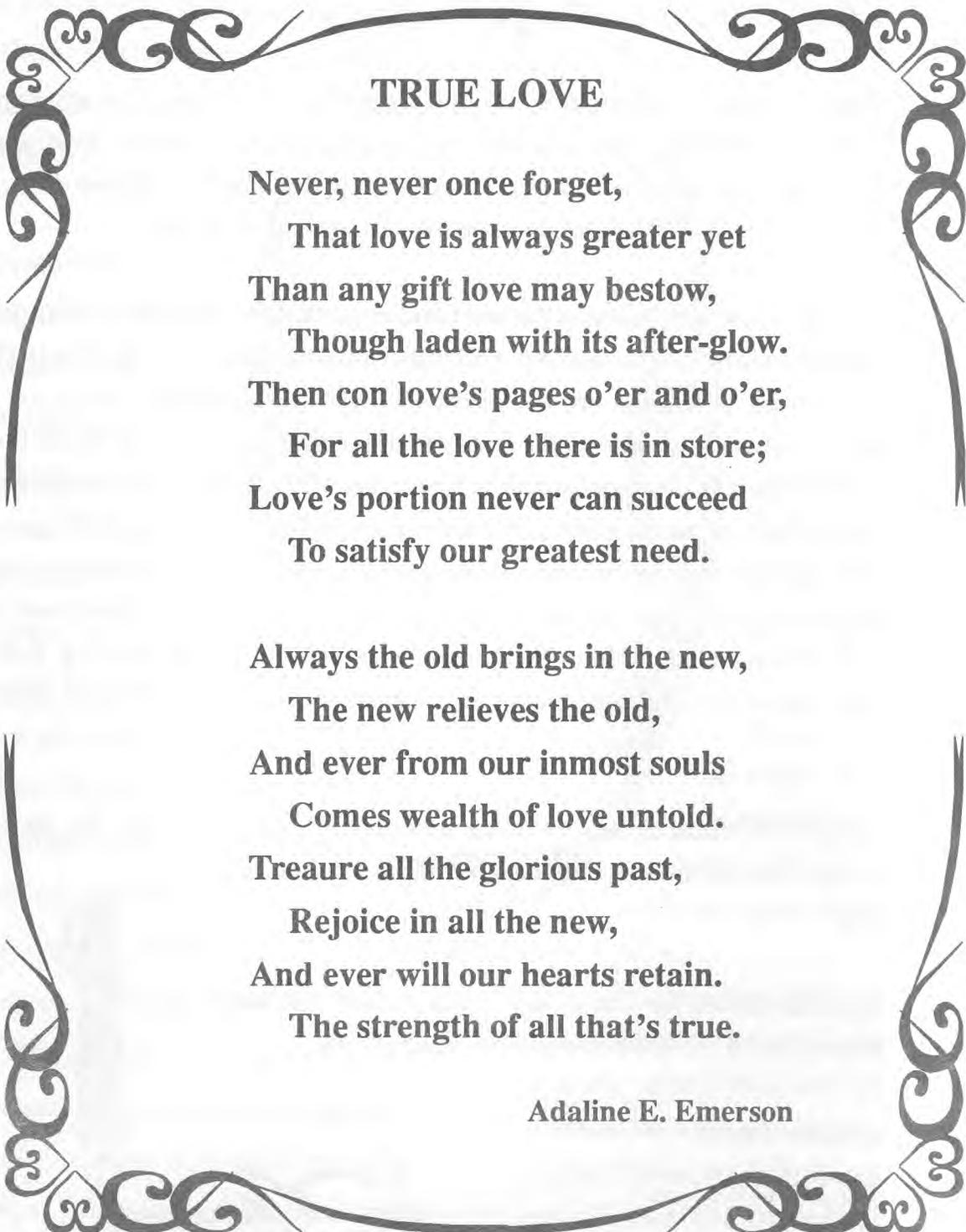

NUGGETS OF HISTORY

VOLUME 33 SUMMER 1995 NUMBER 3



TRUE LOVE

Never, never once forget,
That love is always greater yet
Than any gift love may bestow,
Though laden with its after-glow.
Then con love's pages o'er and o'er,
For all the love there is in store;
Love's portion never can succeed
To satisfy our greatest need.

