

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

Vol. V, No. 1

February, 1964

Published by the BATAVIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Never, perhaps, in our history has there existed a greater need for a spirit of loyalty and patriotism . . . that patriotism must begin at home and it must be based upon an understanding of our historic backgrounds. The story of our development as a nation and the role each community and state has played in this development is a reservoir of inspiration and encouragement capable of toughening our fiber with stern resolve that democracy shall not perish from the earth.

-Dr. S. K. Stevens, Penna. State Historian

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1964 at 3:00 P. M.

IN THE BARTHOLEMEW CIVIC CENTER

PROGRAM

THE PARKS OF BATAVIA

Paper read by Robert Phelps

This should be an interesting subject for all of us. What do you remember about Laurelwood, Mill Creek and Glenwood Parks?

We had an excellent meeting on December 15, 1963 in the Civic Center. In the absence of our President, Oliver Freedlund, our Vice President, Neal Conde, president. The subject of the meeting, "The Story of the Batavia National Bank" was ably and fluently discussed by Earle W. Horton, a director of the bank. It was too bad that our attendance was so poor due to Christmas programs in some of the churches.

Here are your officers elected at this December meeting:

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|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Mrs. Earl L. Judd | President |
| Bruce G. Paddock | Vice President |
| Miss Joan Kane | Secretary |
| Raymond J. Patzer | Treasurer pro tem |
| Mrs. Ben Limbaugh | Trustee for two years |
| Ansgar Carlson | Trustee for two years |

Carry-over Trustees:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Angelo D. Perna | William A. Petit |
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Our society is saddened by the loss of three of our members recently. Our sympathy goes out to the families of Mr. Walter Stone, Mr. Emil Benson and Mrs. Amy H. Moulding.

We have received gifts from the following donors since our last report: Mrs. L. R. Hill, a bound volume of Harper's Weekly for 1864; Mrs. Frances and Mrs. Margaret Benson, four copies of old Batavia newspapers and Mrs. Platt, several dresses of the early 1900 vintage.

Mrs. Platt of Pinehurst, N. C. is the daughter of Mrs. Martha Van Nortwick Holbrook, who, in turn, was the daughter of Mrs. J. S. (Bina Totman) Van Nortwick. Mrs. Strange, a cousin of Mrs. Platt, asked us if we would like them and of course we said most assuredly. They are beautiful gowns, elaborately designed and all hand-sewn. They should go on display somewhere so that you can all see and admire them.

We thank our out-going officers for 1963 for a job well done. A lot of work was accomplished, but there is a lot more to be done. Won't you volunteer your help?

One thing that you can all do is to pay your 1964 dues now, and, if you are in arrears, to pay these dues too. We need every penny to run our society and to do things that should be done.

We are interested in the financial drive of the Geneva Historical Society for their museum. They have now raised \$10,000 toward this goal.

Our booklet, "Then and Now," is still in the throes of being composed. It is a long job and must be done with infinite care. Pictures must be selected, companion photos must be taken, captions must be written and re-written, size and number of pages must be decided upon, paper quality, etc. must be discussed. Many hours of the committee's time has gone into this project and there is much yet to do.

Walter Stone was 88 years old when he died recently. In his youth he worked for Ed. McGuire in his cooperage north of where B. D. Price is today. Then he was a pilot on the steamboat, "City of Batavia," which used to ply between the W. Wilson Street bridge and Laurelwood Park. However, he spent most of his life with the Challenge Mill Co. Some time ago we talked with him. Here are some of the things that he told us:

"Before the days of electric street lights, the town was lighted with kerosene lamps on posts. A young man, named Charlie Harold, used to light them. He had a small mouse-colored pony and a light two-wheeled cart that he used. He would light one lamp and then drive as fast as he could to the next lamp and so on until he had made the circuit. He would fill the lamps and trim the wicks during the day."

