

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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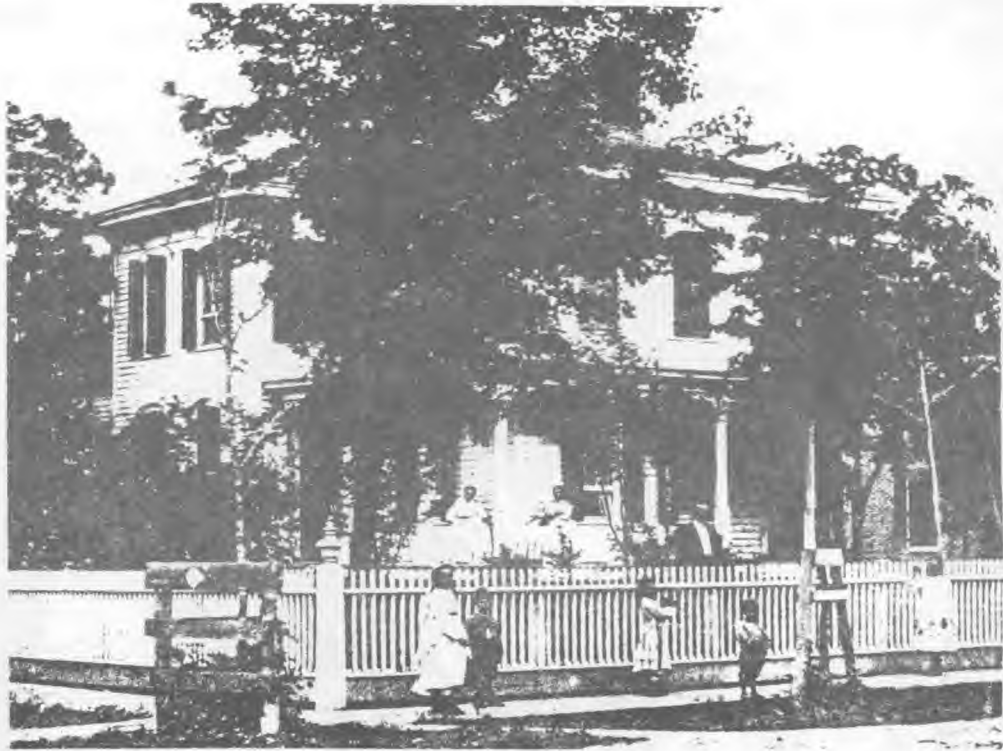


The Anderson - Peterson- Johnson Picnic With 20 Ft. Flag

Former State Senator Andrew J. Anderson and His Family

by

Hazel Mortimer Hyde



Cora's Childhood Home

The house in 1876. S. A. Johnson stands in the yard, the lady in the white dress is Augusta Peterson, the other lady seated is Mrs. Johnson. Hilma with Armer alongside wears the polonaise dress; Amanda is about to toss the ball to Ada and Victor stands at the edge of the walk in a characteristic pose. The trees were boxed-in because wandering cows were often tempted to nibble at the tender bark.

CORRECTION: In the article "Former State Senator Andrew J. Anderson and His Family" Vol. 30, the two words after "I" in the second line are "Joan Hoffman" and should be "Hazel Hyde". Without this correction the perspective of the story is changed. Mrs. Hyde, who is not Swedish, found that she and her family had moved to an historic street, still home to many descendants of original immigrants from Sweden. Her main source of factual information for the family of Senator Anderson and Miss Maude Johnson was noted under the title line, but the personal viewpoint is that of Hazel Mortimer (later Mrs. Harold Hyde) who later wrote her thesis at Northwestern University under the sponsorship of Dr. Leland Carlson on "The Swedish Chapter of the History of Rockford, Illinois". Miss Mortimer took lessons in Swedish at the Salvation Army Center and interviewed approximately 100 people connected with industries started by Swedish people or the early settlement in Rockford.

The "I" in this story is to indicate that any errors of fact are from a person who is trying to learn about her new community. Some other families not mentioned in the story were the Webecks, Flobergs, and Westrings. The pictures and factual material were obtained from the family history of Joan Hoffman, but they are presented from the viewpoint of Hazel Mortimer Hyde, who thoroughly enjoyed her years while living on Kishwaukee Street and still enjoys friendships made on that historic street. (See **NUGGETS OF HISTORY**, Vol. 30 pp. 7-8.)