Always the old brings in the new,
The new relieves the old,
And ever from our inmost souls
Comes wealth of love untold.
Treasure all the glorious past,
Rejoice in all the new,
And ever will our hearts retain.
The strength of all that's true.

Adaline E. Emerson

FROM AN EDITOR'S DESK



This issue highlights lives of two women who exemplified moral character and who exerted positive influence upon the lives they touched. Whether as wife/mother and community leader, or as teacher and supervisor, each contributed a heritage not to be forgotten.

In "A Victorian Love Story," Georganne Hinchliff Eggers recalls the life of her great-grandmother Adaline Talcott Emerson. A member of one of the area's earliest families, Adaline married Ralph Emerson who would become a prominent figure in Rockford's industrial scene. Their "love-at-first-sight" romance endured during more than 55 years of marriage.

Not only in marriage, but also in business the two families intertwined. Adeline's father Wait and her Uncle Sylvester formed a partnership with reaper manufacturers John H. Manny, Ralph Emerson and Jesse Blinn. It ranks as one of Rockford's first major industries. Wait's son (Adaline's brother) William A. continued the family tradition as co-founder with Ralph Emerson of the Emerson and Talcott Implement Company, forerunner of the Emerson-Brantingham Company, a manufacturer of tractor gas engines in the early 1900s. Among his holdings, William A. owned the downtown Armstrong Building which had been constructed by George Haskell shortly after the Civil War. William's son, named Wait after his grandfather, tore down the structure in the 1930s and financed the building of a new 12-story office building, then Rockford's tallest edifice. The Talcott Building still stands today in the 300 block of West State Street.

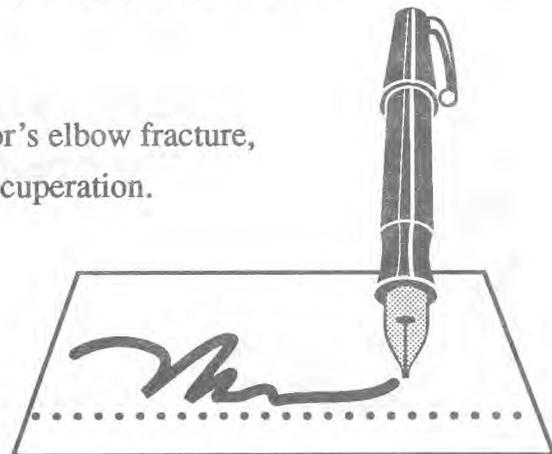
Once again, Hazel Mortimer Hyde contributes a record of Rockford history. This time she remembers the city's first Supervisor of Education, Maud Johnson, and her prominent family.

This Summer issue arrives late due to your editor's elbow fracture, subsequent surgery, and a five-week do-nothing recuperation.

Thanks for your patience.



Peggy Dahlberg Jensen



A VICTORIAN LOVE STORY
ADALINE TALCOTT EMERSON, 1837 - 1915
RALPH EMERSON, 1831 - 1914

by
Georganne Hinchliff Eggers
with *Peggy Dahlberg Jensen*

On an autumn Saturday in 1857, 20-year-old Adaline Talcott opened the door of her parents' Rockton home. A young Ralph Emerson stood on the porch. The couple had never seen each other before, yet their eyes locked in instant admiration. A friend of Addie's who witnessed the meeting, predicted, "Mark my word, Addie Talcott, you will marry that young man. There is love at first sight on both sides."

Later, Ralph would write of his impression of petite Adaline. "The first time I saw her was on a Saturday afternoon as I was driving my red horse, Rex, to Beloit to spend the Sabbath with my brother Joseph. I stopped for a moment in Rockton to leave some word for Deacon Wait (*Adaline's father*). The door was opened by one who from that moment forward was to be 'The Little Lady.'"

After a brief courtship, Ralph proposed in writing. His February 27, 1858, note

read: "Once half jokingly, you promised to go to Europe with me. The changing fortunes of the time appear to indicate that I shall never be able to take such a trip, even if my ambition had not been tamed by the events of the last few months.

"But Addie, need this prevent me from asking you if you are willing to take the 'journey of life with me.'"

"I have over and over again, said to myself that I would not ask that question till we hear the decision from Washington. But somehow I do not wish to wait longer without knowing wheather (sic) or not, in the future I am, to have the privilege of signing myself

Yours only,

Ralph Emerson Jr."



