

# NUGGETS of HISTORY

Volume 29

Winter, 1991

Number 1

## HAVE SPENT MANY YEARS IN ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

From Rockford Register-Gazette, July 28, 1905

The death of Miss Clara F. Randall, who for 12 years was a valued and faithful instructor at the high school, serves to call to mind a score or more of teachers in the Rockford public schools who have, during their long period of service, grown to be almost permanent fixtures in their positions.

There are many of these public servants who have only terminated their connections with the public schools of the city when death cut their careers short.

They have worked hard and faithfully to enlighten the coming generation for what is in many cases a mere pittance compared to what is paid in other professions. Their school life is not one of pure joy. It requires tact, perseverance and patience, and the teacher without these qualities will nearly always fall short of the goal of success.

The responsibility attendant with the care of so many children, especially in the lower grades, is a severe strain upon them. Their tasks sometimes are irksome, but they go through them with a cheerfulness, for it does not do to be otherwise in the school room.

The average school teacher lives on no bed of roses. Poorly paid are they, and never short of criticism by an ever too critical public when the least thing goes wrong in school. Under the sharp scrutiny of the public at all times, they are given little choice but doing the public's will. Despite this, many who entered the service of the city 20, 30 and even 40 years ago are yet today found in their places instilling knowledge to the young and making of the coming generations better men and women.

To Prof. O. F. Barbour and Miss Ella Jenks are awarded the honors of being in the public school work for the longest period. Both have taught school in this city 39 years, beginning their 40th term next fall. Prof. Barbour is too well known to need mention. He has been principal of Kent School for years and has taken an active part in the school work of the city as a whole. Miss Jenks was for many years in charge of various grade rooms but is now principal of Church School, a post of honor well earned by her years of meritorious service.

Miss May G. McPherson, principal of Henry Freeman School, has been in the service of the city for 36 years. Mrs. Marie Rice, principal of Brown School and Miss Elpha S. Moffatt, principal of Montague School, have each seen 29 years of service in the schools.

Mrs. Belle Carkhuff, teacher at Kishwaukee School, finished 25 years of work in the schools this spring. Miss Rose Cassidy, principal of Turner School, has been in the city's service for 24 years. She was for many years principal of Marsh School, but upon the completion of Turner School she was transferred there. Miss Achsah Seal, instructor at Hall School, ranks next with 23 years to her credit.

Miss Matilda Nygren, principal of Kishwaukee School, and Miss Carrie Goodfellow, principal of Haskell School, and Miss Emma Coy, principal of Hall School, have each been 22 years in the school work. Miss Ellen Fitzgerald, principal of Blake School has been a teacher for 21 years, and Miss Adela Andrew of Henry Freeman School has served an even score of years.

Those who have served from 15 to 20 years are numerous. Miss Mary C. Foote, principal of Jackson School, has been in the school work 19

years. She was principal of Wight School for many years but was transferred to the new Jackson School last fall. Miss Lillian E. Martin, principal of Lincoln School (later known as Franklin School after Lincoln Junior High was opened), and Miss Margaret Connolly of Hall School, have each taught 17 years, while Miss Grace Crumb, principal of Garrison School, has been engaged in the school work 15 years.

There are many others who should have a place on this roll of honor but whose names are left off solely owing to lack of space.

At the high school Miss Jennie Waldo has been in charge of the science work for the past 22 years. She is an excellent instructor, and it has indeed been fortunate that the school has been able to retain her for nearly a quarter of a century. Miss Harriet Morse has served 18 years in the high school. She is a most efficient instructor in mathematics and is one of the most valued members of the faculty.

Changes have been more numerous at the high school than in the grades and the list does not contain as many names. The institution has been fortunate in having Miss Waldo and Miss Morse for so long a period. They are very valuable teachers and could ill be spared from the faculty.

These servants of the public in the schools have done their work extremely well and are entitled to all the credit that can possibly be given them. The public should co-operate with them and see that their burdens are made lighter, and they will be able to give even more time to their work than in years past.

#### **TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, AND JEWELER'S WIFE**

#### **Ella Fitzgerald Was All Three During Short Life**

One of the teachers mentioned in the previous article, first published in 1905, was Miss Ellen Fitzgerald, usually known as Ella, who at that time was principal of Blake School, located on the southeast corner of Chestnut and South Court Streets. Further research reveals that Miss Fitzgerald's career in education was soon over, and even her life would end within less than four years.

