

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

Vol. VI, No. 1

February 1965

Published by the BATAVIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.

Sir Winston Churchill

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NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1965 at 3:00 P.M.  
IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

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PROGRAM

“THE NEGRO IN BATAVIA” by Mrs. Jennie Prince

Everyone is Welcome

Our December meeting was most interesting. Mr. Vernon Derry, Aurora, showed slides of antique cars interspersed with clever comments as he remembered them.

At this meeting the following officers were elected:

J. Harrold Blair	President
William B. Benson	Vice President
Miss Joanne Kane	Secretary
Raymond J. Patzer	Treasurer
Angelo Perna	Trustee for Two Years
Arnold P. Benson	Trustee for Two Years

We thank the outgoing officers for a very favorable year. Mrs. Earl L. Judd gave a lot of time and thought to her office as president. The meetings were varied and interesting and she presided with poise. Mrs. Ben Limbaugh and Ansgar Carlson are the Carryover Trustees. Bruce G. Paddock was Vice President and also Chairman of the Nominating Committee.

OUR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As President-Elect of this Society for the year 1965, I would like to express my appreciation for the confidence you have shown in electing me to this office. It is my hope that as an organization and as individuals we may in some way not only preserve the history which is behind us, but continue to make it so that those coming after us will also consider theirs a Valuable Heritage!

Many important projects are in progress, including the acquisition of our Museum and the other officers and I will appreciate your continued cooperation in making this year as successful as those we have enjoyed in the past.

(Signed) J. Harrold Blair

We have received mementos recently from Don Schielke and Jack Dunham of Aurora. We are most grateful to them.

Batavia has lost three revered souls since our last newsletter: Mr. Edwin Bowman, 90 years, a resident here for more than sixty years; Mrs. Charles (Elmina Bartholomew) Hobler, 82 years, who was born in Batavia; and Mr. C. D. Newlin, 89 years, who came to Batavia in 1916 to become president of the First National Bank. Our sympathy is tendered to the families of these people.

Your committee is working on the captions for the pictures for the "Then and Now in Batavia" book. There are also a few more "now" photos to be taken.

It hurts us to see some of these venerable historic homes destroyed without a tear or any obsequies to record their passing. The Solomon Trumbull home on the north side of Church Street between Washington Avenue and River Street is a case in point. We understand this house was allowed to rundown and was tenanted by several families during the last few years. But it had dignity and was the home of at least three prominent Batavia families in years past; Solomon Trumbull, G. B. Moon and George B. Moss. We don't know when the house was built but its on the old birdseye view of Batavia picture printed in 1869. George B. Moss was a partner with Joel McKee in the Batavia Mills from 1850 until it was destroyed by fire, in 1872. He was also president of the Batavia Paper Mills in the 1860's. In 1850 he was 28 years old, his wife Eliza was 32 and he had two children. Solomon Trumbull lived here when he moved to town off of his farm on the Main Street Road where the George Walls lived later and where William R. Moore lives today. Trumbull owned 277 acres. The late Walter Stone called the house in question, the Trumbull House. Then, sometime in the early days, G. B. Moon, manager of the Batavia Creamery, lived there. If you have any more information about this house, or, if we have made any errors, please let us know.

Our cases in the Civic Center have been changed with material furnished by Mrs. Elaine Cannon and Wm. B. Benson, and artistically arranged by them and Mrs. Claire Kruger.

The Society has received a copy of the book "Shadow of a Man", a memorial to Mr. W. C. Furnas primarily, but also the history and development of the Furnas Electric Company. With this is the story of the men connected with shaping the policies of the company. It is masterly written by Robert Lorz.

We received a letter from Allie Johnson telling about some early Batavians and their autos. He mentioned Dr. J. C. Augustine, Miss Amy Burton, later Mrs. Worthington, and John Strom, who built an auto all by himself.

Allie also mentions the "reaper shop" on the north side of McKee Street between Batavia Avenue and Washington Street. Henry Wenberg told me first about this building. He said farmers used to store their farm implements in it. Frank Smith in his article, "Batavia in 1875" published in the Herald for April 23, 1948 says, "West on McKee Street from the corner (North Batavia Avenue)

and on the north side of the street, was a long one story building made into two apartments, formerly a factory building . . .” Do any of you know anything more about this building?