The Talcotts



Adaline Talcott, daughter of Dean Wait and Elizabeth Norton Talcott, was born in Horseheads, New York, 1837. In the fall

of 1838, her father closed a mercantile business and emigrated to Illinois. Earlier, in 1835 Wait's father William and Thomas (Wait's older brother) had scouted northern Illinois and had determined to relocate near present-day Rockton. Thomas then stayed in Illinois, while father William returned to New York to move other family members. They traveled by land in two-horse wagons for six weeks before arriving in Rockton. Adaline's brother William Ariel was the first child born in the new Rockton settlement.

By 1839, Wait, his father and three brothers had developed the first water-powered saw and grist mill on the Rock River. An influential citizen, Addie's father helped to incorporate both Beloit College and Rockford Female Seminary (predecessor of Rockford College). Later, he would represent four area counties in the Illinois Senate and he laid the groundwork for the first railroad link between Rockford and Rockton. President Abraham Lincoln appointed Wait as commissioner of Internal Revenue for the Second Congressional District.

In spite of her father's involvement

with two local colleges, Addie attended Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the first person from this area to do so. After graduation in 1856, she returned to Rockton to teach school.

Young Ralph Emerson

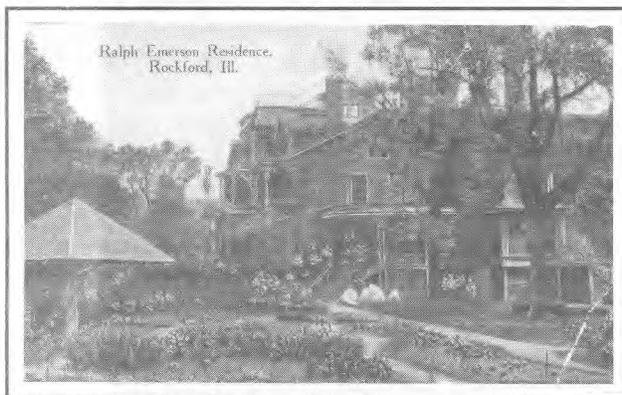
Meanwhile twenty-year-old Ralph Emerson had left Andover, Massachusetts, in 1851 bound for Bloomington, Illinois. Working in a law office under a friend of his father's, he met Abraham Lincoln who had come to Bloomington on business. Ralph sought advice about his career from Lincoln, "Shall I stay in the legal field?" Lincoln advised him to abandon law. Ralph then joined his brother Joseph in Rockton, and later moved to Rockford.

A partnership formed in 1854 between Addie's father and his brother Sylvester with reaper manufacturers John H. Manny, Ralph Emerson and Jesse Blinn ranks as one of Rockford's first major industries. During a suit filed against the Manny Emerson Reaper Company by Cyrus McCormick, Lincoln represented the Rockford firm. The partners incurred heavy losses during the national financial

crash in 1857 plus expenses of the law suit. Nevertheless Ralph proposed to Adaline.

🌀 Adaline & Ralph Emerson 🌀

The wedding took place September 7, 1858, at nine o'clock in the morning presumably in the Talcott's Rockford home. Adaline wore a brown taffeta gown with a lace collar (*donated recently to Midway Village by Adaline's great-grand-daughter Georganne Eggers*). The newlyweds moved into a spacious home at 427 North Church Street. (*The present Mendelssohn Club stands immediately south of the original home on Emerson land donated years later by Adaline's daughters.*)



*Ralph and Adaline's residence
at 427 North Church Street*

Ralph had purchased the home from his cousin Joseph Emerson, then pastor of Second Congregational Church. The untimely death of Joseph's wife changed his plans to occupy the newly-constructed home.

Here the Emersons reared five daughters – Harriet, Belle, Mary, Dora and Adaline – and one son, Ralph. Two infants died.



*Emerson Daughters
(left to right) Adaline Thompson,
Harriet Hinchliff, Mary Lathrop,
Belle Keith, Dora Wheeler*

Adaline's health failed after her child-bearing years. She spent months away from home "taking cures." A devoted Ralph visited often. Enroute to see Addie in Elmira, New York, in 1871, he stopped in Chicago to check on a construction project. He purchased a gold chain as a gift for Addie – from a jeweler who planned to occupy space in the

soon-to-be-completed building. Ralph considered giving the chain at a later date, but decided to take it with him then. The following day Chicago experienced its devastating 1871 fire. The gold chain, termed a “relic of the Chicago fire” by the family, has been handed down from generation to generation.

