit in competitive trials held at Geneva, New York, in 1852. Orlando Clark, of Clark and Utter, Rockford's first manufacturer of agricultural machinery, induced Manny to come to Rockford (from Freeport) in 1853. Under the inventor's supervision, 150 reapers were built in the following spring. To obtain new capital for expansion, Wait and Sylvester Talcott were taken into the firm as partners in 1854, and the concern's name was changed to John H. Manny and Company. During that year 1,100 machines were built. Jesse Blinn and Ralph Emerson joined the firm at this time and the name was again changed to Manny and Company. The success of the Manny reaper in European trials gained an international reputation for the machine. Although the New York Tribune referred to Rockford in 1853 as the "Forest City", a sobriquet which has lasted to the present day, the city was better known in the 1850s as the "Reaper City".

Cyrus McCormick, generally credited with being the inventor of the reaper, believed the Manny machine infringed on his device. A tedious lawsuit resulted and ultimately Manny was vindicated. The case attracted attention because of the calibre of the lawyers on both sides. A silent member of the Manny defense was Abraham Lincoln, who received \$1,000 for his services. Lincoln's only visit to Rockford was made in connection with this case. The suit was tried in the federal court at Cincinnati, Ohio. The defense legal staff was headed by George Harding and Edwin M. Stanton, both of whom are said to have regarded Lincoln with contempt. Later, the lanky lawyer from the Illinois backwoods was, as President of the United States, to appoint Stanton and Harding to important posts in the government. He is said later to have remarked that the \$1,000 fee was used to help finance his presidential campaign.

John H. Manny died on January 31, 1856, just too soon to profit from his court victory. The untimely loss of his genius did not, however, retard the industry's progress in Rockford, for Wait Talcott and Ralph Emerson were able successors. On the Death of Emerson in 1914, the firm that Clark and Utter had brought to Rockford was a \$50,000,000 enterprise with branch plants throughout the country under the name of the Emerson-Brantingham Company.

Other members of the Manny family contributed to Rockford's progress. John P. Manny, a cousin of John H. Manny, came to Rockford in

1854 to manufacture the knife sections of the John H. Manny reaper, employing an oil hardening process said to be still unsurpassed. In 1860 John P. Manny perfected his own combination reaper and mower. This machine was manufactured by N. C. Thompson of Rockford. For a number of years thereafter Manny received a royalty of \$15 per reaper on an average annual output of 4,000 reapers. Competition ultimately destroyed the market for the Manny reaper and Rockford lost its preeminence in this field.

Among other inventors and manufacturers who laid the foundations of Rockford's farm machine industry were W. D. Trahern, James B. Skinner, and Bertrand and Sames. As early as 1848 Trahern began manufacturing threshing machines and "horsepower" machines; later he moved to a new plant in the Water Power where he made iron pumps. James B. Skinner transformed his blacksmith shop, which stood on the present site of the Palace Theater (now a parking lot), into a factory making gang plows and riding-cultivators of his own design. As business grew he too moved down to the Water Power. In the mid-1850s Bertrand and Sames began manufacturing plows, sulky cultivators, and vibrating colters.

Historian Charles A. Church credits M. L. Gorham of Rockford with the invention of the twine binder. Prior to its development, sheaves of grain were bound with wire. A visiting inventor, realizing the possibilities of Gorham's device, is asserted to have taken the idea and put practical machines on the market before Gorham had perfected his own. Cyrus McCormick's company is said to have purchased the Gorham patents for \$25,000.

The growth of the farm machinery business created allied industries. It is probable that the foundry Duncan Forbes started about 1852 turned to the production of malleable iron castings a decade later in answer to the demand of the farm machinery manufacturers for castings. The D. Forbes and Son Foundry, forerunner of the Rockford Malleable Iron Works, was one of the first to produce malleable iron west of Pittsburgh. (It is now known as Gunite Corporation.)

Rockford grew swiftly throughout the fifties. In 1853 it had twenty-four dry goods stores, ten tailors, six drug stores, fourteen groceries, six boot and shoe stores, five hardware stores, nine millinery shops, five furniture stores, three liverys, two gun shops, a marble yard, six wagon shops, twelve blacksmiths, a brewery, a distillery, a book-bindery, an express agency, eight churches, an institute, a seminary, and sixteen private schools; it had sixteen ministers, seven doctors, eighteen lawyers, four barbers, a tobacconist, and five tanners. There were bakeries, saloons, wholesale provision houses, seven hotels, a music store, a soap factory, four lumber yards, a water cure establishment, a steam wagon shop, two exchanges, five harness shops, two sawmills, and a flour mill. Two Daguerrean salons recorded "likenesses" for posterity.

