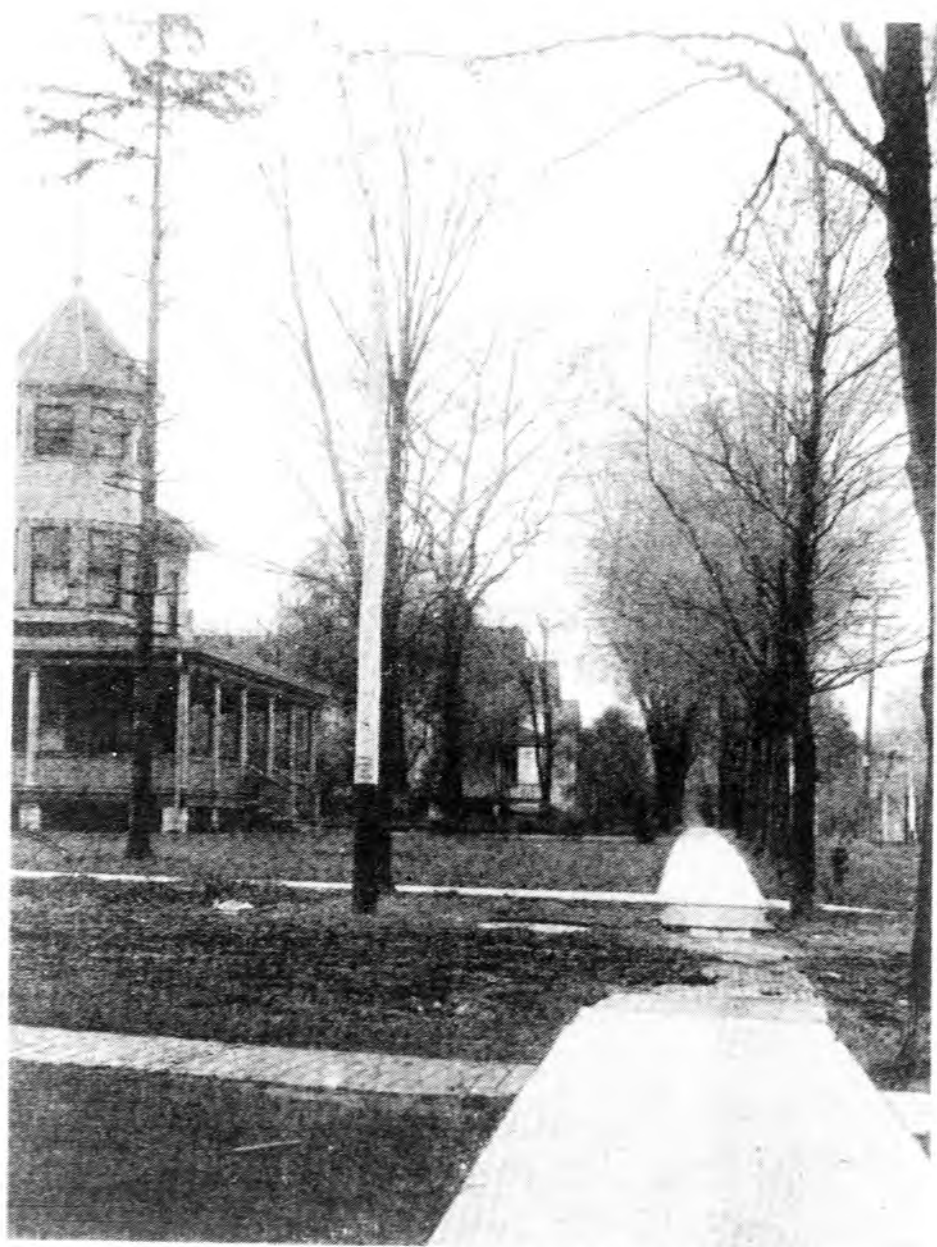


FOREWORD

The contents of this booklet are not intended to be a history. It is true that historical facts are included, but the real intent of the writer is to entertain and inform with anecdotes and happenings that would probably never be included in a history of our village.

Bartle R. Herrick



Curtis Street looking east from Washington Street

I

DID you know our county and the river DuPage derived their name from a French trapper of that name who worked the local streams for beaver as early as 1780?