At home in Rockford, a magnificent garden and greenhouse gave Addie much pleasure. Each fall she would issue invitations to view a spectacular chrysanthemum exhibit. Not only friends came, but also the general public, sometimes as many as 1000 persons.

Addie delighted in reading and in writing. She distributed three editions of “Love Bound and Other Poems” to friends around the world. She and Ralph collaborated in writing a tribute to their friend Abraham Lincoln following his death. Then when the Emerson’s son Ralph Jr. died in 1889 while fighting a Water Power fire, Addie assuaged her grief by compiling memories and poems as well as letters sent by sympathetic friends and acquaintances.

Besides devotion to family and writing, both Addie and Ralph donated liberally

to mission concerns and other philanthropic enterprises. She expressed her attitude in these words, “I live rich in faith, feeling that no day should come and go in which good is not done.” Influenced by that view point, the Emersons contributed liberally to Rockford Hospital (Addie was its first patient), Rockford College, Second Congregational Church and other causes.



Europe, at last



Although Ralph’s proposal letter mentioned that he probably would never be able to take Addie on a trip to Europe, he fulfilled that dream more than once. In a February 6, 1885 letter to her children, she wrote, “We did not take any trip to Europe until after we had been married 25 years. In January of 1884 on the 9th ... we sailed from New York.” She continues, “Again (*i. e. February 1885*) we are on the eve of a second trip to Europe.” Next, she mentions going alone to London in June of 1888 as a delegate to a Missionary Conference. After the ten-day event, she spent four months with her daughter Belle who was studying Art in Munich, Bavaria. And then in 1900,

she attended the Paris Exposition – the only woman from Illinois and one of three from the United States. Before leaving on the voyage, she received a letter from Susan B. Anthony who addressed Addie as “My dear friend.” The two women traveled together aboard ship. European trips did materialize.



A life's journey of faith and love

But more important than those luxuries, Addie would realize that “Throughout my life my faith has been an unflinching source of inspiration and strength.”

In 1908, Ralph and Addie celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary

at their summer home in Colebrook, Connecticut. Once again, Addie wore her wedding gown. Guests included the five Emerson daughters and thirteen grandchildren.

Of her family's devotion, Addie would write, “My husband's level hand and enduring love and the adoration of our

children are bounty enough for me.”

On the occasion of their 55th wedding anniversary in 1913, Addie prepared a brief collection of love notes which she had previously written to her beloved Ralph. She included reflections such as, “True love is something to walk with hand in hand through the every day work of the world.” And, “True love steals

into the heart with feet as silent as the lightsome dawn; a love that gives and takes, that seeth faults, not with flaw-seeking eye, like needle points, but lovingly, kindly ever looks them down.” She further declared, “You have been and ever will be a wonderful



Ralph and his “Little Lady” Adaline, May 1912

man. God bless you and keep you in perfect peace.” A year later Ralph Emerson died; Addie, in 1915.

Resources: An oral presentation by the Emerson's great-granddaughter Georganne Eggers given March 1994 for the Rockford Historical Society's spring dinner. Newspaper clippings from that era. C. Hal Nelson, Editor and Compiler, *Sinnissippi Saga, A History of Rockford and Winnebago County, Illinois*. Rockford, Winnebago County Illinois Sesquicentennial Committee: 1968.

MAUD JOHNSON, ROCKFORD EDUCATOR

1882 - 1955

Edited by Peggy Jensen

Maud Johnson School, 3805 Rural Street, honors Rockford's first Supervisor of Elementary Schools. Daughter of Swedish immigrants S. A. and Emily Peterson Johnson, she (and her twin brother Leanus) joined seven other siblings to complete the Johnson family circle, October 20, 1882.