"George K. Pierce used to meet the trains on the CB&Q RR with a hack when passenger trains used to run from Turner Junction (West Chicago) to Aurora. Many times theater troops would arrive and stay at the Revere House of the Howell Hotel on the site of the present Walt Supermarket."

It is interesting to note what was happening in the nation and in Batavia 100 years ago. It was the fourth year of a long, bloody and cruel war. At the beginning of the year, the South still thought they could win. When the spring campaign opened up, General Grant began his long, slow advance on Richmond and General Sherman started his march to Atlanta and the Sea. This was the year of a bitter presidential campaign. General McClellan, popular with his old soldiers, was running on the Democratic ticket and Abraham Lincoln was running for re-election on the Republican ticket. Victories in the fall of 1864 gave Lincoln an overwhelming majority. Batavia voted for Lincoln.

In March of 1864, the First National Bank was organized with William Coffin as president and Henry C. Paddock as cashier (he was a relative of our vice president). This bank was liquidated in 1879, winding up its business under the U.S. banking law. The Present First National Bank was organized November 1, 1891.

In October the present Masonic Lodge 404, AF & AM, was organized with Meredith Mallory as the first Worshipful Master.

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The nation is beset with difficulties and confusions, many of us have doubt and grave concern for the future. But no one who reviews the past and realizes the vast strength of our people can doubt that this, like a score of similar experiences in our history, is a passing trial. From this ledge must come the courage and wisdom to improve and strengthen us for the future.

Herbert Hoover

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1964 at 3:00 P. M

IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

PROGRAM

Round table discussion on the needs of the Society for a museum and storeroom for the increasing number of our memorabilia, led by Mrs. Ben Limbaugh.

If time permits, the meeting will be thrown open to members to discuss the history of their own home or some historic home in Batavia. Please come prepared to give of your knowledge. A constant question is "What do you know about my house?" So many times we have to answer, "Nothing." Here is a chance for you to help break this veil of ignorance.

We thank both Mrs. Don Johnsen and Mrs. Ben Limbaugh for appearing before both the Town Meeting on April 7th and the Council Meeting on April 8th to ask the cooperation of both bodies in moving the C&NW Ry. Depot to city owned property at the corner of First and Water Streets. This building, on its new site, to be used by both the Batavia Township Board and the Historical Society. The appropriation requested for the moving and rehabilitation failed to pass at the Town Meeting. However, the issue is not dead. We understand that several people, not society members, at the Town Meeting, said that they would contribute to a museum fund. To put the question bluntly – do we want a museum? Should we have a fund drive for one now? What will you do to help? Come to the meeting on May 3rd and express your views.

We have received gifts from the following donors since our last report.

1. Mrs. Wm. H. Warford of Geneva, two white petticoats, one white gown and one steeple clock owned by Mrs. Brooks, the mother of Mrs. George K. Pierce.
 2. John Samuelson, the banner of Batavia Lodge, Sons of the North.
 3. Mrs. David T. Olson, an old Swedish trunk dated 1871.
 4. Mrs. Ruth Shaw Logan, a framed photo of the John Davis house on N. Van Buren Street.
- We are grateful for these gifts.

Our Society is saddened by the passing of Mr. Wm. C. Spencer and the former Batavians, Mrs. H. L. Hunter, Mr. Glen Crane and Miss Peckham.

Mrs. Harry (Katherine Wolcott) Hunter, 91, was the daughter of Mr. H. K. Wolcott and was the aunt of Malcolm and Wolcott Derby. She left Batavia in the 1910's to make her home in California. Some time ago she sent us her scrapbook on loan to copy any information we might wish for our files. She was intensely interested in our Society and wrote us several times. In one of her letters, she said, "I remember well the stairs going up the west side of the Newton Wagon Co. building and how, as a little girl, I used to climb them to go up to see my father sometimes."

Don't forget to view the dresses given to us by Mrs. Platt, the daughter of Mrs. Martha Van Nortwick Holbrook. They have been most tastefully arranged by Mrs. Elaine Cannon and Mrs. Claire Kruger.