It was fifty years later when a tall, slim man, still straight in carriage though in the golden years of his life, dismounted from his horse at the intersection of two Potawatomie Indian trails west of Chicago. Pleased with the land, he struck his claim. From Ogden Avenue on the north to Highland Avenue to the east, the railroad tracks to the south and Downer Drive to the west now became the land of former Vermonter, Pierce Downer. The year was 1832.

A farmer, lured to the area by a son who was helping to construct the first lighthouse in Chicago, Downer grasped at the promise this land held for his family, never dreaming his claim would spawn a village to bear his name. Two years later his daughter, Adeline, came to keep house for him. That was 1834, the year of the last Indian uprising. Mrs. Downer joined him in 1836.

Once, upon returning to his claim from a trip to Chicago for supplies, he found a pair of claim jumpers erecting a cabin on his land. Armed with only a club, he attacked them single-handedly and, after a bitter fight, drove them off.

Travellers in those early days found refuge for the night at Aldrich's Tavern near the intersection of Ogden and Fairview avenues. It was the only haven of rest and sustenance between Brush Hill (Hinsdale) and Naperville. A crude long structure, it had doors on both the north and south walls large enough to allow oxen to drag the huge fire logs into the tavern.

While Indians still frequented the area, they were more inclined to thievery than violence. When they found a settler family friendly to them, they would bury the head of a tomahawk in the road leading to the settler's door with the handle of the weapon horizontal to the ground. Any abode so marked was never bothered by a red man.

Early settler, Israel Blodgett, built a leanto against his log house to be used as a school. His twelve-year-old daughter was the "teach".

It was called a subscription school with every settler sending a child there, having to pay what he could toward the school's expenses. One winter it was open for only three weeks due to the low value of the settler's produce. Few there were who could afford the luxury of a school for their children when oats were selling for ten cents a bushel and dressed pork delivered all the way to Chicago, went for three to four cents a pound. Hard cash was extremely limited and the practice of bartering became a necessity.

Levi Aldrich, no relation to the Aldrich on Ogden and Fairview, built his log tavern on the hill overlooking the ball park on west Maple Avenue. It rested just east of the old Girl Scout cabin destroyed by fire some years ago. The tavern's barns were across the street south. Later the logs of the tavern were sided with planks. Some years afterward, probably in the sixties, M.L. Dunham purchased the building and land, making it his farm home. Dunham road was named for him since it was the eastern boundary of his farm.

The village was truly born on the forty acres owned by Henry Carpenter in the area of Maple Avenue and Carpenter Street. Carpenter was the possessor of several "firsts". In 1838 he donated a lot for the First Methodist Church. He became the first realtor of the village when he divided his acreage into town lots for sale.

His was the first store in town, operated from his home, still standing, on the corner of Maple and Lane. About 1850 he built a new home across Maple on a rise of land now occupied by the Methodist parsonage. Mr. A.F. Foster built the first Methodist church while living in a house where that church now has a parking lot. That was 1852. The blacktop parking lot is also the location of N.A. Belden's blacksmith shop in the 1840 period. It is said that Belden's first job was to shoe Pierce Downer's horse.

II

WE are all cognizant of the settler's hard life, but we rarely take time to consider their daily trials and frequent exposure to danger. For example, did you know a family named Schump farmed just south of the village? One morning, while Mrs. Schump was in the pasture milking cows, she became confused when a dense fog settled around her. Endeavoring to find her house, she strayed across the prairie until she finally encountered the farmhouse of Dr. Henry Faul in Greggs (Westmont). Her distraught husband searched the wrong way for her and went as far west as Hobson Road and Washington Street in Naperville. Surely, this was a milk-curdling experience.

Did you know the large stand of Maple trees along Gilbert Avenue provided the early settlers with a supply of much valued maple sugar?

Elmer Gleason, living south of the little settlement, felt the need for a Baptist church. He helped to organize one about 1838. With no church baptismal available, they had a problem not easily solved. Hardy souls they were, for even though it was mid-winter, the ice was cut out of St. Joseph's creek by axes and ten members of his family and others were baptized in that frigid water. As they emerged from the creek they were embraced with blankets and rushed indoors for warm, dry clothing.