We thought the following would be interesting in view of the construction of the present causeway across the Pond. This report was given to us by Edwin Parre from the papers of his father, L. A. Parre. We copy it verbatim.

Batavia, April 3, 1855

To the Board of Auditors of the Town of Batavia

The Com. of Highways would respectfully report

That they assessed 577 days road labour.

That M. Foster, Overseer of Highways in. dist. No.6 has returned his list.

stating that the whole amt. of labour viz 22 days assessed had been performed to the best of his ability and that he was willing to serve another term if the public required it.

That no returns have been made from the other Road districts consequently have no means of knowing whether any part of the labour assessed has been performed.

That no monies have been received by them for fines or commutations.

The following improvements they consider necessary viz a Roadway across the Slough or pond leading directly west from the Bridge.

Probable cost \$600 or \$800 provided Sluice ways are put in without expense to the Town.

The following is a Statement of the Town a/c with Derby, Barker & Corwin

Amt. of contract for building Bridge	\$8500.00
Paid on the above as per a/c furnished	<u>6056.00</u>
	2444.00
Int. on payment due on Contract to date	85.49
Amt. allowed for extra work on bridge and depth of piers	
Total	<u>275.00</u>
	\$2804.49

It will require that provision be made for the above amt. also for \$300 into which will be due Feb. 1, 1856 on loan of \$3000 obtained of Mr. Coffin.

Whole amt. to be provided for the present year of Bridge indebtedness with

int. to Mr. Coffin \$3104.49

Supposed (?) collectors fees on the above 100.00

3204.49

There will be in the Treasurers hands on the 1st of May next

155.00

\$3049.49

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Joel McKee )

Daniel Hyde )Com. of Highways

M. P. Houck )

## THE NEGRO IN BATAVIA, ILLINOIS

By Mrs. Jennie White Prince

(Read by Mrs. Prince at the Batavia Historical Society meeting, Sunday, February 14, 1965. Augmented by some further comments and answers to questions asked her.)

I do not know who the first Negro settler was in Batavia, I only know of the families who my grandfather, John Ozier, knew in his lifetime. He came here after the Chicago fire of 1871 by way of Turner Junction, now West Chicago. He told me after that he left behind him four lots in the burned-out area. Here he dug in at the corner of River and Gore Streets and built his cabin, as he called it, one room at a time. He then was one of the not more than fifteen families, some of whom, like he, had wandered here, coming with other families, or who sought a home free from slavery or with better working conditions. All prospered and became owners of what is now valuable property in different sections of the town. They lived mostly on the east side of the Fox River, but one, Mr. Thomas Guyder, lived on the west side. Others owned or had businesses in the downtown area, later three or four families lived south of Wilson Street.

On North River Street, starting from Gore Street to the corner of Buttermilk Alley (State Street), on both sides of the street, the early families were:

1. John Ozier, my granddad, was gardener, cook, handyman and owned the first candy, tobacco and what-ever-he-could-sell store, just outside Laurelwood Park at the time of the park years. He was a Civil War veteran. His name does not appear on the Newton Monument in the West Batavia Cemetery because the papers given him for recognition of service came from Rhode Island. He told me often that he was in the battle of Bull Run and remembers filling his canteen with water where a horse had been killed. He drank from it and was glad to get it, and also anything he could get to eat. He left his home with the armies that came through Tennessee. He evidently was sold with his mother for he often said that he saw her and other slaves beaten and salt and pepper put in their stripes.

The Batavia Herald for the week of June 12, 1919 carried an article about him. He died on June 4, 1919, after living to be 100 years and five months old. One article that I read in a Kane County History said that Negroes had to have a guardian in Illinois. That is why Mr. Marley, editor of the Batavia Herald, became his guardian. The bowl and some other articles that he used in the Civil War are upstairs in the Library.

2. Tom Duke lived on the corner of Gore and N. River Streets, across from John Ozier, on the present Wm. McDonald property. Some of his family live in Aurora and Elgin.

3. Where the Clint Maves family lives at present, 909 N. River Street, lived Lewis Smith, who was part Negro and part Indian. He was janitor for many stores in town. I especially remember that he worked for Thompson and Shaw.

4. Jordan, or Jerry White with his wife Lena and children lived next south. He worked for the City, the Challenge Co., and the Creamery. Later he hauled garbage, was handyman, gardener until blindness finally forced him to retire.