Ella Fitzgerald was born in Rockford February 26, 1863, daughter of William and Mary Fitzgerald. The family lived on North Madison Street, then known as "North Main, East Rockford", until about 1882, when they moved to the 400 block of North Second Street. Mr. Fitzgerald was a laborer.

Ella began her career as a teacher about 1884, and as far as can be determined she taught only at Hall School until February of 1905. She was then appointed to succeed Ada C. Waldo, principal at Blake School since about 1895. Miss Waldo had resigned because of poor health, and died January 7, 1906.

On July 11, 1906, at the age of 43, Miss Fitzgerald married Edwin P. Barrett, a former jeweler who in 1903 had switched to insurance. The new Mrs. Barrett resigned her position at Blake School, and for the next two-and-a-half years was a housewife, while doing some substituting in various schools. She was also an active worker at St. James Catholic Church, where she was a member.

Ella Barrett suffered a heart attack on New Years Day of 1909 and never recovered. Few of her "large circle of friends" realized how serious her illness was, so her death from heart failure came as a great shock to many. She died March 5, 1909, in her home at 1309 Benton Street.

#### **THE OUTLOOK CLUB 1892-1992**

**by Elaine Carlson**

Although the last decade of the 19th Century is remembered as "The Gay Nineties", the last 25 years preceding 1900 saw the birth of many serious Women's Clubs around the country. One such group was The Outlook Club which this year, 1992, will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

In 1900 Rockford women hosted the 6th Annual Meeting of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. An article appeared in *The Western World* magazine for October, 1900, from which are excerpted the following items, with an emphasis on the Outlook Club:

The sixth annual meeting of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs will be held in Rockford, Ill., Oct. 16, 17, 18 and 19.

Rockford is called the "Forest City," and the delegates will find the natural attractions very great; the beautiful Rock River, a broad majestic stream, divides the city, and affords most picturesque and delightful views. The elegant homes are surrounded by spacious and well kept private grounds, and the streets are lined with grand old trees, which convert the avenues into veritable parks.

All this will but afford delight to the eyes of the delegates and friends, who will go there, but the true wealth and beauty of Rockford is in her many noble women. Many of them are prominent and noted, admired and loved not only in Rockford, but abroad, in our own and other lands.

Those women have arranged every detail that they may anticipate all that shall contribute to the pleasure and comfort of their guests. Arrangements have been made to entertain in their homes two delegates from each federated club, federation officers, speakers and members of standing committees, while the Nelson, a perfectly appointed hotel, the hotel headquarters of the federation, will afford most commodious and pleasant accommodations for the visiting club members. The meetings will be held in the Second Congregational Church. Rockford manifests an atmosphere of healthful morality by its numerous and imposing church edifices. One of the most costly and largest has been most hospitably given for these meetings, and the Parish Memorial House, just across the street, has opened its doors for the noon luncheon. All this is but the setting. The wealth of hospitable instincts, which bear traces of old New England, will be expressed in a most lavish manner by numerous social functions, given by individual members and local clubs.

The Rockford federation, which is the hostess of this occasion, comprises many clubs, nine in all. It is noticeable that the work of each club is distinctively literary, and that each has a limited membership. It has been said that this can, in a measure, be accounted for by the fact that one of the aims of Rockford College has always been to maintain a high degree of scholarship rather than a large number of pupils. Many leading women of Rockford have their alma mater in this college, and it is but natural that those devoted daughters should continue their work, since leaving college, with this same marked characteristic. Mrs. Seely Perry, the beloved, admired and respected president at large of the Illinois State Federation of Woman's Clubs, is the president of Rockford Federation. It is due in a great measure to her excellent leadership that much of this work has been made possible. A

graduate of Rockford College, she later received her M.A. Not only has her influence been felt along literary lines, but her ability as a leader, and her noble and generous nature has identified her with every progressive movement in her own city, reaching out far beyond. As a trustee of Rockford College she has actively promoted the best interests of that institution, of which Rockford has been justly proud. She is a womanly woman, and her influence is always given for that which will tend for intellectual, social or moral advancement.