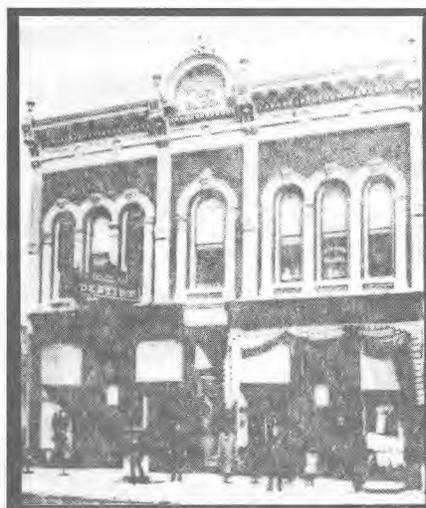
Maud's Father



Maud's father Sven August (usually known as S. A.) was born November 12, 1832 in Hakabo, Wing Socken, Elborslan, West Gotland, Sweden. Having served an apprenticeship, he received the master tailor designation. That career served him well upon emigrating to the Midwest in 1852. Upon his 1853 arrival in Rockford, where he would make his permanent home, he worked for tailor John Fraley.

About 1862, he formed a partnership with John Erlander, another Swedish tailor. An early business card lists their business address at 321 East State Street. A photo shows the store location as the Nash Block. The business soon expanded

from only cutting, fitting and sewing – they specialized in police and firemen's uniforms – into a men's furnishing store.



*Erlander-
Johnson
Store*

When the Erlander/Johnson partnership dissolved, Gust Wanstrom joined Johnson in a Johnson & Wanstrom firm. Later, S. A.'s sons Victor, Edmund and Leanus joined the firm and the name changed again, this time to the S.A. Johnson Store. S. A. retired in 1912.

Besides the clothing store, S. A. had other interests. He helped to organize the Central Furniture Company in 1889 and served as its president. He was a stockholder in the Star Furniture Company, the Royal Sewing Machine Company, and Third National Bank. He held the office

of treasurer in the Swedish Building and Loan Association (now HomeBanc), and assisted in organizing a Swedish Cemetery (now Scandinavian Cemetery, Guilford Road). A charter member of First Lutheran Church, he served as treasurer for 29 years and helped to raise funds for the original and two subsequent buildings. Additionally, as treasurer of the church's Savings Bank—a service for Swedish people in savings and loans—he handled transactions at his store, then conveniently open until 9 p.m.



Maud's Mother



Maud's mother, Emily Peterson Johnson, came from Sweden in 1854 with her parents Carl Magnus and Johannes Persdotter Peterson. Although Carl purchased a farm near Pecatonica in the Twelve Mile Grove area, 11-year-old Emily worked in the Rockford home of a Baptist minister. Interested in teaching a young Swedish girl the English language, he tutored her. She gained valuable experience by copying his sermons. Emily met her future husband at the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church (First Lutheran). The wedding

took place September 3, 1862, at the home of Emily's sister and brother-in-law, Peter and Sophia Lindahl.



S.A. Johnson and Emily Peterson

The newlyweds' first home consisted of two small rooms in the "Long House" on South Madison Street near the original Rockford College site. The arrival of daughters Hilma and Amanda precipitated a move to a home at Second Avenue and South Fourth Street. In 1870, after the births of Ada and Armer had increased the family size, the Johnsons built a ten-room home at 402 Kishwaukee Street (later changed to 406). At first, single

men or small families rented space for \$4 – \$6 per month. But as the family grew to include Victor, Edmund, Cora and the twins – nine children in all – plus Emily’s sister Augusta, the Johnsons needed all the rooms.

Gradually new conveniences enhanced the home: a bathroom, gas lights, electricity and a telephone. When all children except Maud had married, S. A. remodeled the house into two apartments, using the lower floor for personal use. It would be the family home for 57 years.



Maud’s Career



Meanwhile, a young Maud had graduated from high school in the class of 1900. At the urging of a friend, Maud decided to apply for a teaching position. Her first assignment – acquired with only a high school diploma – came in 1902 at Freeman School. For 24 years, she remained at Freeman, serving as principal the last five years.

Meanwhile, to meet the inadequacy of her professional education, she attended University of Chicago summer school sessions and took correspondence courses. She earned two degrees, a Ph. D. and an

M.S. with majors in geography and history.

In 1926, Superintendent of Schools Frank Jensen had created the post of Elementary School Supervisor. Maud received appointment to that new position. As supervisor she then had 169 teachers under her jurisdiction. She was responsible for seeing that all children received a uniformly high standard of teaching.