5. An old lady lived just south of us. I don't know her name but she did sewing and mending. I spent many hours watching her. Oh yes, she owned a sewing machine.

6. The Jordans lived across the street. They had at least three boys and one girl. Charles, or Chuck, was a fighter and hunter. George was janitor for the Aurora and Elgin Railroad. William was a handyman and plasterer. Lizzie Riggs,

the girl, married a man who drove horses for a company in Aurora.

7. Chas. Corbett lived in a house owned by my brother, now torn down, with his wife and several children. Some of the children now live in Maywood. He was a handyman and worked on the ice.

8. James Watts lived at the corner of N. River and Lake Streets, in a real log-cabin. He had at least two boys who I remember, Jim and Mott. They hunted, fished and worked on the ice. They liked to fight with bare knuckles. Maybe they helped give Gore Street its name. So far as I know that's where most of the fights that started ended up or in Buttermilk Alley.

9. Just opposite the Watts family, on the corner, lived George Martenas and his two boys and two girls. George Jr. went west, then came back and died here. Garfield was a polisher for the flat-iron company in Geneva. He also played for dances and did some fighting on the side. Eva Taylor Caldwell, the first wife of Wm. Caldwell, also worked for Howells in Geneva and was one of the first lady foremen. Miss Hattie lived in the old house, now torn down, on the site of the present Fred Wessling home, 112 Lake Street, her father lived with her. Later she went to work in Park Ridge but came back here. Some of the Martena heirs live in Aurora.

10. The Thurston sisters, Carrie and Julia, lived in back of the Martena home, in the house where Alfred Gibson now lives, 118 Lake Street. Carrie worked for the George Spooner family and Julia worked for Dr. Anna Spencer.

11. Stephen Smith lived next south where Carl Osland lives today, 109 Latham Street. He lived here with his son nicknamed Pickles, otherwise he was known as Peck's Bad Boy or so the neighbors and the kids of his time said. We had no water, so got it here from an open well. Later a pump was put in. We used to view the shows on the lot nearby and saw the parades come and go. I saw Uncle Tom's Cabin there. Either Ethel Waters or Mamie Smith was one of the later Negro artists seen there. I remember also Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show which mostly wound up with nearly all races.

12. Down the street, where the new apartments are now, just about in the center of the block, was a house that I called the old French house. Here lived a Mrs. Decorcey, who later became Mrs. Jones with her granddaughter Janey. We played together and I often spent week ends in that house. It usually wound up with both of us getting licked and not speaking to each other, as the old lady did not spare the rod. It hurt then, but I'm grateful to her now. She lived on a pension of some kind.

13. On the corner of N. River and \_\_\_\_\_ Streets, in later years, lived Dixie Brown who moved here from the Pigeon house on Washington Avenue. He was janitor of the U. S. Wind Engine & Pump Co., also for the bank and some of the stores. His wife did some cleaning for the N. F. Reckards which he said she did not have to do as he invested her money.

14. At 208 N. River Street, in the house where the Robert Buckner family now lives, Grandpa or Abram R. Hall lived. I don't know how large his family was. I know his son Perry went to Washington, D. C. and worked around the Capital. I was told this by one of the daughters, Susie Hall Lippings, wife of the proprietor of the restaurant and boarding house in the basement which was under the Jules Morris Store, the present Phipps Department Store.

15. Others in the downtown area of that period were James Stewart who had a barber shop on East Wilson Street when I was young. He lived in the house back in

the yard, which, I believe, he left to a Batavia newsboy who did chores for him. I believe his father lived with him. I know that he had three sons; James, Jr. who married a woman from Chicago, John, and McKinley who died young.

16. Other well known names include Claybourne Turner, janitor of the now Louise White School. His daughter, Rosa Slater Jordan, was one of the King's Daughters, the first Negro girl graduate of East Batavia High School. His brother was blind James Turner. There was also Mrs. Nero Norcross and family, son George and daughter Queen V. Thomas. She was the mother of Mrs. Mae Humbles of North Park Street. Mr. Thomas was one of the deacons in the torn down Methodist Church. Also there were Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Buckner, Mr. and Mrs. C. Ballard, Mr. and Mrs. Otis Barton, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Jackson.

Time has erased from my memory nearly all of the old timers, but good luck to the present group who are making their homes here and may they hold high the torch of success passed on to them in their different fields, be it church, school, hospital or science. May the God of all men walk beside them each day to make and keep us a united city.