The work of the federation has been along philanthropic and practical lines, and much definite work has been accomplished. During the first year twenty-three libraries, of forty volumes each, cased and catalogued, were placed in the public schools of the city. For several years a Pingree potato patch has been maintained with most successful results, showing the educational and economic value of the experiment. A good work has also been done in co-operating with the local humane society. An art exhibit was very elaborately arranged and the school children were given the benefit of it, and in addition a large number of fine pictures, framed, have been placed in the public schools. A simple but unique feature has been the table of missionary literature maintained in the public library. The churches contribute their own denominational magazines. This table is in charge of a committee, who arrange a special catalogue, and from time to time by press notices or in other ways, keep it well before the public. This is found most useful to those interested in preparing for missionary programs, as it makes the current literature of all mission fields available.

The cordial relation of club and press has enabled the federation to exert a much more powerful influence in the community than it otherwise could have done. The press has in every way co-operated and endorsed the work, and the spirit of united interest and purpose has been most marked.

The Outlook Club has just completed its eighth year of consecutive study and is somewhat unique both in organization and manner of conduct. Most clubs are formed by coteries of intimate friends, but this one has often numbered entire strangers among its members at the beginning of a season. The object of the club is study, and from the first it has employed a leader at definite salary, whose business it is to arrange the syllabi and assign the parts for study, based mainly on references to books in the city library. Any lady who is willing to pay the required fee and do the assigned work may apply for membership. The club numbers from twenty-five to thirty, and fifty percent of the charter members are still on its roster, and many others have been connected with the club from three to five years. The Outlook has found it of great advantage to have its work planned, and its book selections made by one having professional training, and credits much of its success and enthusiasm to the leadership of Mrs. Caroline P. Brazee. The first two years were spent in the study of American intellectual development as shown in newspapers and periodicals, colleges, oratory, literature proper and in statesmen. The third season was spent on English drama. The fourth, fifth and sixth were devoted respectively to the Renaissance Reformation period in Italy, Germany and France. A year upon Russia, past and present, followed, and that just finished was given to the work of certain selected artists. The winter of 1900-1901 is to be spent in studies upon the development of Winnebago County.



MRS. CAROLINE POTTER BRAZEE.



MRS. E. S. GREGORY.

Though the main work of the club is open to the oft-repeated accusation of selfishness, as looking only toward personal improvement, still there has been an alertness to the activities of the time, and the trend of current thought, and delving in the past seems to have given the members of the Outlook a more just and broad-minded attitude toward the future. The officers for 1900-1901 are: President, Mrs. Eduard S. Gregory; vice-president, Miss Harriet Morse; recording secretary, Mrs. Chas. A. Church; corresponding secretary, Mrs. L. L. Morrison; treasurer, Mr. M. M. Carpenter. To Mrs. Carroline Potter Brazee, M.A., is due much credit for the high degree of discipline and culture shown in the club work. Having received her degree of M.A., she carries college methods into the club. Her work has not been so much as an organizer or as an executive officer, but she has promoted study along lines of consecutive thought, which has led to practical results. Her services are of such value that from year to year she is regularly engaged to prepare outlines of study, and to lead in conversation not only in Rockford clubs, but elsewhere.

Dues in those early days were \$4 a year, which for those times was a sizable fee. These dues were needed, as the leader, Mrs. Caroline Brazee, was paid \$75 a year for her guidance. From the time of its organization, Outlook has been a well-regulated organization, with a Constitution and By-laws which were adopted at the first regular meeting. Originally meetings were fortnightly on Saturday afternoons. It was preeminently a "study club".

In 1904 the *Register Gazette*, in its Historical, Biographical, Industrial Special Edition, carried the following article about the Outlook Club along with information about numerous other clubs:

The Outlook club is one of the largest organizations of the kind in the city, having a charter membership of thirty-three, which has varied but slightly during the years of its existence. It is composed of many well known Rockford women prominent in all good works both literary and philanthropic. Among its earliest and active members were Mrs. Ella Root, Miss Lena Todd and Mrs. Samuel Baker. Mrs. E. S. Gregory was the first president and much of the time its hostess. Under the able leadership of Mrs. Brazee the club has explored hitherto unknown regions of history and ethics. It was organized in 1892 under the name of the Columbia club, a systematic report being given of the World's fair at each meeting. Some idea of the value and pleasure derived from this association can be estimated from the nature of their plans for study. The first subject was American literature from the earliest productions, the colonial

newspaper and origin of the magazine in 1741 in Benjamin Franklin's General Magazine; the political history of America - rise of parties and the great leaders; the Renaissance as it affected the history and art of Italy, Germany and other countries. A delightful winter was spent with the art of twelve great artists. The poets were not forgotten, and a number of afternoons were spent with the work of some poet. One of the most delightful was the Tennyson afternoon, supplemented by a lecture by Mr. Charles A. Church, on his In Memoriam, which was a gem in sentiment and expression.