Did you know that downtown Downers Grove was once an island? That's right. St. Joe's Creek split east of Washington Street with the lesser branch going north of Curtis Street. The main branch went due west to bend around the Congregational church. It flowed north briefly and then pursued its western flow to join the east branch of the DuPage River. The northerly branch of the stream rejoined the main branch just west of Forest Avenue.

Our little river of destiny, with its springtime bank-to-bank volume of violent water, often flooded the basements of the downtown merchants, ruining merchandise and creating a real mess in general. That was when the fish would make their spring fight against the current to spawn in the swamp that is now Barth pond. Many fish lost

their lives enroute by the hands of local fishermen. In the summer the stream often dried up and smelled quite badly.

For its nasty behavior, the creek was confined to a huge tile in recent years and, so far, the confinement has worked. Members of the Congregational church, who for years experienced the frequent flooding, will never forget seeing their pianos floating in the church basement.

Many of this country's villages have caught a cemetery in their center as they developed. I believe it is Kansas City, Kansas that has the relatives of Zane Grey, the Western author, in a cemetery in their downtown. Downers Grove's cemetery was at first located east of Main Street and south of Maple Avenue where a large parking lot now exists. A story persists as to why the cemetery was moved to its present location and this is the story.

A little boy whose last name was Pye had recently been buried in the original cemetery. Henry Carpenter, from his house at Lane and Maple, could see that pathetic little grave on the hill (it was a hill then) every time he emerged from his house. It bothered him so much that he called a meeting of the cemetery board and it was decided to change the location of the burial grounds. The new location (the present one) was Mr. Curtis' sheep pasture. He willingly sold one acre for fifteen dollars and around 1853 the move was consummated.

Strange as it sounds in view of today's terrain, Pierce Downer often had difficulty finding his cabin. It is difficult to realize the dense underbrush and timber that grew about his home, especially to the south. He solved the problem in a novel way to help himself and visitors locate his residence. He cut a number of saplings in such a manner that they fell pointing to his cabin. These cut trees were scattered through the brush and served as guides.

III

DID you know that Downers Grove once had a stockyard? That should not be surprising when one recalls that the surrounding area was composed of farms. It was located on the east side of Main between the railroad tracks and Burlington Avenue. If you were an early riser or a light sleeper you would know a farmer was driving his stock down Main to the yards where the animals would be held until shipped into Chicago.

Sometime when downtown, take notice that the old headstones in the cemetery face to the west. That is because our main street, then called Union, ran through Fishel Park. Washington Street bore the name of Liberty Street, Forest Avenue was Foote Street, Warren Avenue was Belmont, Fifty-fifth was Orchard Street.

Grove Street was born in 1874 and Belden Place, named for the early smithy, was cut in 1875. Wooden sidewalks consisting of two-inch planks four feet wide were laid on the north side of Maple Avenue from Carpenter to Washington in 1873. That was the year the little village became of age and was incorporated. March 29th. Most people boasted wooden walks from house to outhouse. Brick sidewalks still exist along Carpenter Street and for many years stone slabs were the sidewalk on the south side of Maple.

Did you know how absurd some of our early laws were? One ordinance forbid the annoyance of others by doing any dancing on Sundays. Nor could you fiddle, sing, play baseball or cards, fish, etc. if it could be proven that you were annoying someone else.

Originally, one could not reach Ogden Avenue by going north on Main. One of the Rogers' houses was in the way requiring a veer to Highland Avenue right after crossing the railroad tracks. The existence of an extensive swamp and peat bed just south of Ogden and in line with Main Street also deterred Main's extension to the north.

A group of land developers, including such locally well-known names as Prince, Foote, and Linscott, tried to purchase the Rogers' house with intent to move it and develop their holdings on the north side of town. Rogers was not amenable to the proposition so the

realtors went to court. They won the suit condemning Rogers' house, moved it and cut Main Street through straight to Ogden Avenue. Rogers ended up receiving less than the amount originally offered to him.

With the initiation of the "Gay Nineties", our neighbor village to the south – Lemont, boomed. Perhaps the "boom" was the explosion of popping corks extracted from whisky bottles. By 1895 Lemont boasted (?) some seventy saloons. At one time the Salvation Army was stoned out of that tough community.

Did you know the high school graduating class of 1895 consisted of four members – Lee Stanley, Grace Batterham, Elizabeth Strong and Annie Herring; the last became a long-time teacher in our grammar schools.