We thank the Furnas Electric Co. and all others concerned with getting out these newsletters. They do a fine job and we appreciate it.

We thank the Batavia Township Library Staff and Board for inviting us to their public meeting in Library Hall, Sunday, April 12th, the beginning of Library Week. The program was an illustrated talk given by Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Elwood of their recent trip around the world. Both of the Elwoods are photographers par excellence. It was a most enjoyable afternoon.

We have an opportunity to see some of our historic homes by taking advantage of the House Walk offered by the women of the Calvary Episcopal Church on April 29th. The walk includes the following historic homes: the Stacey Nelson home on Main Street; the Mrs. Mary Simpson home on S. Batavia Avenue and the Rodney Brandon home, known as Lockwood Hall, also on S. Batavia Avenue.

The following may be a thing of the past by the time you get this newsletter. We hope that many of you, old and young, could attend the Northeast Region Student Historian Meeting at the Jefferson Junior High School, Aurora, all day Saturday, April 25th. We are grateful to the Herald for mentioning it in "The Spectator" in the April 15th issue.

Mr. Albert J. Smith of Elgin of the Dept. of Biological Science at N.I.U. asked us when the floor of the old quarry on the east side of Route 25 just south of Batavia, was last worked. He is carrying out an ecological study in this quarry. We told him it was last worked about the turn of the century. Do you have a more specific date?

Have you paid your dues? They are so small, but we do need every cent. One of our problems is - shall we continue to send these newsletters to all on our membership list whether they are paid up or not. We believe that most of you who are remiss just don't know it. So our good treasurer, Ray Patzer, is taking the trouble to fill out the following statement of your account.

We had a most interesting four day vacation recently through the Lincoln Heritage Country of Illinois, Kentucky and Indiana. This Lincoln Trail is so accessible and so close-by that it makes a very inexpensive short vacation of great historical value.

There are so many "blanks" in our knowledge of Batavia affairs. So frequently people ask us about the history of a house, a store or a person and we have to tell them we just don't know. We are learning more and more about Batavia from old newspapers, books, etc. that YOU good people are sending to the Society from time to time. Some time I hope to list some of my questions in the Newsletter, maybe you know the answers. At present I have a full page of inquiries and the list is growing all the time.

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

Vol. V, No. 3

September, 1964

Published by the Batavia Historical Society

One of America's angry writers, Eric Sevareid, recently predicted that our last frontiers of serenity and space will disappear "unless we learn, as the English have learned, that progress has to be defined to mean preserving and cherishing as well as changing and improving."

Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1964, at 3:00 P.M.
IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE HIGH SCHOOL OF BATAVIA

by Arnold P. Benson

THE NEED FOR THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL by Arthur V. Perry, Superintendent of Schools.
Bruce G. Paddock will be in charge of the meeting.

On February 10 and 11, 1915, the Women's Club dedicated the High School Auditorium. On March 29, 1915 the present High School building was officially dedicated. Thus, next year we will celebrate the Semi-Centennial of its dedication.

Also, on November 16, 1914, the first Parent-Teachers' Association was formed in the Central (McWayne) School. The next day, a similar organization was started in the Louise White School.

The Society is saddened by the loss of two of its members recently. Our sympathy goes out to the families of Mrs. Frank P. Smith and Guy Conde.

Mrs. Frank Smith was reporter for the Aurora Beacon-News from 1918 to 1962, 44 years. She was always interested in Batavia and its history. We owe her a debt of gratitude for putting this history on paper for future generations to read. Her energy and diligence made her a remarkable person.

Guy Conde came out to see me on November 17, 1961. Miss Eunice Shumway brought him out. He told me a lot about Batavia at that time that I wanted to know. It may be that sometime I'll have room in the Newsletter to tell you some of his memories that I have in sixteen pages of notes. May I just touch on some of the interesting stories that he told me then?