Walks and Studies in ancient London awakened many interesting memories. Paris as an Intellectual Center carried them to that greatest of all art galleries - the Louvre - with its seven miles of paintings and sculpture.

Some Aspects of Fiction were considered, with the thought that the imaginative and idealizing faculty revealed in all ages needs no apology. The passing of the old romance, with its turreted castles, brave knights and fair ladies, was traced to the modern historical and purpose novel, and examples of Victor Hugo, Hawthorne, Chas. Reade's and of many other well known authors were studied in detail and very many lessons learned from coming into touch with human nature and its needs, its joys and sorrows, between the covers of a novel.

The quaint little country of Holland, rescued from the sea by such herculean efforts, occupied one winter, with all the changes which time brings and the people who made it, by their sturdy industry, that which it is today.

All through the early years of the 20th Century the club carried on its fortnightly meetings, although the meeting day was changed to Monday. A perusal of program notes through the World War I years shows no special notice of that event. However, during World War II special note was taken of sons, husbands and brothers in service, and in 1942 an Honor Roll of their names was recorded in the Club's historical files.

Many well-known local women have been members of the Outlook Club throughout its history. By the time Charles A. Church's third and last history of Winnebago County was published in 1916, his wife had become president and had been replaced as recording secretary by Mrs. Daniel Lichty. Mrs. Caroline Brazee was no longer the leader of their intellectual pursuits; instead, various members took their turns. Examples of other women who have been members were Mrs. Betty Dame, who spent 21 years as a missionary to Saudi Arabia; Katherine Obye, a well-known English teacher and advisor for student publications both at Rockford High School and West High; Hazel Koch, English teacher and counselor at Rockford High School and East High; and Elizabeth Plueddeman, well-known Rockford teacher, Church woman and historian.

Women in the Club today include retired teachers, librarians, business women and homemakers. This coming September, 1992, the group will celebrate 100 years of activity.

#### OUR FIRST SUFFRAGISTS

(Reprinted from the ROCKFORD MORNING STAR of Jan. 30, 1942)

Rockford was the scene Jan. 24, 1888, of the first woman suffrage convention to meet in Illinois. Few men attended the sessions, which were held in Centennial church, but there was city-wide discussion of the movement. Rockford newspapers interviewed citizens on the question.

Among clergymen opposed to permitting women to vote were Dr. J. H. Sutherland, Dr. Frank P. Woodbury, the Rev. Fr. Murphy, the Revs. D. C. Peabody, P. W. Swift, C. G. Lundell, L. A. Johnston. In favor of woman suffrage were the Revs. A. J. Brill, W. H. Haight, M. E. Cady, J. T. Burhoe, G. R. Vanhorne, W. A. Stanton. Dr. Thomas Kerr had no objection, especially to voting in municipal affairs. Dr. Woodbury was quoted, "It will be a curse to the land when women vote." The Rev. S. L. Conde, opposing it, believed it was coming.

Rockford newspapers also interviewed prominent women on the question. Opposed to women voting were Mrs. Gilbert Woodruff, Mrs. H. W. Buckbee, Mrs. E. M. Botsford, Mrs. Henry Richings, Mrs. H. W. Taylor, Mrs. W. H. Fitch, Mrs. E. L. Woodruff, Mrs. J. S. Ticknor, Mrs. Frank P. Woodbury, Mrs. G. B. Kelly, Mrs. I. L. Andrew, Mrs. C. C. Jones, Mrs. Levi Rhoades, Miss Martha Hillard, head of Rockford College. Mrs. William Brown thought women ought to be permitted to vote on municipal questions.

Favoring the ballot for women were Mrs. F. K. Hill, Mrs. F. N. Davis, Mrs. Horace Scovill, Mrs. S. P. Crawford, Mrs. C. L. Miller, Mrs. J. W. Hart, Mrs. Clinton Helm. Kate F. O'Connor, urging the ballot for women, said it was inevitable. Mrs. Ralph Emerson thought it more unfortunate that women were not permitted to serve on juries.