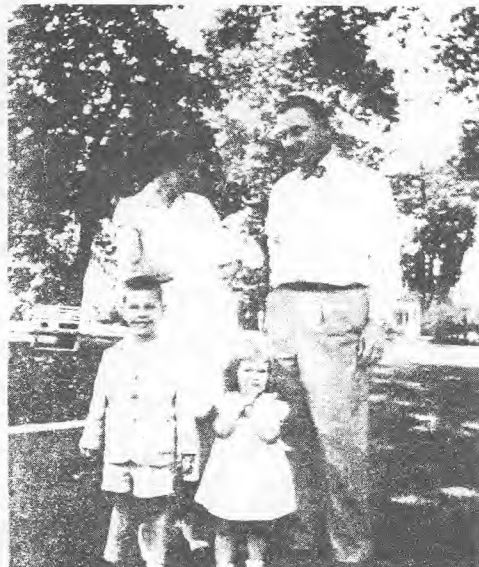
strange and fascinating one. He was educated at Dartmouth College, but not caring for literary pursuits he established himself out in the woods, miles away from white people; married a squaw named Hononegah and in habits became almost an Indian himself.

The first white settlers of Rockford were Germanicus Kent, a native of Alabama, and Thatcher Blake of Maine. Having heard glowing accounts of the West, Mr. Blake started the first week of June 1834, for Galena, then the most noted town in Illinois, on account of its lead mines. Here he met Kent who had preceded him several weeks. They joined forces and the two embarked on an exploring expedition. They drove out of Galena in a democrat wagon. The first stopping point was Hamilton's diggings where they ob-



Thatcher Blake, founder of Rockford with Germanicus Kent. They settled permanently on the west side of Rock River at Kent creek Aug. 24, 1834.

He offered to take me to see the tomb of Medill McCormick near Middle Creek Church. Howard warned me to wear casual clothing and walking shoes as it was well back from the road. A few days later we visited the historic spot. (Later the body was moved into the Middle Creek Cemetery.) The work pursued by Howard Anderson was accountant, auditor, bookkeeper, and clerk. He worked for public accounting firms in Rockford and Chicago. In Rockford Howard worked for Haddorff Piano Company for seven years. During World War II he worked in the engineering records department at the Woodward Governor Company. About 1948 Howard began to spend part of each year in the Southeast because of the healthful climate.



Roberta, Bob, John, Suzan and baby Kathryn.

The Robert J. Lindley Family

Another person who became a part of the family of Andrew and Cora Anderson was Roberta Esther, the infant daughter of Cora's brother Edmund L. and his wife Esther, whose deaths occurred within a few days of each other. Roberta, who was born January 24, 1921, grew up and was educated in the A. J. Anderson home. On August 29, 1942, she married Robert J. Lindley, who later was to serve as city clerk of Rockford. The Lindleys had four children, John, Susan, Katherine, and Barbara.

While preparing this recollection of the Anderson family, one of the families on Kishwaukee Street, several people remembered their own recollections.

Joan Eleanor (Anderson) Hoffman, the daughter of Eleanor Cora (Peterson) and Albert Anderson, my friend from the Rockford Chapter of the Lyric Opera, recalled the huge American flag which I found so impressive.

Mildred (Knighton) Nelson and Mrs. Norman LaGrande remembered Miss Maude Johnson, who was related to the A. J. Andersons, as teacher and principal at Freeman School. In fact, Mildred Nelson was my next door neighbor on Kishwaukee living in the white house on the corner. Mildred explained she was "Swedish by marriage" because her husband Clifford was Swedish. Of Miss Johnson, Mildred said "I had Maude Johnson as a teacher at Freeman School. Maude Johnson was a wonderful teacher. She found ways to make learning exciting. She brought into the classroom materials that made the words of the textbooks come alive. I loved her." In closing we spoke of how sad that Kishwaukee had changed over the years. And we agreed it was appropriate to name a school the Maude Johnson Elementary School.

EDITOR'S NOTE: When the 1877 courthouse in Rockford was taken down, the following historical sketch was found in the cornerstone. Although the story has been told many times before in the **Nuggets**, it was felt that this one would be a good one to use to repeat the story because it is a piece that was written close to the actual events described. The capitalization and punctuation of the author has been maintained in order to honor the integrity of the sketch.

HISTORY
SKETCH OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF
ROCKFORD AND
WINNEBAGO COUNTY

By R. P. Porter

Written June 20th 1876.