Editor's Note: This has been a continuation of the excerpt from the W.P.A. booklet entitled **ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS**, begun in the previous issue. It will be continued in the next issue.

HE BROUGHT ROBERT H. TINKER TO ROCKFORD
William A. Knowlton Gave Tinker His First Job Here

At 528 Indian Terrace stands the home of the man responsible for bringing about Robert H. Tinker's move to Rockford. William A. Knowlton was visiting one of his brothers at Westfield, New York, when he met the 20-year-old Tinker, who was working in Westfield as a bank teller.

Something about the young man apparently appealed to Knowlton, so, after returning to Rockford, he wrote to Tinker, offering him a position as a clerk. Tinker accepted, but being short on cash, decided to walk all the way to Rockford from Westfield, arriving here in August, 1856. Tinker certainly made his mark here, as all students of our city's his-



William Alfred Knowlton

tory are quite aware. His most lasting contribution, of course, is the picturesque Tinker Swiss Cottage high on the bluff above Kent Creek.

Knowlton is remembered today chiefly for having brought Tinker to Rockford. Little has been written about him in the various books printed about our community's history through the years. Probably few people know that Knowlton was a rather successful implement manufacturer for almost twenty years, or that a street and subdivision in southwest Rockford are named for him.

William A. Knowlton was born at Ellery, in Chautauqua County, New York, ca. 1830. His parents brought him to Kane County, Illinois, when he was five. About 1851 or '52 he went to Freeport to work for his older brother, Dexter Knowlton, who was a prominent financier in Stephenson County; Dexter was about eighteen years older than William. Knowlton came to Rockford in 1853, apparently to work for John H. Manny's reaper company. An article in the *Rockford Register-Gazette* in 1927 quoted Knowlton's daughter, Mary, as saying that her father had

come to act as Mr. Manny's secretary. According to Miss Knowlton, Manny recognized Knowlton's qualifications, and later, when Manny's health was failing, he made Knowlton his agent.

The *Rockford Register* of June 23, 1855, stated that Knowlton was a correspondent, one of four men in the Office Department at Manny & Company's "mammoth" reaper and mower factory. One of the men was a bookkeeper, and the other two were "writing clerks". In his autobiography, Ralph Emerson stated that "...Knowlton proved an admirable traveling agent...." Rockford's first City Directory, printed in 1857, listed Knowlton as living on Church Street between Mulberry and State Streets, but did not give his occupation.

John H. Manny died in January, 1856, leaving a widow, Mary Dorr Manny. According to an article in the 1874-5 City Directory, Knowlton "conducted the business and estate of J. H. Manny from the time of his death until 1870...." The City Directories of 1859-60 and 1866 list him as "agt., Mrs. Mary Manny...." It was apparently in his capacity as business agent for Mrs. Manny that Knowlton offered the clerk's position in his office to Robert Tinker. In his new job, Tinker of course came to know the Widow Manny, and their friendship grew, resulting in their marriage in 1870. During their period of courtship, Mrs. Manny undoubtedly turned over an increasing amount of her business affairs to Tinker.

According to Miss Mary Knowlton, it was her father who acted for Mr. Manny during the famous McCormick-Manny reaper patent infringement trial of 1855. She said, "In preparing for this trial they had engaged attorneys of national reputation, among them Edwin M. Stanton. At Mr. Knowlton's recommendation that they strengthen their defense by retaining someone to assist Mr. Stanton, and able to take his place in an emergency, they decided to call in young Mr. Lincoln... (aged 46)... of Springfield." She went on to say that Mr. Manny was very sick and confined to bed when Lincoln came to Rockford to confer with him, so Lincoln conferred with Knowlton instead: "After talking with Mr. Manny a bit, the two men (Lincoln and Knowlton) went to.... (Knowlton's....) office close by to consult records and prepare data. It was a very hot day and finally Mr. Lincoln stood up and stretched (to) his full height exclaiming, 'Knowlton, let's get out in the open; I can't think in here.'