Did you know that for several years a water trough for horses adorned Main Street just north of the cemetery? Hitch rails and posts to hold customer's horses lined the street. Where such a convenience was unavailable, the animal could be held by a leather strap attached to bridle and a heavy round weight heavy enough to discourage "old Dobbin" from straying.

Did you know that in those early days boys and girls did not fraternize during recess at school? A wooden fence just south of the Lincoln building divided the play areas – boys on one side and the girls on the other.

Main Street at Curtis looking north



IV

MANY homeowners added a pre-fabricated entryway to their front door. These structures would help prevent the cold wintry blasts from blowing directly into the front room. Erected late in the fall, they were taken down early in the spring, but were reused annually.

The many grand old army veterans of the village met monthly and talked politics, eulogized Grant and played cards. Whist was a very popular game of that day.

Crescy's auditorium, now the home of Intervarsity Press at 5212 Main was the town entertainment center from 1890 to 1910. In ensuing years it became a plumbing shop for Emil Woehrel, then Hawkins Brothers had a furniture store and still later Hawkins sold Nash cars on the site.

The Belmont area was slow to develop and was popularly called Lacton. Puffer School stood on the point of land formed by Ogden Avenue and Warrenville Road. I believe this neighborhood was also called Toad Hollow by old timers.

The Downers Grove Park District Golf Club, alleged to be the first west of the Allegheny Mountains, is one of the most popular courses in the area. At first it was simply a cow pasture and later, the cows shared it with the golfers. During that time the warning "fore" was less often heard than "watch your step!". An old-timer, reminiscing, recalled seeing gentlemen and their ladies debarking from the Chicago trains and making their way through the dust of Belmont Road (the ladies gingerly holding their skirts high) to the golf club where refreshments were served.

In the nineties, the Burlington Railroad built a freight office on the west side of Main close to the tracks. John Remmers was freight agent for many years and his wife served on the local school board. Some of you may remember the control tower that stood just north of the tracks on the west side of Main which housed the controls for the manually operated gates on Forest, Washington and of course, Main. At the approach of a train, the gateman would emerge from his shelter in the tower and stand in the middle of the street with a sign

designated "stop" for pedestrians and motorists to obey.

Did you know that in 1895 the village still had no water system and everyone depended upon their wells for water? Try to imagine the horror of J.W. Graves when he found a dead dog in his well. For how long was it there? Who did such a thing? It was said at the time that Mr. Graves was most anxious to learn the perpetrator of the deed.

Poor Mr. Graves had other troubles when Halloween arrived. Several of his buggies somehow arrived on Main Street and were set afire. The next, sounds unfortunately, a bit like today. When the poor man tried to extinguish the flames, he evoked laughter from bystanders who made no effort to help. Two of his buggies were found atop a local hardware store the following morning.

Main Street at Burlington looking south



V

THE village was becoming organized. In 1897 the town's houses were renumbered. The city bought a horse-drawn sprinkler to help allay the dust of summer on its streets. Downtown street lights were of kerosene and required a man to fill and light them every night.

Now a note of possible interest for Madame Housewife. Butter was selling for sixteen cents a pound and you could purchase a pair of shoes from Nash Brothers for \$3.00 a pair. The subscription to the Downers Grove Reporter was \$1.00 per year with cash in advance, please. John Stanley built a small building on Curtis Street for a library where the Downers Grove National bank drive-up exists today. Previously, the library had been on the second floor of the Farmers and Merchants Bank on the northeast corner of Main and Curtis. The "Youth's Companion" made great reading for the youth of the day. In books, the Bobbsey Twins and Tom Swift thrilled their readers.

W.E. Herring, a local contractor, was building a lovely home for his family at Maple and Benton. That was in 1895 and it's still there.

Let's share some notes from an old-timer's 1895 diary. "Received fifty cents for driving funeral wagon today. Bought a 25-ride ticket to Chicago for \$5.25. Sold horse to Hoffert's renter for \$50.00. Sold calf to Jake Klein for \$3.50. Nash Brothers bought ten dozen eggs for 18 cents a dozen. Bought some sugar at 5 cents a pound."

This advertisement in the local paper must have created quite a "splash". It read – "Archie Marvin, local barber in the basement below the Farmers and Merchants Bank (now Muriel Mundy's) has now installed a public hot water bath. No need for local citizens to go to the city for a hot bath". A real estate ad in the same paper offered a new large house with a fifty-foot lot and only one block from the depot for \$2,400.