Respected for her skill in helping teachers find new and interesting ways to teach, Maud often demonstrated by teaching a class herself. Hazel Mortimer Hyde recalls two such hands-on incidents during her teaching days (1936 - 39) at Montague Elementary School in southwest Rockford.

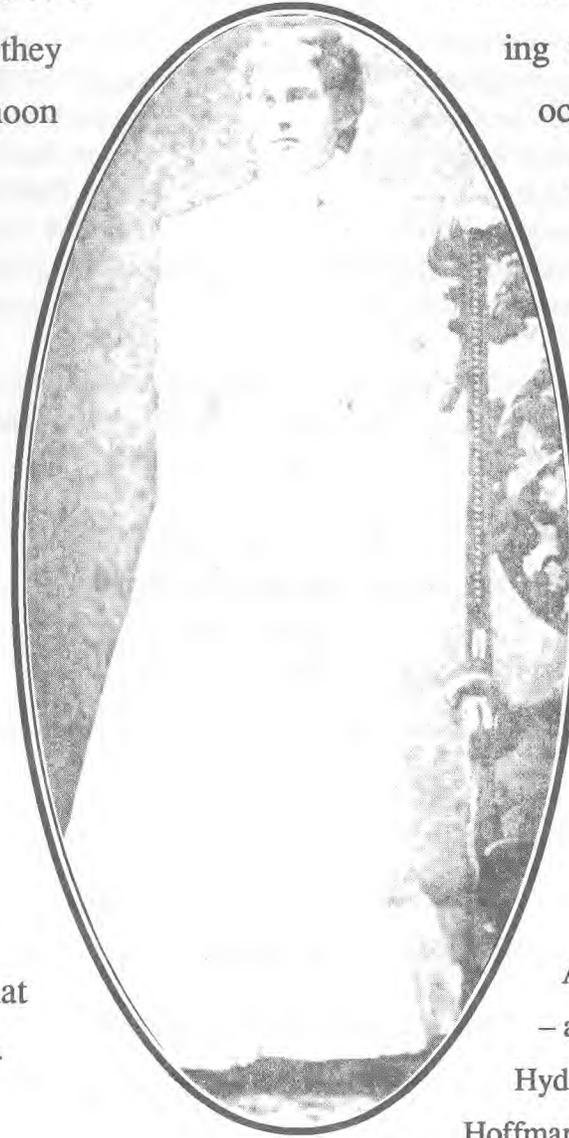
Rather than critiquing Hazel’s teaching on these occasions, Maud taught the science class. Since garden snakes came out in great numbers at that particular time of year, Maud suggested that each pupil bring a snake in a jar for future study. Hazel reports that the next morning every window ledge was filled with wriggling snakes – not one of her favorite specimens. But the pupils taught their

teacher how to hold a snake behind the head so that it could be petted. Then Hazel told her pupils that the kindest act they could perform would be to release the snakes where they found them. During the noon hour, all snakes disappeared from the classroom.

In another hands-on teaching demonstration, Maud asked Hazel's students to collect cocoons. Following Maud's advice, Hazel stored the cocoons in a built-in cupboard. But she forgot about them. One spring day she opened that cupboard and, to her surprise, found dozens of cecropia moths. Of her supervisor's methods, Hazel says, "Maud Johnson was very fair in her judgments about the pupils' responses to the lessons and the method of presentation. Her recommendations were imaginative as well as concise. Her critiques

were aimed at giving help or opening up new avenues of approach or thinking."

Johnson would serve as supervisor until her retirement in 1948. During those career years, she occupied presidential chairs in the Illinois Association of Supervisors and Directors of Education and for the North-Western State of Illinois Educational Association. Until her death on January 8, 1955, she continued to keep a vital interest in educational progress.



Maud Johnson

Resources:

An August 10, 1992 interview – as recorded by Hazel Mortimer

Hyde – with Joan Anderson Hoffman, a great-niece of Maud Johnson.

"One Hundred Years 1852 -1952 ...

The Story of S. A. Johnson," a family history quoted by Hazel Hyde in her Master's Thesis at Northwestern University, from the "Swedish Chapter" in her History of Rockford, Illinois and subsequently in a manuscript submitted to *Nuggets of History*.

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