"So they walked together," continues Miss Knowlton, "finally stopping on the north side of the west end of the State Street Bridge, the only bridge for pedestrians and vehicles across the river at that time. As I understand it, this was a covered bridge and along the west bank.... north for quite a distance was what we called 'the Green', a beautiful green space sloping to the river.

"Father pulled out a saw-horse from under the end of the bridge, and on it sat Lincoln and whittled while they talked and thought, and father, sometimes sitting and sometimes standing, threw stones into the river...."

As all Lincoln scholars know, Stanton treated Lincoln very rudely at the trial and would not even look at Lincoln's written arguments, and Lincoln was not given the opportunity to participate at all in the trial. However, according to Miss Knowlton, it was her father who wrote a check to Lincoln for \$1,000 for the time he had spent preparing for the trial.

Another anecdote told by Mary Knowlton goes as follows: "The

friendship formed by my father with Mr. Lincoln lasted as long as the latter lived, and Father visited him in Washington more than once. It was during the Civil War that one of these visits to Mr. Lincoln was made just preceding the Battle of Gettysburg, and Mr. Lincoln said, 'Mr. Knowlton, we are looking for one of the greatest battles of the war tomorrow and if you would like to witness it, I will see that provisions are made for you to go in company with officers, and that you are placed in view of the battlefield.' Mr. Ralph Emerson, one of Rockford's leading financiers, was also a Washington guest, and Mr. Knowlton said, 'If Mr. Emerson may be included in the company and if he will stay over, I would greatly appreciate this rare experience'.... As two men prepared to go to the battlefield, it was found that Mr. Emerson had only very light shoes with him and these were quite impossible to wear on this expedition. Now, Mr. Ralph Emerson was a very large man, of quite massive and imposing form, and he had feet of corresponding size, so when they searched Washington over to find boots for this distinguished guest, the quest was in vain. Mr. Knowlton sent his regrets to Mr. Lincoln in their behalf, and the two men returned to Rockford." (It is possible that Miss Knowlton was mistaken as to which battle they would have been observing. Gettysburg is about sixty-five miles from Washington, so it may have been the first or second battle of Bull Run which Mr. Lincoln had offered to let them observe.)

As early as 1869, W. A. Knowlton was listed in the City Directory as a reaper manufacturer. However, he was probably still with the reorganized Manny firm at that time, which had by then become known as the Emerson Company and was controlled by Ralph Emerson. Knowlton supposedly began his own business in 1872. The 1874-5 City Directory

Knowlton's Combined Reaper & Mower

(Widely known as the New Manny)

Stands unrivaled for its Simplicity, Durability, Ease of Draft, and Perfect Field Work.

Nothing competing with it has ever stood as well in Trials. In every Test it has won the favor of all disinterested spectators, and the highest praise and award of all committees.

THE

Dexter Walking Cultivator

Is the Cheapest (not the lowest price) Implement of its class.

It is wholly made from selected materials, with careful supervision, and has in no respect a superior in field work.

THE

Paddock Sulky Hay Rake

Stands Unequaled for Simplicity, Adjustability and Capacity. One of the best of its class.

Every implement having my name on it is fully warranted. Having been engaged in the Western trade for the past twenty years, I will make it to the interest of all farmers to patronize me.

W. A. KNOWLTON.

From 1874-5 Rockford City Directory

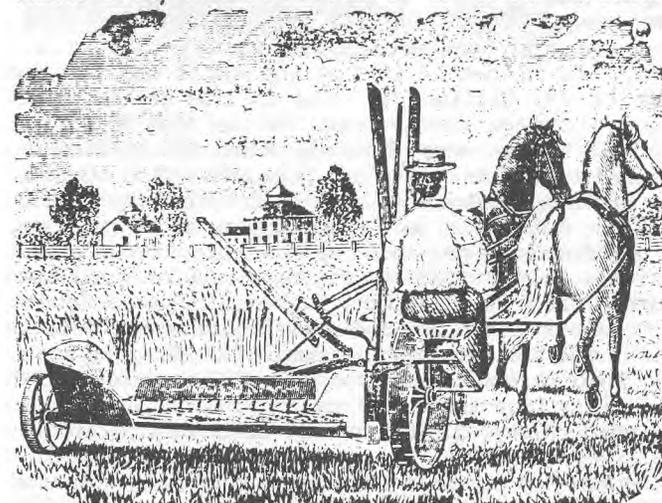
states that he "...selected some of the most skilled and experienced mechanics in the West for his employees. He purchased large stone shops on the water power, having a ground frontage of 137 feet, and gives employment to seventy-five hands. The business he transacts amounts to about \$150,000 per annum, and his manufactures are so skillfully made of the best selected materials and composed of so many improvements as to be unsurpassed....Here were manufactured last year 750 of Knowlton's new Manny combined reapers and mowers, 500 of Knowlton's Dexter walking cultivators, and 200 of Paddock's celebrated self-operating, adjustable steel tooth hay rakes. These are the 'specialties' of Mr. Knowlton's manufactures, besides which he does a large foundry business...."