Some local businesses of the day were A.H. Dannamark, the north side's general store on Forest Avenue, making deliveries three times weekly; Mrs. McNaught's bakery offering bread for five cents a loaf; A.P. Tholin, artistic tailor had suits at \$18.00 and pants for

\$4.00; U.H. Balcom offered fine furniture and undertaking service; The latter's store straddled the creek on the west side of Main near Giesche's present store. Later the building was moved to 5120 Forest Avenue and made into a home.

W.H. Baker, a local photographer who was short of stature, but long on gentleness, published a booklet of pictures featuring the village, and including several photos of Prince Pond which had been donated to the village. Mr. Baker specialized in selling calendars with his photos mounted on them. His equally diminutive wife, for a little more money, would tint the pictures. Their life did not have a happy ending. They lost their little home when the mortgage could not be met and died shortly thereafter practically penniless.

Village officials in the mid-nineties were Carpenter, president with board members Bush, Crescy, Edwards, Gesner, Gallup and Moss. Members of the school board were Lindley, president and members Blodgett, Nourse, Stevens, Carpenter and Towsley.

The village population in 1895 was a robust 2,500 souls and several hundred dogs and felines.

The first telephone exchange of the Chicago Telephone Co. was located in the rear of a downtown drug store. Spencer Palmer was one of the early operators.

Fire was always a dreaded catastrophe of the early years and with so many wooden structures, the fears were well founded. In April, 1895, Fire Marshall Blanchard (salary \$25.00 annually) called for an organization of two fire companies – one for the north side of town and one for the south side. Twenty men formed the south side company with Charles Mochel acting Captain. The north side selected D. Colville as their captain.

Firemen were expected to get to a fire by their own initiative if they weren't close enough to the station to hitch a ride on the ladder wagon.

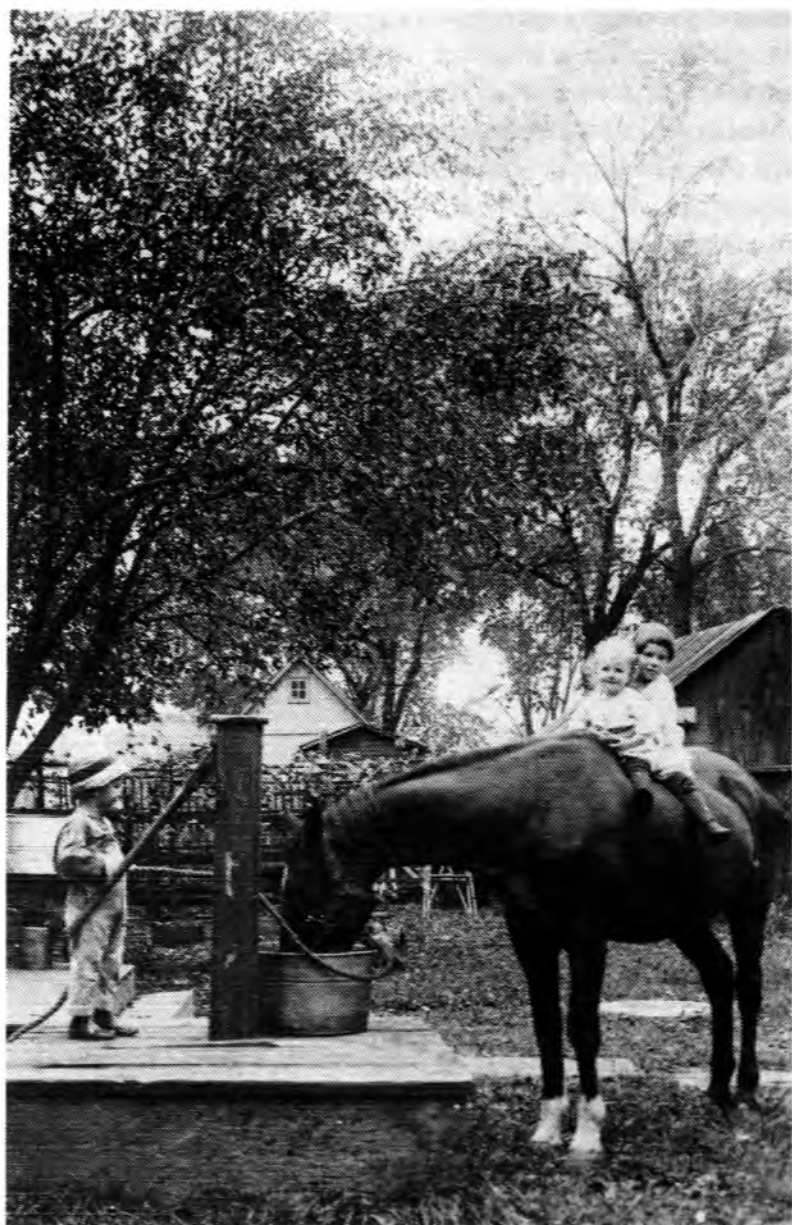
At the turn of the century a fire alarm system was devised as follows: first a series of short blasts of a whistle to alert the firemen, followed by one to four long blasts according to the fire's location. One whistle for east of Main and south of the railroad; two whistles for west of Main and south of the tracks; three whistles for west of Main and north of the tracks and four whistles for east of Main and north of the tracks. When it became pressing to buy a pumper for the department (all volunteer), one of the volunteers, who found himself a little short financially, mortgaged his home to help raise the money. That was class. His grandson is today a fine local doctor.