#### DAUGHTER OF EARLY ROCKFORD SETTLERS

Mary Kilburn Carrico Born in 1840

When Mary Kilburn Carrico died on October 16, 1927, all three Rockford newspapers the next day proclaimed that she was the first white child born in Winnebago County. However, Charles A. Church, in his three histories of the county, gave that honor to Melissa J. Long, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Long, who, according to Church, was born in February of 1836.

Church was probably correct, but even without the honor of being the first child born here, Mrs. Carrico nevertheless achieved a certain amount of local fame. Mary Louise Kilburn was born April 17, 1840, to Benjamin and Eleanor Maynard Kilburn. Mr. Kilburn, born at Belchertown, Massachusetts, first came to Rockford in 1836, accompanied by his wife's brother, Henry Maynard. He bought a lot at the southeast corner of what are now South Main and Chestnut Streets and hired a carpenter to build a house. He returned to Massachusetts, and the following spring returned with his wife and family. Kilburn later purchased a quarter section of land northwest of town. When he found there was limestone on his land, he established a stone quarry on much of it. Kilburn's quarter section was bounded by Auburn Street on the north, Rockton Avenue on the east, School Street on the south, and North Avon Street on the west.

On November 10, 1857, Mary Kilburn was married to Thomas W. Carrico, who was born at Beverly, Massachusetts, June 9, 1830. He was brought by his parents to Logan, Iowa, at an early age and grew up there. In 1854 he arrived in Winnebago County and opened a stone quarry at Rockton, which he sold in 1857. He went into business with his father-in-law, Mr. Kilburn, in the quarry which stretched from North Horsman Street to North Avon Street a short distance south of Auburn. When Kilburn died in 1860, Carrico took over operation of the quarry, which he continued to operate until his death in 1908.

When Benjamin Kilburn purchased his quarter section of land between

School and Auburn Streets, he sold his home at South Main and Chestnut; it was razed about 1892 to make way for the Nelson Hotel. Kilburn built a new home in the 800 block of Pecatonica Road, which later became Kilburn Avenue. The address was later 923 Kilburn Avenue. As a child, Mary Louise saw Rockford grow from a stretch of wild prairie land on which Indians still occasionally roamed. She saw the first railroad come to town on the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad in 1852, when it let the passengers off on a platform near Fourth Avenue between Fourth Street and Kishwaukee.

Mrs. Carrico attended Rockford College for a short time, but as she was married before turning eighteen years of age, there was not much time for advanced schooling. For many years she centered her attention on her home, but also took an active interest in the work of the Christian Union, where the Carricos were members. When her husband died September 22, 1908, less than a year after their golden wedding anniversary, Mrs. Carrico assumed the presidency of the Carrico Stone Company, with her son Fred becoming the secretary, treasurer, and manager.

Sometime before 1920 Mrs. Carrico left the family home on Kilburn Avenue, where she was born and grew up, and moved to 919 Garfield Avenue. In the early nineteen-twenties, the Carricos sold the quarry to the Northern Illinois Supply Company, and Fred Carrico started a real estate agency. Mary Carrico continued to live in her home on Garfield Avenue. In late September of 1927 she became ill with bronchial pneumonia, and at eight o'clock on Sunday evening, October 16, 1927, Mary Louise Kilburn Carrico died at the age of eighty-seven. In addition to her son Fred, she left five grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

#### **"CRADLE OF BASEBALL"**

**by W. Ashton Johnson**

**(Written about 1965)**

**(Continued from last issue)**

Rockford took advantage of Springfield's withdrawal from the Three-Eye circuit in the spring of 1915, when Howard Wakefield assumed the managership. War activity caused an abbreviated season in 1917 and league officials decided to disband for the entire season of 1918. Following World War I, Rockford returned to league play, being the only club in Three-Eye not affiliated with a major league club.

The city retained its franchise through the 1923 season. Moline, the only northern club in the circuit except Rockford, withdrew because of straitened treasury trouble, and Rockford asked to quit the Three-Eye because of heavy transportation expenses. Not until 1943, during World War II, was the city again represented in a professional league. This time it was the American Girl's Professional Baseball loop that drew the largest crowds ever to jam a ball park here. The idea was a Philip K. Wrigley (Chicago Cubs magnate) plan to fill big league parks when and if schedules were junked in the major circuits.