Mary Knowlton stated that her father was also an inventor, and "...his last patent was on the 'wide-cut' mower. Until this time a swath of four feet could be cut rather unsuccessfully. By this improvement they were able to cut a swath of seven feet with success...."

WM. A. KNOWLTON,

MANUFACTURER OF

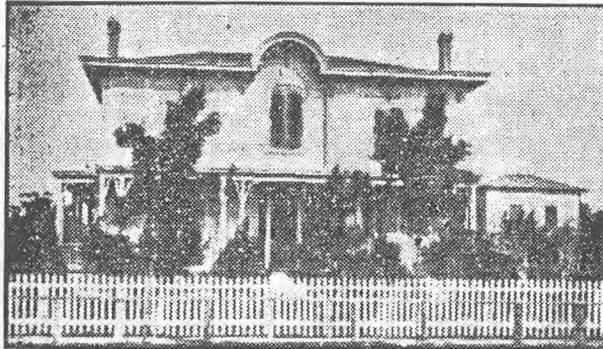
REAPERS, CULTIVATORS & HAY RAKES.



From 1874-5
Rockford City
Directory

In 1857 Mr. Knowlton married Miss Matilda Hitchcock, a daughter of Artemus Hitchcock. She was born at St. Thomas, Canada, about 1833. The family left Canada because of the Mackenzie rebellion of 1838, and arrived at Rockford in 1839. Mr. Hitchcock went into the grocery business, and eventually built a three-story building known as the "Hitchcock Block" at the northwest corner of First and East State Streets. He was Winnebago County's sixth county coroner, serving 1844 to 1850. Mr. Hitchcock died October 12, 1865.

From 1857 to 1860 the Knowltons lived on South Horsman Street. In 1860 they moved to the northwest corner of North Main and Peach Street, which was changed to West Jefferson Street after the Jefferson Street Bridge had been built. Their address was 302 N. Main Street, and was changed to 306 N. Main after the renumbering in 1894. Mr. Knowlton



Knowlton residence as originally built at North Main and Peach streets, where American Insurance company building now stands.

hired a Scotch gardener named Blair to do the landscaping. Their home was a social center for many years, as both Mr. and Mrs. Knowlton enjoyed entertaining.

Six children were born to the Knowltons: Helen, Mattie, William Jr., Evaline, David, and Mary. David died in 1864 at the age of one, Evaline died in 1900 at the age of 39, William Jr. died in 1916 at the age of 58, and Mary died in the Winnebago County Home for the Aged in 1938 at the age of 71. Helen and Mattie were the only Knowlton children who married; they both settled in Massachusetts and presumably died there.

Most companies have their ups and downs, and the Knowlton firm was no exception. Through 1887 it seemed to do fairly well most of the time, but by 1889 it had apparently gone into receivership, or at least Knowlton had lost control. In the 1889-90 City Directory he was listed merely as the resident at 302 N. Main Street, with no occupation given. In the autumn of 1891 he moved to Chicago and was associated in business with George and Hugh Ross and William Hulin, according to daughter Mary. He died suddenly of a heart attack September 17, 1892, at his home in Chicago. In the 1894-95 City Directory the Knowlton Company was said to be "in liquidation," with Henry N. Starr as "secretary" (probably receiver).

Mrs. Matilda Knowlton and her unmarried children continued to live at 306 N. Main Street (the renumbered address), where Mrs. Knowlton died quite suddenly February 2, 1897. Mary Knowlton was traveling in Europe at the time of her mother's death, so was unable to return in time for the funeral.