THE BATAVIA HISTORIAN

Vol. VI, No. 2

June 1965

Prepared by John Gustafson and.  
Published by the BAT A VIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It is not how much you know about life but how you live your life that counts. Those who can avoid mistakes by observing the mistakes of others are most apt to keep from sorrow. In a world full of uncertainties, the record of what has gone before human-experience is as sure and reliable as anything of which we know.

Ray Lyman Wilbur

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NEXT MEETING  
SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 1965 at 3:00 P. M,  
IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

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PROGRAM

BATAVIA - "THE WINDMILL CITY"

Speaker

J. Harrold Blair

Our February meeting was unusually interesting as evidenced by our larger-than-usual attendance. The program was in keeping with Negro History Week. As an extra bonus with this Newsletter we are enclosing an augmented copy of the paper, "The Negro in Batavia," which was read by Mrs. Jennie Prince. The typing class of the high school, under the leadership of Miss Beatrice Hodgson, did the printing; Mrs. Mary Williams did the liaison work. Our grateful thanks to all who helped, and to the Furnas Electric Company for printing and distributing our Newsletter.

We have received several mementos from Bellevue Place Sanitarium through the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Ross and her son, Rodney. Also a pair of wool carders from Miss Helen Brauns and mementos from Richard Butcher, Mrs. Wayne M. Johnson and Mrs. Wilbur J. Cannon.

We are saddened by the death of Mr. Ray E. McDaniels, 82; and Mr. Elmer R. Swanson, 65. The passing of Miss Louise White at the age of 90, an educator in this area for 43 years, she will be long remembered. To know her was to love her.

Following are some of the requests that we have received recently. We have tried to answer them regarding people, homes; businesses, etc.

From San Francisco, California, about the Grimes Family and the early history of Batavia;

From San Bernardino, California, about Col. Joseph L. Lyon and his family.

From the Smithsonian Institute about the U. S. Wind Engine & Pump Co.

From Aurora about the early history of the Congregational Church. (Originally the Church of the Big and Little Woods),

Three different families have asked for information about the age and early history of their homes;

From the "Then and Now" book committee about information about Batavia.

Information about the Railroad Right-of-Ways in Batavia.

Raymond Patzer, our Treasurer, is working up a history of the telephone companies in Batavia and would appreciate hearing from anyone who can help him with information. He wishes especially information about people who worked for the Chicago Telephone Co, at 2 E. Wilson Street from 1900 to 1917. Following is a list of names that he has. Can you supply the missing parts?

John Blake

Viola Loker, 423 Garfield Ave,

Helen Miller, assistant chief operator, 29 Franklin St.

Katherine Heath

Kate M \_\_\_\_\_.

Lydia A \_\_\_\_\_

Alice McBreen, 134 S., Prairie St,

Hazel S. Sova, 22 S. Prairie St.

Myrtle L. Fredendall, night operator, 197 N, Prairie St.

Bertha D. \_\_\_\_\_

Ed E. \_\_\_\_\_

Were there any other people who worked for the Chicago Telephone Co, here?

The following worked for the Interstate Telephone Co., 16 E Wilson St:

Nellie A. Rachielles, manager, 285 Main St.

Delia L. Murray, 172 S, Prairie St.

Elizabeth Plautz, South St.

Were there any others?

The first telephone was installed in Batavia August 5, 1882. Now the Bell Telephone Co. is putting up a \$7, 000,000 laboratory building at the intersection of the Warrenville and Wheaton Naperville Roads,

Here is an interesting note on telephone history taken from "The History of Kane County, Ill." Vol. 1, 1908, written by E. Waite and Frank W. Joslyn, page 596.

In Aurora, as in most of the towns, telephones met a lot of resistances. A Mr. Hord was anxious to have the telephone line extended to the mill at Montgomery in which he was interested, and volunteered to go around with the solicitor from Chicago to help get subscribers for phones in Aurora. He says it took ten days to get ten subscribers. "What use would this be to us?" said the president of one of the banks, "I can't imagine what good one of them things could do a bank." A member of a big dry goods firm said: "I wouldn't have one of them

things in the store if you would put it in for nothing. The clerks would neglect their business and be fooling with the thing all the time trying to call up their friends around town."