C. B. Dodson owned the farm where the Fabyan Forest Preserve is now. When he sold out and moved to Geneva, he moved some of the big trees on the farm to Geneva. He took these trees across our stone bridge because,

either the steel bridge in Geneva was not strong enough or the passageway wasn't large enough to allow the trees to pass through.

Also he said that circuses in Geneva and Aurora, in the early days, came to Batavia to cross the Fox River. Elephants wouldn't cross a steel bridge with loose plank flooring such as in Geneva and Aurora, but had no qualms about crossing our stone bridge.

In 1897 Guy and Harry Belding bought the Batavia Steam Laundry, which I think was on the Island. In 1901 Guy was sole owner and later sold it to the late Frank P. Smith. In 1909 he was secretary of the Batavia Plumbing and Heating Co. During the early years of Mooseheart, he helped in its development and installed plumbing and heating in the various buildings.

Since our last report, we have received gifts from the following donors: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hendrickson, Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Wynn, Mr. Millet, Mrs. Elsie Cleland, Mrs. Jennie Prince, Mr. John Van Nortwick and Mr. and Mrs. Orman Barkdoll. We thank all of these people for their generosity and kindness in remembering the Society.

One of the surprises inherent in belonging to the Illinois State Historical Society is to receive a book bonus every once in a while. Recently we received a copy of "Legends and Lore of Southern Illinois" by John Allen. This is an absorbing book, well written by one who knows southern Illinois intimately. I wish someone would write about northern Illinois in like manner. The annual dues of \$5.00 are nominal when the rewards received from joining are considered.

Jake Feldman and Raymond Patzer are in Community Hospital at this writing. We wish them both a speedy recovery.

Mrs. H. N. Jones, chairman of the Committee working on the "Then and Now" book says that Mrs. Pauline Campbell and Frank Elwood are taking the "Now" photos to match the "Then" photos which have been selected.

Mrs. Ben Limbaugh and her committee are working on the museum question. They have several sites in view, but how to finance any of them is the big problem.

The cases in the Civic Center are being changed to school memorabilia to supplement our September program.

Dues are due. Now is a good time to pay up if you haven't already done so.

Does anyone know the present whereabouts of the Fred S. Milne family? I have an inquiry from Wheaton for their present address. If you know, please notify John A. Gustafson.

The museum for the Geneva Historical Society has been started. They plan a beautiful building in Wheeler Park.

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

Vol. V, No. 4

December, 1964

Published by the Batavia Historical Society

Fortunately the past never completely dies for man. Man may forget it, but he always preserves it within him. For take him at any epoch and he is the product, the epitome of all the earlier epochs.

“The Ancient City” by Fustel de Coulanges

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1964 at 3:00 P. M.
IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

PROGRAM

"THANKS FOR THE BUGGY RIDE" - An illustrated talk on antique automobiles by Mr. Vernon Derry of Aurora, Illinois.

Mr. Derry is editor of "Thrift Corner Yarns," now in its fourth year, a monthly pamphlet gotten out by the Aurora Savings and Loan Association. He has written many articles about the history of Aurora and the surrounding area.

Now just a note about Batavia's early cars and car owners. In September of 1900, according to the Batavia Herald, A. D. Mallory was the first auto owner in Batavia. He bought a double seater model and ran it from Detroit to his home here. Other early auto owners were Dr. A. A. Fitts, E. C. "Ned" Brown, L. A. Parre and Thomas Snow.

Batavia's first horseless carriage was made right here by Edwin K. Meredith.

He was an inventor, and was Superintendent of the Batavia Light and Water Plant, preceding L. A. Parre. He entered his homemade car in the first auto race to be held in America, November of 1895, the course running between Chicago and Milwaukee. Mr. Parre said, "The car started for the Chicago race alright, but soon overheated and never reached its destination."

I also have the following quote from the Batavia Herald for the year 1909: "Railroads killed 196 persons in Chicago during the first nine months of the year, street-cars 106, teams and wagons 48, and automobiles only 10."