The Rockford Peaches, several of whom were recruited from Canadian provincial championship teams, were popular here for nine of the eleven years of the league's existence. Rockford won pennants and always fielded an aggressive team. During one season 127,000 paid to view the girls in their short skirts romp over the diamond at Beyer Stadium. Rockford entered a men's team in the Class "C" Northern League in 1947 - a Cincinnati farm club - but the players sent here were mostly discouraged youths picked up in the draft. Listless play resulted in poor attendance. The Peaches proved too popular for the

luckless Rockford "Rox", outdrawing them 5 to 1 at the gate. The league broke up in 1949, with transportation stubs and debts staring the officers in the face. In 1954, the novelty of watching girls play baseball wore off. With the Milwaukee Braves but 90 minutes away and two Chicago major league clubs 86 miles away, Rockford fans enjoyed their baseball via motor trips.

With the dissolution of the American Girls' Baseball League in 1954, local followers of the national pastime turned their interest toward industrial loop twilight games. The rapid development of the Junior Baseball program since its inception in the "Depression Thirties" resulted in the increased use of public park diamonds. When Walter R. Craig Post of the American Legion leased a small tract off Auburn Street to launch its boys' baseball program, attendance was small. When the Jaycees got behind the program, several parks were used several nights weekly. There were more than 30 teams playing when girls' baseball passed out of the picture.

The need of a modern miniature diamond adapted for kid games attracted the attention of Roy Gayle, Willwood Memorial Cemetery executive, in 1960. Accordingly Rockford Boys' Baseball, Inc., became possessors of a 5-acre tract near the corner of Meridian road and U.S. 20, the gift of the Gayle family, in 1961. Generous Rockfordites raised a fund for construction of bleachers, dressing rooms, and other essentials, and the Roy Gayle Baseball Park was ready for youthful "Ty Cobbs and Walter Johnsons".

With these modern facilities in use, officers of the junior baseball organization sought and secured the Junior Pony Baseball national championship tournament for 1963. So successful was the undertaking that national officers chose Rockford for the second tournament scene in 1964.

Another season is at hand (1965). There are 150 teams that will have sponsors in the Greater Rockford area. Whether our Colts, Ponies, or Junior Ponies reach high high tournament play is not the only goal ahead. Increased interest among youngsters from 10 to upper teen-age is a guarantee that popularity of this great outdoor sport and pastime is here to stay.

#### **Rockford's Baseball Managers**

George King was business manager of the famous Forest City club, 1865-66; Henry N. Starr, 1867-70; George Ross and Starr, 1871; James F. McKee, president of short-lived league, while Frank C. Lander was manager, 1879; Henry W. Allen and Frank C. Lander, 1888; Hugh Nicol, 1891-92, 1896-98; 1901-1904; George Bubser, 1908-1912; Francis (Frankly Speaking) Edmison, the noted columnist, was president of the W-I loop for one season; Howard Wakefield, 1915-1917. Other local managers during the W-I League were Frank Richards, Charles Golden, Orville Wolf, Clarence Marshall and Clifford Dulin. Other Three-Eye League local managers were: Henry Hines, Varney Anderson, John A. Croon and Carl H. Glans. In the Girls' loop John Arthur Lundahl and Carl H. Glans, the local deans of the baseball fraternity in northern Illinois; Mayor Benjamin Schleicher and Beryl (Shorty) Adams held the reins.

An interesting sidelight on profits derived by stockholders in Rockford baseball clubs is this fact. Only once in 100 years have the backers of local teams been paid off dollar for dollar. It happened in 1915, when Carl Glans attended a Three-Eye League session and sold several players to other clubs just 12 hours before Rockford was "invited" to drop out of the circuit!

### Our Baseballs are Relics

Two Rockford women have unearthed two hand-stitched baseballs used by the famous Forest City baseball club nearly one hundred years ago. Mrs. A. W. Fletcher, 1532 Jackson St. and Mrs. Joseph Westerberg, Sr., 1620 Crosby St., have learned that their souvenirs are acceptable to the Cooperstown, N.Y., Hall of Fame curators. They are to be encased in glass display cabinets and labeled thus:

"A baseball used by Al. G. Spalding, when he pitched for the Rockford, Ill., Forest Citys, 1866-1870."