The following are new B. H. S, members:

Erd, Svea, 204 N, Batavia Avenue

Colberg, Isabell, 711 McKee Street

Lewis, Mrs. Richard., 405 W. Wilson Street

McConnaughay, Mr. James, 26 N. Harrison Street

Humbles, Mamie, 902 N. Park Street.

We welcome you to our Society,

Prepared by John Gustafson

Published by the BATAVIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"The very things that Americans adore abroad they destroy systematically at home. Old buildings are broken up in the United States as fast as used packing boxes to make way for new ones. The loss we endure is not merely sentimental. What we lose is our funded experience."

"Architecture is an art whose masterpieces cannot be stored away like paintings or reproduced centuries later like music. The art lives on in used buildings; they alone can carry it. Without them we are perpetual juveniles, starting over and over, a people without a memory."

Editorial in Architectural Forum, reprinted in the Readers Digest for December 1957.

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NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1965 at 3:00 P.M.  
IN THE BARTHOLOMEW CIVIC CENTER

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PROGRAM

ROUND TABLE - "SHOW AND TELL"  
THE USUAL SPECIALS AND REFRESHMENTS

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Remember the meeting we had in February of 1961 called "Among My Treasures?" Many people brought their most prized possession of historic interest, displayed it and then talked about it. There were so many treasures that we ran out of time. We hope that this will happen this time. Bring one of your mementos to "show and tell." The success of the meeting depends on you.

IT'S OUT! The booklet, "Batavia, Illinois Past and Present," consisting of 52 pages and 103 photographs, will be presented for sale at \$2.00 at this meeting. It portrays our town as it was almost 100 years ago together with some of the changes which have been made. The old pictures were furnished by members and friends of the society, and the present ones were taken by Mrs. Pauline Campbell and Franklin Elwood. Mrs. Campbell even risked climbing the aerial ladder belonging to the Batavia Fire Department to obtain the present picture for the cover.

The members of the committee who have spent considerable time in selecting the pictures and preparing the captions are Mrs. Horace Jones, Miss Eunice Shumway, Mrs. Pauline Campbell, Mrs. Michael Schomig, Mrs. Mary Williams, Philip Carlson, Franklin Elwood, J. Harrold Blair and John Gustafson.

We had an attendance of seventy at our June meeting which was excellent considering the extremely hot and humid weather we had at that time.

A short entertainment feature preceded the main program furnished by three girls from the Batavia High School. Then our President, J. Harrold Blair, discussed Batavia's main industry until the turn of the century, "Windmills." Refreshments were served by a committee headed by Mrs. Ben Limbaugh.

We are saddened by the passing of Mrs. Bertha Rowland, Mrs. Frank (Ruth Ballard) Nelson, Mr. William Bowron, Mr. Jacob Feldman, and Mr. Edwin M. Parre. These people were all greatly interested in our society and we will miss them.

Mementos have been received from the following friends: Harold E. Gleason, Aurora; the Geneva Historical Society; Edwin M. Parre; Mrs. Margaret B. McGee, Oberlin, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mason; Ed. G. Kuhn, Warrenville; Mr. and Mrs. Carl Hendrickson, Mrs. Edward Ross; T. L. Popeck, St. Charles and Harrold Blair.

Two books that every local historian should enjoy are in our Public Library. "The Thin Gold Watch" by Walter S. J. Swanson is the story of the newspaper Copleys. The second book is "The Burlington Route" by Richard C. Overton. This book includes the story of the Aurora Branch, later the Burlington, our east side branch. The presidency of John VanNortwick is discussed in detail. He served the road through the depression of 1857 and through the trying years of the Civil War until 1865.

Have you realized that we do not have a Lincoln Street or Avenue in Batavia at the present time? The late Bill Bowron called my attention to that fact and said he thought it a shame that our greatest Illinoisian was not represented in our street names. At one time Mallory Avenue was Lincoln Avenue and Van Nortwick Avenue was Douglas Avenue. We suppose that the desire to honor our local men warranted the changeover. But subdividers should keep this in mind; our next street should be named Lincoln.

We have not emphasized money gifts to our society as memorials for our deceased members. We recently received a donation in memory of Mrs. Frank Nelson.

We thank all of you who contributed information about telephone operators in Batavia exchanges for the Chicago and the Interstate Telephone Co's. Ray Patzer has appreciated receiving this information for his story of the telephone companies which he is writing.