The following Nominating Committee was appointed at the last Board of Trustees meeting on November 10th:

- Bruce G. Paddock, Chairman
- William B. Benson
- William Wood
- Mrs. Pauline Campbell
- Mrs. Eldora Hoover

They will report at our Annual Meeting to be held next January.

Our membership and meetings are open to all. We do need workers, people who will interview some of our old timers, people who will look up the history of our old homes, store and factory buildings. Also people to make a record of the inscriptions on the old stones in both the East and West Batavia Cemeteries. We do have, at the last count, 319 members.

The "Then and Now" Booklet Committee had a three hour meeting on November 6. We matched up the photos, then and now, that we have, and decided on what we still need. Then captions will have to be written before the job can go to the printers. Mrs. Pauline Campbell and Frank Elwood are our photographers.

We need a photo of one of the old hose carts. We have one of the firemen posed in front of the hose cart, but not much of the latter shows. We would like to borrow a photo of the old Henry Kahlke coal office which preceded the present Thorsen Lumber Co. office.

The Museum Committee, Miss Eunice Shumway, chairman, met on November 16. We discussed several possibilities in buildings which might be converted into a museum but, as yet, no definite decision was arrived at.

Both Mrs. John G. Strange of Appleton, Wisconsin and William VanNortwick of New York City, have sent us \$50.00 each. Both are being sent Life Membership cards and the balance of the gifts is being entered in our Museum Fund.

Mrs. Strange has sent us a box of clothing (scarfs, stoles, etc.), originally owned by the early VanNortwicks. Mrs. Margaret McGee of Oberlin, Ohio, has sent us a hair wreath composed of locks of hair of Judge and Mrs. Lockwood and their descendents. We are most grateful for these gifts.

Miss Mary Anderson (W. L. Anderson Shop) used some of the VanNortwick gowns, given to us earlier, in her window display during her recent store anniversary.

We congratulate Mrs. Miriam H. Johnson, our esteemed librarian, on 25 years of devoted service in that office.

The Society owns several histories of Kane County as well as the books, "Legends and Lore of Southern Illinois" by John Allen, "The Great Third Rail," "Illinois Negro Historymakers" and others. Any of these books can be borrowed by the members.

Regarding my query about C. A. Brooks & Co. on another page, Mrs. Margaret Allan told me since I wrote that article, the 1850 census shows Brooks as a resident of St. Charles. Then did he have a store here and live in St. Charles?

We still have some copies left of the book, "Historic Batavia." They would make excellent Christmas gifts. Prices are paperbound \$2.00, clothbound, \$4.00. We also have a few large photos of a birdseye view of Batavia in 1869, price \$2.00 each.

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT BATAVIA IS HISTORY

How little we know, after all, about Batavia's early affairs - there are so many "blanks." So frequently people want to know the history of a house, a store, a business or the biography of a person, and we have to say that we just don't know. We are learning more and more about Batavia people, places and things through old newspapers, books, etc. that you good people have given to the Society from time to time. For example, here are some of the things that we have learned recently:

We didn't know that there was a Henry McCray, along with John Burnham and Daniel Halladay, who formed the Halladay Windmill Co., forerunner of the U. S. Wind Engine & Pump Co., until we got a copy of the Batavia News for December 23, 1881. This had a spread of a page and a half of history of Batavia industries. We also learned that there was an intermediary company between the Halladay and the U.S. Wind Engine & Pump Co. called the Western Windmill Co., which bought windmills from the former company to sell in the Midwest.

Another thing we learned was there was a man named Thomas O. Perry, employed by the U.S. Wind Engine & Pump Co., who made the first steel windmill, who made the first scientific test on mills to determine the right curvature and the correct number of slats in the wheel and who worked out the proper gear ratio between the wheel and the pump for the greatest efficiency.

He really did as much as Halladay did for the advancement and popularizing of the windmill, but who knows anything about him? He is just one of our forgotten engineers.