"Baseball allegedly used when Frank Osborn made the last out in game between Forest Citys of Rockford and the Cincinnati Red Legs in 1869. The Reds were stopped by the touring Illinoisans after earning the role of champions following twenty-one consecutive victories."

The names of the donors will be inscribed on the placard, it was reported.

Mrs. Fletcher informed Junior Baseball commissioners here that her husband's stepfather, Osborn, had presented the relic to the younger man several years ago. Where the Westerberg ball reposed ceased to be a mystery shortly after the late banker's death. The widow found it wrapped in a cloth in her husband's safety deposit box in what was then the Third National Bank.

"How Joe came by the souvenir I do not know," explained Mrs. Westerberg. "He had never mentioned it, but I felt it must be a treasured relic...When I read of the proposed centennial observance of Junior Baseball, I made inquiry at the Boys Club."

Both women expressed the wish to visit the baseball museum.

(Editor's Note: Mr. W. Ashton Johnson, founder and first editor of NUGGETS OF HISTORY, died December 11, 1965. During the last year of his life he was finishing a history of Rockford on which he had been working for several years. He finished it shortly before his death, but it was never published. His widow, the late Mabel Johnson, turned it over to the Rockford Historical Society, and from time to time we have been publishing various chapters, of which "Cradle of Baseball" is one.)

### AN EARLY ROCKFORD HARDWARE DEALER AND ONE OF JOHN H. MANNY'S PARTNERS The Story of Jesse Blinn

One of the partners in the Manny Reaper Company, at the time of McCormick's lawsuit against Manny for patent infringement, was Jesse Blinn. As he sold out to the other partners about 1858, little has been written about Blinn.

Jesse Blinn was born April 9, 1809, at Bennington, Vermont, the fifth child of Theodore Blinn and Sarah Wright Blinn. At that time Abraham Lincoln was an infant, less than two months old, near Hodgenville, Kentucky. In 1818 Theodore Blinn moved his family to Saybrook, Ohio, about six miles southwest of Ashtabula. There Jesse spent the remainder of his boyhood, and eventually was apprenticed to a wagon maker. In 1831, at the age of twenty-two, he moved about 20 miles northeast to Conneaut, Ohio, to pursue his trade. It was there that he met his life's companion.

Aurilla Simons was from Lebanon, New Hampshire, where she was born

November 9, 1914. She was a descendant of Lord James Loudon of Scotland, and among her treasured possessions were some handwritten lines by the poet Robert Burns, commemorating a visit to Loudon castle. When Aurilla was a child, the family moved to Conneaut, Ohio, where on March 16, 1834, when only about four months past the age of nineteen, she married 25-year-old Jesse Blinn.

Shortly after their marriage, the young couple moved to Chicago, where Jesse became the manager of the Mansion House hotel, with Aurilla as the hostess. The Mansion House was a center of the social life of the town, and the Blinns became well-acquainted with "Long John" Wentworth, Gilbert Hubbard, William Ogden, and other men important in the early history of Chicago. There were still Indians near Chicago in those days, so a garrison of soldiers was stationed at Fort Dearborn. The officers often spent their leisure hours at the Mansion House. In later years Aurilla recalled many interesting incidents of her stay in Chicago.

In 1836 the Blinns returned to Conneaut, Ohio, but in January, 1837, they moved west to Toledo. What line of work Jesse followed in Conneaut and Toledo during this period is unknown, but presumably he returned to his trade of wagon making. Leaving Toledo in May, 1838, Jesse continued his journey westward, temporarily leaving his family in Toledo. Passing through Chicago, he pursued his pilgrimage until reaching Winnebago County. Here he settled at Macktown, the village founded by Stephen Mack at the mouth of the Peconica River. He then sent for his family, and they arrived at Macktown July 11, 1838. The ferry at Macktown was established by Mack in 1838 and later was sold to Jesse Blinn, who ran it for a while.

Macktown was in its final days as a town, having lost out to Rockton because of a bridge built there. The Blinns soon moved to Rockton, where Jesse followed his trade and also, for six years, served as justice of the peace.

When Rockford's first Masonic Lodge, No. 102, was organized February 13, 1851, Jesse Blinn was among the twelve charter members, although he still resided at Rockton. On May 13, 1851, however, the Blinn family moved to Rockford, where they continued to reside.