We asked Mrs. McGee when she brought her mementos to us recently if she knew definitely and positively if President Lincoln visited her great-Grand-father Judge S. D. Lockwood when he lived here. She said, "No", but it is a family tradition that he did."

Have you visited the Geneva Historical Society Museum in Wheeler Park? It's a beautiful building and Mrs. Allan, Miss Mary Wheeler and Frank Jarvis

and others have done an excellent job in arranging the exhibits.

Batavia has lost some old building recently in the name of progress. Some of the buildings won't be missed too much, but some of us old-timers have grieved over the razing of the old H. K. Wolcott (Earl Nelson) home. We remember it as it was so beautifully kept up by the Wolcotts. It was a proud building and was so well built that it resisted demolition. These buildings of distinction are being torn down and many times jerry-built, poorly designed structures are put up in their place. Who would want these replacements to endure?

This is the first time since we have issued these newsletters that we have used a quote at our masthead the second time, but it seemed so appropriate at this time.

Following are some of the requests for information that we have received. We have answered them to the best of our ability.

Oak Lawn Public Library, Oak Lawn, Illinois, wanted information about the type of materials we collect and the manner in which they are preserved.

A man from Chicago about Charles Wheaton, especially his connection with the 1870 Illinois Constitutional Convention.

A man from Joliet about the David Bristol and the William Clark families.

A lady from West Chicago called and wanted information about the Alcott and Root families. These families lived in St. Charles but had friends in Batavia.

Mrs. Schroeder who wanted to know about the Col. Joseph L. Lyon family, sent us money for two history books and one year's membership.

Our thanks to Harold Bunker, LaFox, for letting us copy the names of customers, items and prices from the day-books of John McGuire. He had a blacksmith shop here on N. River Street in the 1870's.

Do you remember Bill Sandell, Hilding Streed and Harry Strain, old-time Batavians? We have received letters from the first two and Harry Strain and Mrs. Strain brought some mementos for the society as they were passing through on their way east. After going through New England, they were going south to Athens, Georgia to see Clarence Jones.

Have you paid your 1965 dues? Our treasurer, Ray Patzer, will even accept your 1966 dues.

Have you asked your friends to join our society? Dues are only \$1.00 per year.

Mrs. Horace Jones and Mrs. Mary Ann Judd have had a siege in the hospital but they are now coming along nicely.

We will look forward to seeing you on Sunday -- Come join the fun and bring your friends!

Published by the Batavia Historical Society

"One who lacks this expanded sense of indebtedness to the past is like a town I once visited. 'Thirteen years ago,' said my friend as he waved his hand out toward it. 'there was nothing here, and now look at it!' I did look at it. It was very raw. It was painfully extempore. It had all the virtues of enterprising youth-business, energy, expectancy - but it had the obvious lacks of youth as well. It had no past tense. As I looked at it I thought of other towns which have a present and a future but which have a past as well. One is aware in them of days gone by and. it may be of high doings when folks fought and died for great causes. The past is not everything and any generation or any man that tries to make it everything is lost. But neither are the present and the future everything. It is an ennobling experience to have a great past and to be gratefully aware of it."

From "Possessing a Past Tense" in "Twelve Tests of Character"  
by Harry Emerson Fosdick.

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NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY. DECEMBER 12. 1965

at 3:00 P.M.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL

WILSON ST. AND WASHINGTON AVE.

PROGRAM

“MEMORIES OF A 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHRISTMAS”

Prepared and Presented by Ben Limbaugh

and his associates of a newly organized

Junior Historical Society

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Our last meeting was held Sunday afternoon October 24, 1965. This was an informal meeting in which members sought one of their most treasured mementos to “show and tell.” The chairs were arranged in two concentric circles with a table in the center on which the mementos were placed to “show” after “telling.” Ten members participated in the program which was enjoyed by some sixty members. Refreshments were served after the program by a committee headed by Mrs. Ben Limbaugh.

Remember to buy our book. "Batavia. Illinois: Past and Present" for Christmas presents to your friends. They are attractive, historical and easy to mail. Anyone who has lived in Batavia and is now living elsewhere will especially appreciate receiving a copy. One such recipient said. "Even though one is happy where he is, they never can completely forget their early home life, nor does one want to."