At first a simple hand cart carried the hoses and later a wagon to carry ladders and hoses. The horses were originally furnished by generous business men who owned teams used in the conduct of their own business. At the sound of an alarm there would be a race to the station by men who had teams available and near the station, even to leaving their delivery wagon standing in the middle of Main Street. There was ten dollars in it for the driver getting to the station first. I'll bet it was interesting when two drivers arrived at the same time. Perhaps some old-timer can report on that.

One of the worst fires in village history occurred early in the century. It destroyed eight buildings in the area of Grove and Main, including a blacksmith, livery stable, a residence, a laundry and a harness shop. Every cistern and well in the vicinity was pumped dry in a vain effort to contain the rampaging blaze. In 1907 Fink's livery stable just north of the present Tivoli building burned, killing one man whom it was suspected had fallen asleep in the hay while smoking. Seven horses also perished.

A typical early residence





A summer scene about 1915

VI

IN 1903 the village postmaster's salary soared to \$1,500 annually.

The average cost of educating a grammar school student in 1860 was six dollars and ten cents annually. By 1875 the cost had risen to eleven dollars and ninety-two cents a year. The Lincoln Center building (front part) was built in 1900 and the high school (rear section) addition was constructed in 1913.

Hey fellows! Did you know Downers Grove was considered something of an Eden for lonely men in the early part of the century? Out of a population of 2,500, there were 83 widows by actual count and many of them were considered "catches", owning their own homes and with money in the bank.

The Downers Grove Reporter printed a sixty-four page catalog for T.F. Potter and Company which was located where our village offices now stand. Potter was an inventive sort of man who manufactured, among other things, pre-fabricated chicken houses that were sold nationwide. It is entirely possible he was the first to use that type of construction. He lived at 1200 Maple and also owned a farm on West Maple opposite the baseball field. On his property at Springside and Maple two or three huge willow trees overlooked a low spot that held water until mid-summer and was often used as "the old swimming hole" by those who didn't mind a little green scum on their water. Potter raised tomatoes and strawberries for market. On the hill to the west, the old farm house, now much remodeled, holds a mystery. Recent room alterations within the house exposed the skeleton of a child in a inner wall. Whose? Why? When?

The town voted in 1903 to pave its Main Street with bricks. Four prominent business men at first objected, feeling that paving would destroy some of the "charm" of the little village. That street could prove an incredible challenge in the spring when the rains came, the creek flooded and the frost left the earth. A loaded vehicle could sink to its axle and it was often necessary to double-team a wagon to see it through the downtown. There were times when local notices were printed advising residents that deliveries would be delayed until the

streets dried out.

About this time, early in the century, Art Gregory suffered a broken arm while working with some western mustangs corralled in the area of Gilbert Park. Frequent shipments of these animals were received and sold to local people. The Chicago Telephone Co. directory just issued listed over one hundred subscribers. A personal note in the local paper advised that W.C. Barber, local dentist, was improving his residence with the addition of a bathroom. Don't laugh! It was one of the very first in town. Dr. Barber was one of the first to own a car and his wife was probably the first female driver.

