

# Ruggets--Old AND New

the bi-monthly bulletin of the Rockford Historical Society

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## Calling All "History Majors"

Hear ye! Hear ye! HEAR YE!! You are invited to attend the regular quarterly meeting of the Rockford Historical Society on December 4th, at Memorial Hall. Call to order at 8 p.m. sharp.

Attorney Philip Keister, Freeport, former president of the Illinois Historical Society, will be our speaker. Mr. Keister holds the honor of being an organizer and long time president of the Freeport Historical group. Among the points of interest, the speaker will explain how his chapter went about acquiring a museum and club house.

Bring a friend and prospect. There is room for 500 in our North Main Street memorial to county veterans of all wars. Let's try to fill it.

Director Robert Borden has the distinction of residing in one of the oldest homes on the east side. The Borden home on Cosper place was erected by Bob's grandfather in the same era during which Maj. Elias Cosper built another pioneer dwelling across the street. Dr. and Mrs. William J. Bryan now occupy the Cosper homestead.

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## Rootage of Rockford History

Winnebago and Chippewa Indians gave out with some choice bits of travel information to Thatcher Blake and Germanicus Kent in the spring of 1834 that resulted in the founding of our town.

In tracing the route taken by the two disgusted lead miners from Galena to Rockford, one must assume that the travelers had unusual fortitude and a thirst for adventure. Galena was quite a town and it was thriving when the pair arrived from the east via boat, covered wagon and shank's mare. But both Kent and Blake caught the drift of conversation from earlier immigrants. Earnings from mining of lead were diminishing. Unless a new lead vein was discovered, Galena's fame as a mining center would soon die.

Friendly Indians related that "heap white man Mack" had a paying fur trading post near the confluence of Pek-a-ton-ika river and the "big river". They inferred that our Rock river valley was rich in forests, black soil and game. And so the pair began their pilgrimage east. When they reached Hamilton's Diggings where a small cabin indicated habitation, they stopped long enough to whittle out a clumsy but seaworthy canoe out of an oak log. Proceeding down the Pecatonica river to Macktown, they were told that the "big river" was but a half-mile away.

From Rockton the two explorers made two or three stops to check soil and timber. When they reached a point near where downtown Rockford is now located, riffles on the water indicated shoals. Farther down stream they found a turbulent creek emptying its waters into the river and that was it. Kent staked his claim on what would be a square mile from the river west, extending from near State street south below