Mementos have been received from the following people since our last meeting: Mrs. Mary Williams, Mrs. Elaine Cannon, Mrs. Arthur W. Bergstrom, Harry Strain, Bert L. Hyde and Richard Butcher. Our thanks to these friends for their gifts.

We went up to see the Geneva Historical Society Museum on November 1.

They have a beautiful building and the mementos' are attractively arranged in it with no "cluttered up" look. The room to the south of the display room is the storage room with plenty of space to conveniently hold all of their items properly cataloged. I especially envied them this room. In the rear is the office and work room.

The museum is open Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:30. Visit it if you have not already done so.

Looking through the department "Activities of Local Historical Societies" in the last issue of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, we note that several societies are conducting drives to raise money for a new-or-old building for a museum.

As we close this year, let us think of Batavia a century ago. What did it look like and what were the thoughts of the people? We have some idea of the former by looking at the Bird's-eye View of Batavia in 1869. This is the spread in the center of the book, "Batavia, Illinois: Past and Present." But the latter is not so easy to come by.

The Civil War had just finished and then in the midst of the rejoicing came the tragic news of the assassination of President Lincoln. How did Batavia take this news? We have these words from the record of the Congregational Church Sabbath School for April 16, 1865, "Today we meet, but it was in sadness as our dear President has breathed his last. May he rest in peace."

Along the same line, the following comments from the diary of Nathan S. Young for 1865 are interesting:

"Aug. 15, Sat. The news came today of the death of Pres. Lincoln at 7:22 this morning having been shot last evening at Ford's Theater by a Rebel Desperado.

"Thus is a nation suddenly thrown into mourning and sadness by this calamity.

"Aug. 19, Thurs. The funeral of Pres. Lincoln took place at Washington on April 19th and also throughout the loyal part of the country. It was observed as a solemn day, all business laid aside and the people repaired to their various churches where divine services were held. Buildings, universally almost, were draped in mourning.

"Aug. 20, Fri. A delegation with the body of Lincoln left Washington for Illinois. . . .

“May 1. To Chicago when the funeral procession of Pres. Lincoln came off. Stores and saloons all closed and the whole city was out in procession or on the sidewalks.”

Then follows some comments about Jeff Davis and of his capture in Georgia. Then on January 1, 1866 he says:

"We all ought to rejoice that we are entering upon a new year with a Union unrent and the flag flying and acknowledged in every state. The fratricidal hands that raised the sword to rend the Union have been overpowered, surrendered their arms and given up the contest, acknowledging that the Doctrine of Secession and State Rights have been lost to them forever, as well as their slaves who are free henceforth.

“That a people thus terribly thrashed as the Southerners have been, and their peculiar institution, slavery, their life and backbone gone, should love the Yankees for all this is not possible; but on the contrary, we may look for hatred and revenge on all occasions that offer a chance.”

Mr. Young settled in Blackberry Township in 1843. He came to Batavia in 1853 and was successively a Highway Commissioner, Assessor, Village Trustee, Supervisor, banker and a real estate broker here. He was also a member of the Board of Education for many years and a member of the Board of Library Directors. So you see, he kept busy. He was the grandfather of Mrs. Arthur Rendler.

Christmas was not celebrated much by the early settlers. They were evidently too busy with frontier jobs - building barns and fences, digging wells, adding finishing touches to their homes, cutting wood, husking corn, butchering hogs, etc.

I have partial copies of Mr. Young's diaries for 1843, 44, 45 and 46, but he never mentions Christmas in any year. He only gives the weather for Dec. 25, 1843. A year later, for Christmas 1844, he says, "Cloudy and quite warm, wind south. Self and Peleg (his brother) down to Snyder's Mill (North Aurora) looking for stone, timber, etc."

His entry for Dec. 25, 1845 is, "Cold, snowy and windy. Peleg and Father off to town with pork and wheat. John Wheeler also took along a load of wheat for us." He notes only the weather for Dec. 25, 1846 as, "Very pleasant and fine."

Our thanks to the Furnas Electric Co. for printing our Newsletter throughout the year and to the staff for folding it, clipping it, stamping it and putting it in the mail. They do a fine job, don't you think?

Two century-old houses have received our plaques this year; the William Springborn home at 635 Elm Street and the Russell Nelson home at 420 McKee St.

Ray Patzer will accept your 1966 dues.

And now in closing - May there come to you at this Holiday Time an abundance of the precious things of life; Health, Happiness and Enduring Friendships.