The lands bordering on Rock River, and of which Rockford forms a part, were formerly owned by tribes of Indians known as Sacs and Musquakees or Foxes, and were ceded to the United States in 1804. Just below the present site of Davenport the principal Sac village was located, and according to the history of Davenport the entire country belonging to the tribes, bordered in the Mississippi, and extended about seven hundred miles down the river. In 1820, this tribe numbered about 3000 persons, and were commanded by the celebrated Black Hawk whose proper name was Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak.

The most careful research and inquiry enables me to say that the first living white man that visited the site where Rockford now stands was Ira Barker, who with a party of explorers crossed Rock River, on the way to Galena in 1823. They found a village consisting of two or three hundred Indians near the banks of the river. The Indians seemed very friendly, and those living in the vicinity at that period,

were largely Squaws and young people, the warriors being absent on the war path. The exact spot where Mr. Barker and his party encamped he cannot remember, but from the general appearance he judges it was exactly on the present site of Rockford. Everything was then in the State of Wildest nature, the grass was higher than a man; and they did not know they were so near Rock River, until they struck a large bluff, and on coming to the end of it found the sparkling stream flowing many feet below. The scenery was enchanting in the extreme. The moving waters, the prairie rolling back like an ocean of grass, the shady trees, near river bank on the west side, the bluffs on both sides with the green foliage and bright autumn sky, formed an Elysium as pure and bright as that of the Greeks. On the bank of what is now called Kent Creek, Mr. Barker says he found the large encampment of Indians mentioned above. Their wigwams and mounds of custodial graves must have completed the picturesqueness of the landscape and added much to the silent grandeur of the scene. But this gentleman was not the only one who visited the site of Rockford before the first settlement, though undoubtedly he was the first one. Our Martyr President, Abraham Lincoln, told Judge Anson Miller, himself, that soon after the close of the Black Hawk War (over a year before Germanicus Kent and Thatcher Blake arrived here) he, and a party of Government officials, encamped on the banks of Rock River just below the old dam. He also informed the Judge that both himself and party were struck with the wondrous beauty of the scenery.

This is the first introduction we have of Rockford, now (June 22 1876) a flourishing city of 15,000 inhabitants. The first white settler of Winnebago County was a man named Stephen Mack who built a cabin in a grove, a mile and a half from the mouth of the Pecatonica River, in a place afterwards called Birds Grove. Mack's history was a

strange and fascinating one. He was educated at Dartmouth College, but not caring for literary pursuits he established himself out in the woods, miles away from white people; married a squaw named Hononegah and in habits became almost an Indian himself.

The first white settlers of Rockford were Germanicus Kent, a native of Alabama, and Thatcher Blake of Maine. Having heard glowing accounts of the West, Mr. Blake started the first week of June 1834, for Galena, then the most noted town in Illinois, on account of its lead mines. Here he met Kent who had preceded him several weeks. They joined forces and the two embarked on an exploring expedition. They drove out of Galena in a democrat wagon. The first stopping point was Hamilton's diggings where they ob-