William Jr., Evaline, and Mary continued to live in the Knowlton residence, but Evaline died in March, 1900. William Jr. worked much of his life as a machinist. In 1904 Will and Mary, the only Knowltons left in the old house, received an offer by the American Insurance Company to purchase their property, which was just south of the present Coronado Theater. The offer was for the land only, and was enough to allow them to purchase a lot at the north end of Indian Terrace, have their home moved there, and still have a considerable sum left over. Beginning in 1905 their address was 528 Indian Terrace, but they still lived in their old family home.

Will Knowlton was said to have inventive ability, and had worked with his father at the implement company, and later at other firms. Begin-



The Knowlton Home at 528 Indian Terrace

ning about 1900, however, Will was not in good health. He returned to work for a short time in 1907, but that was all. He suffered from some kind of paralysis or crippling disease, possibly multiple sclerosis, and Mary could no longer care for him. About 1911 he was sent to West Newton, Massachusetts, to live with sister Helen (Mrs. Charles) Gibson. Perhaps the Gibsons were more affluent and could afford better care for him than he could receive at home. It was at the Gibson home that Will died November 24, 1916. Helen Gibson was in Colorado at the time, so apparently she had hired someone to care for Will while she was gone. Will was buried in Greenwood Cemetery along with his parents and his brother and sister.

Mary continued to live at 528 Indian Terrace until 1936. She was a lifelong and active member of Second Congregational Church, where her parents had been charter members. As an accomplished violinist who had studied for a time in Paris and been a violin teacher, she was active in the Mendelssohn Club, and was also affiliated with the Rockford Woman's Club, the Century Club, and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In the summer of 1936, Miss Knowlton realized she could no longer maintain the large family home, so she began to dispose of some of her possessions. The following from the **Rockford Morning Star** in July, 1936, explains where some of her belongings went:

"With the announcement today of a valuable and unusual gift, the Rockford Art association may soon boast of a new addition to its already impressive home, the Burpee Art gallery at 737 North Main street.

"From one of Rockford's oldest homes has come to the association a splendid collection of Victorian furniture and oil paintings, the gift of the owner, Miss Mary T. Knowlton.

"The collection will be used to furnish a 'Victorian room' in the Burpee gallery, and may later form the nucleus of a new wing to the

building, to be used as an historical museum for furniture and paintings.

"Miss Knowlton's gift is made in memory of her mother and father, and will be known as the William Alfred and Matilda Hitchcock Knowlton Memorial.

"Prominent in the collection, and invaluable as excellent examples of pre-civil war painting are the two oils of the late Mr. and Mrs. Knowlton, painted by a world-famous portrait artist, G. P. A. Healy. The portrait of Mr. Knowlton was painted about 1865, and that of his wife a few years later.

"Of solid, hand-carved rosewood is the precious Victorian furniture which forms part of Miss Knowlton's generous gift to the association. The collection contains two sets, each including a settee, or sofa as it was known then; an armchair and two smaller chairs to match the settee; and a table.

"Inspected recently by Frank I. Johnson, authority on period furniture, and Prof. Marques E. Reitzel, art association director, the collection was pronounced by them as one of the finest they have ever seen, and 'equal to anything in the Metropolitan museum' in New York City.

"Already installed in the entrance hall at the Burpee gallery is an antique French pier glass, moved for the first time this week in seventy-six years from its place on the wall of the Knowlton parlor. A stately, tall mirror, it has the old-fashioned gilded frame of its period, topped with a gilded cluster of grapes and vines. At its base is a marble shelf, supported by two wrought iron, gilded cranes.

"Also in the collection are three antique oil medallions, one of which is said by Miss Knowlton to have been painted by the famous French artist, Bouchet.

"When the new Victorian room is completed in the Burpee gallery, it will be a replica of the Knowlton's family parlor in their old home at 528 Indian terrace, where the donor still makes her home.

"It was in 1860 that the William Knowltons bought their home, newly-built on the corner of what is now North Main street and West Jefferson street, and where the American Insurance company building now stands....The furniture....presented to the association was bought....when they furnished their new home in 1860."

Shortly after making that valuable donation to the Rockford Art Association, Mary Knowlton moved to 408 North Horsman Street, which in those days was the Winnebago County Home for the Aged, and had previously been the home of Samuel P. Crawford, Rockford mayor from 1881 to 1883. It was there that Miss Knowlton died February 16, 1938. Her two sisters in Massachusetts had preceded her in death, so she was survived only by three nephews, three nieces, and two cousins. She was buried at Greenwood Cemetery with her parents, two brothers, and sister Evaline.

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