About that time a hardware firm, Fisher, Keep & Co., decided to establish a hardware store at Rockford. Somehow, Jesse Blinn was chosen as manager, although as far as is known, he had no previous experience in the hardware business. His experience as a wagon maker and managing a hotel probably were enough to qualify him for the job.

Ralph Emerson was working at the Fisher-Keep store in Beloit. The owners decided they would like to sell the Rockford store, so they suggested to Emerson that he join with Blinn to buy it. Blinn and Emerson thereby became partners in the business, located on the east side of South Main Street between Elm and Chestnut Streets.

A hardware store in those days, in addition to the usual hardware goods, sold metal stock such as could be used to make machinery parts. As Rockford was the end of the railroad line in 1852 and 1853, the Blinn-Emerson firm sold goods to many customers as far away as 60 miles to the west. Among their customers was the John H. Manny reaper firm of Waddams Grove and Freeport. Manny needed credit to purchase his material, and offered to move much of his manufacturing to Rockford if Blinn and Emerson would extend him credit.

This was agreed, but even with the extended credit, Manny needed more capital, so Wait and Sylvester Talcott were added to the firm. In the fall of 1854 Jesse Blinn and Ralph Emerson were also asked to join the

Manny Company, probably both for their business experience and for the additional capital they could bring. Emerson began to spend most of his time at the reaper factory, leaving operation of the hardware business to Blinn. The Blinn & Emerson Hardware firm was still listed in the 1857 City Directory, by that time having moved to West State Street somewhere between Main and Church Streets. It was disbanded soon after that, and at about that time the decision was made that the other partners in the Manny firm would purchase Jesse Blinn's interest in the company. The agreed-upon amount was approximately \$37,000.

Blinn was nearing fifty at that time and was not in good health. He did join for a time with F. H. Manny, a cousin of J. H. Manny, and with W. C. Culver in an enterprise producing reapers and fanning mills. He was also one of fifteen Rockford businessmen who organized the Kenosha & Rockford Railroad, which received its charter January 20, 1857. Other well-known Rockfordites among the organizers were Jason Marsh, George Haskell, David S. Penfield, Robert C. Lane, C. C. Briggs, Charles H. Spafford, and Seely Perry. The road was completed between Harvard and Rockford November 21, 1859, but never reached Kenosha. It was later acquired by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad.

The Blinn home was on North Horsman Street. In the City Directories, it was variously described as "E of Pecatonica & W Horsman" (Pecatonica Street is now known as Kilburn Avenue); corner Horsman & Cherry, west side; Horsman between Cherry and Locust Streets; and 504 Horsman Street. The numbering system changed somewhat in 1894, so most house numbers were changed at least slightly at that time. When Jesse Blinn died in 1879, Aurilla continued to live at 504 Horsman until about 1891, when she moved to the home of her daughter.

For fifty years, Jesse Blinn suffered from asthma. For the last year of his life his health was failing rapidly, but during most of that time he was at least able to enjoy life. He belonged to the Early Settlers' Society and attended most of their meetings. The Blinns had four children, three sons and a daughter. William C. Blinn for many years was a bookkeeper with the J. P. Manny Mower Company, eventually becoming secretary-treasurer of the firm. About 1896 he became president of the Rockford Burial Case Company; he lived at 1806 National Avenue. Edmund B. Blinn was a painter and paper hanger for many years, eventually becoming an interior decorator. Another son, Charles E. Blinn, moved to Humboldt, Iowa. The daughter, with whom Aurilla Blinn lived for the last fifteen years of her life, was Mrs. Laura Holland, wife of Hosmer P. Holland, a lawyer and financier. The Hollands lived at 1717 National Avenue.

Jesse Blinn died August 29, 1879, having suffered what his physician described as a severe attack of acute inflammation of the bowels. He was 70 years old. Aurilla was a widow for over twenty-five years. She died March 30, 1905, at the age of ninety.

\*\*\*\*\*

**NUGGETS OF HISTORY** is published quarterly by the  
Rockford Historical Society, Rockford, Illinois  
President.....Richard J. Marsh  
Vice President.....John J. Crandall  
Editor.....Robert H. Borden  
Associate Editor.....Hazel M. Hyde  
Membership Chairman.....Gertrude Mead  
Recording Secretary.....Martha E. Mangas  
Corresponding Secretary.....Eldora M. Ozanne  
Treasurer.....Russell H. Carlson