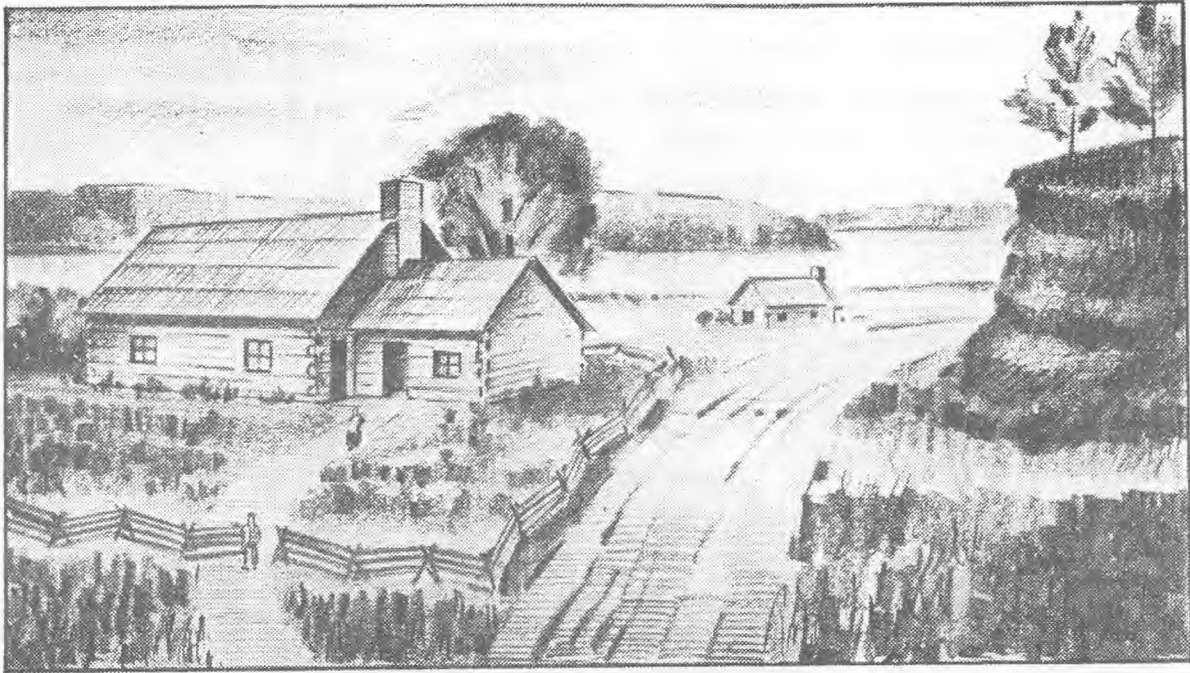
Thatcher Blake, founder of Rockford with Germanicus Kent. They settled permanently on the west side of Rock River at Kent creek Aug. 24, 1834.

tained refreshments, and a fresh supply of provisions. From there they made for the banks of the Pecatonica, and embarked in a canoe. They landed at what is now the city of Freeport, but which at that time was the site of a large Indian village, known as Winniskisk's village. Making but a short stay here the explorers pushed on until they came to the mouth of the Pecatonica. Both of them had heard of Stephen Mack and looked closely for cabin, about the spot, but did not find it because it was built over a mile from the river bank in a grove.

In the early part of August 1834 instead of the busy crowd that now throng our streets, the whistling of the steam engines, the hum and bustle of the manufacturers there was nothing save the flowing of the river and the rustling of the trees, with the occasional clang of wild birds, to break the silence of the prairie. Toward dusk of that night might have been seen floating down Rock River the first germ of the community of over 15,000 living souls that now enliven this lovely city with the music of their every-day life. As a little canoe glided noiselessly past where all our palacial mansions now stand; past where the



Founders Park Memorial



Kent's Cabin, 1834

hundreds of business houses loom up; and past where the hundred or more factories stand; did the occupants think their hopes were so soon to be realized; did they imagine that with an Aladdin's lamp-like rapidity, a city would spring up upon those banks; that bridges would span the river; public buildings of architectural beauty would loom up; and that in forty-two years the locomotive with its civilizing agencies, would convert an unknown wilderness into one of the most charming cities in the Northwest. Late in the afternoon the mouth of the Kent Creek was reached, and then after their long journey, Rockford's founders stepped out of the boat drew it on shore, and without stopping to make further explorations made themselves comfortable for the night and soon fell asleep. The spot where Thatcher Blake and Germanicus Kent, spent their first night in Rockford is on the bank of the River just below the present dam.

A short survey next morning sufficed to convince the

two travelers that the location was all that could be decided. They, therefore, returned to Galena and procuring horses, wagons, provisions etc., retraced their way back to the site of the present City of Rockford. They brought with them a colored man named Lewis who is still living, Thatcher Blake is living now (June 22 1876) a hale hearty old gentleman; Germanicus Kent died about six years ago. The next permanent settler was Daniel S. Haight who was the first settler on the East Side of Rock River. Immediately upon his arrival Kent commenced the work of building a saw mill, which when completed may be considered as the precursor of our many manufactories. The saw mill was built on the spot now occupied by the Swiss Cottage of H. R. Tinker's, The first religious ceremony ever held in Rockford took place June, 1835 and was held in Daniel Haight's log house. All Rockford attended (a circumstance very unusual nowadays.) Germanicus Kent's brother, Rev. Aratus Kent, a Presbyterian devine, conducted sthe services. At the time Rockford numbered eleven persons- three ladies, Mrs. Haight and her sister, and Mrs. Kent; and eight gentlemen- Germanicus Kent, Thatcher Blake, Joseph Sanfors, Daniel S. Haight, and his hired man, Lewis the slave, and a couple of millwrights.

To be continued

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