When Mr. Harold Bunker gave us the book of reproductions of the Kane County map for 1860, he brought us two old ledgers for us to see and to copy what we wished. One was an old ledger for 1871 of John McGuire, a blacksmith of Batavia. Mr. McGuire was the father of the late Mrs. Hazel Pratt. The other ledger was more remarkable since it was the ledger of C. A. Brooks & Co., Batavia for the years 1845, 46, 47 and 48. That firm sold nearly everything and did a tremendous credit business. Their customers must have included nearly everyone living in the Batavia community at that time. The year when these customers started trading with C. A. Brooks & Co. is a good indication of when they came to Batavia. We copied the entire list of their customers with their first and last entries.

Now, who knows anything about this firm, C. A. Brooks & Co.? Where were they located? How long were they there? Who was C. A. Brooks? And who was the "& Co.?"

In a copy of the booklet "Superior Facts" for May, 1932, sent to us by Mr. John Van Nortwick about the Van Nortwicks and the paper industry in Batavia, Mr. H. N. Wade is quoted. He mentions Frank P. Crandon as bookkeeper of the original paper mill company. He also mentions a "picturesque old gentleman, Dan Cornell, who had been a contractor on the Erie Canal, and it was quite interesting to hear him swear. He was associated not only with the Batavia Paper Manufacturing Co., but also had been, I think, with its predecessors." Does anyone know anything more about either of these two men?

The Society has a postcard view of "Old Mill Ruins, Mill Creek, Batavia, Ill." It pictures an old frame building along the creek. What was this used for? Who ran it and where was it located on the creek?

The Society also has a Hotel Howell register giving the names of guests staying there from June 15, 1885 to March 30, 1889. This was lent to us by Mrs. Karl Collins before she and Karl went to Phoenix, Arizona to live.

Some of the names in the register are beautifully written in Spencerian script, other signatures are not legible. The names of the casts of various show companies that played here were usually written by one person and were well written.

Edward (Doc) McAllister must have boarded or worked at the hotel from June 1885 on. He wrote in a lot of fictitious names as well as his own several times. It is rather hard sometimes to tell which names were authentic and which were not. I was able, after studying the signatures, to recognize his handwriting. He wrote in such names and places as: Dublin Daniel, Ireland; Thulamoil, Willison., Minn.; Carter Harrison and Wife, Chicago; Big Charles, Aurora, Room 29.

I have my doubts about the authenticity of the name of Adelina Patti, Florence, Italy, entered Sunday, November 11, 1888. It might have been written as a joke by the man whose name precedes hers, H. Conklin. The handwriting is very similar.

The hotel itself was a frame building at 20-24 S. Van Buren Street about where Walt's Super Market is today. It must have contained about fourteen rooms. The building was torn down about 1901.

Does anyone remember the singer, Adelina Patti, as being here in November of 1888? If she was here, did she sing in our Music Hall? Why did she come to Batavia, a comparatively small town?

In the book, "Legends and Lore of Southern Illinois" by John W. Allan, he has a section on livery stables of bygone days. Do any of you remember our livery stables well enough to describe them? Batavia had several, both on the East and the West Side. What were they like inside? Who owned them? Who drove the hacks at funerals? What was the average number of horses kept in a stable? Can you describe the vehicles used? Who patronized the livery stables? Also, who remembers the blacksmith shops well enough to describe them?

When I was a youngster, I just wasn't interested in livery stables or else was warned to keep away from them. However, I do remember that sometimes I would pause at the open door of a blacksmith shop and watch the smith shoe a horse. I remember the sparks, the ring of the anvil when struck, the smell of burning hoofs as the smith fitted the hot shoe to a hoof of a horse. That was fascinating to me. Then I had to hurry home to do my chores.

Have I started memories in your mind, questions that you want answered? A roundtable discussion of some of these "way back when queries" may be an excellent program for one of our Society meetings.