A village sewer system was installed in 1905 with the filter beds located in the gravel pit where the Gilbert Park pavilion now exists. Some of the more mature readers might recall the hobo camp in Gilbert Park along the tracks. A picture of this hobo camp exists in the Chicago Historical Society archives. The area of the baseball diamond in Gilbert Park used to support a butte of gravel and clay some forty to fifty feet high which the more adventureseome lads loved to scale.

Businesses changed owners and new ones began. The Downers Grove Fair at 30 South Main advertised "we close every Wednesday at seven". Fred Gerwig was now operating the North Side Grocery. In East Grove (popular title for the Fairview Avenue district) T.D. Brooks opened a coal yard. A.B. Austin established a nursery which later became known as Littleford's Nursery. C.V. Wolf opened his flower shop on Prairie Avenue across the street from Gollan's greenhouses. Fowler and Frankenfield began their plumbing enterprise at 33 So. Main while Naramore and Foster opened a real estate business at 24 S. Main.

VII

TWO ladies out for a buggy ride on Ogden Avenue were killed when their horse bolted out of control. That highway's toll of lives had begun.

Fathers Bolmann and Goodwin were on hand to take part in the laying of the corner stone of St. Joseph's Church at the corner of Franklin and Main streets in 1907. One year later another corner stone for a church was laid at Main and Maple. This was the Evangelical church.

It was casue for excitement when the light lit up on the police station. This meant there was a call for police and that the officer (there was only one on duty at a time) would scramble to the station to learn the problem. Later the light was placed at the top of the water tower where the officer could see it from a greater distance. The village had just two officers. One was the chief and the other the night constable. White and Venard are two chiefs remembered.

1907 saw sidewalks installed on Benton Avenue and a band shell was erected at Curtis and Washington where the Masonic Temple now stands. This corner was the scene of many carnivals and public outdoor events for many years.

J.W. Kidwell, well known Chicago florist built forty greenhouses at Belmont and the railroad. They specialized in the growing of roses and gardenias. That was when gardenias were a most popular corsage flower. What an ecstatic delight to penetrate the house of gardenias and inhale the perfume exuding from those lovely flowers. The products of these greenhouses were sent to Chicago wholesalers for distribution to retail flower shops in the midwest. The tallest smoke stack in the area was that of the Bassett and Washburn greenhouses in Westmont. They were located where Blackhawk Heights is today and in their prime those greenhouses were one of the largest in the United States. They grew just about every type of fern and flower a florist would ever need.

At a public meeting of the Downers Grove improvement board held in September 1907, officials were studying a storm

sewer map of the north side when one M. Sackstedder objected, stating that the board was illegally constituted. J.W. Hughes, president of the board, suggested he prove his allegations. The talk became quite heated with Hughes being called a liar several times much to the indignation of his fellow board members. One Mr. Bunge suggested that Sackstedder exit for cooler zones but that person punched Mr. Bunge in the nose. Both men left the meeting precipitously. At a trial later on, Sackstedder was fined twenty dollars for abusive language.

The nerves of local citizens, especially children, were disturbed when the village endured a minor earthquake, May, 1908. Several hundred dollars worth of damage occurred in Aurora. No damage here.

At this time in the life of the village there were no ordinances restricting the keeping of chickens, horses, etc. on your premises. Most families kept a few chickens, both for their meat and of course, eggs. The Downers Grove Poultry Association was a vibrant group with many members holding prize flocks. The town awakened every morning (fair or fowl) to the braggadocio crowing of rival roosters. Many also kept a buggy horse. One acquaintance was paid six dollars a week to drive a grocer's delivery wagon Monday through Saturday and on Sundays he had to clean the stable.

The C.J. Winters and Rudy Ellsworths (Belmont Greenhouse operator) drove to Springfield to attend the State Fair. They reported the Fair was great but the trip getting there and back was a nightmare with mud to the running boards. (Children, you'll have to ask your grandparents what running boards were.) As long as we have mentioned mud, it is appropriate to mention here that one George Willard went to the mud baths of Martinsburg, Indiana for treatment of his rheumatism.

The Dicke Theater, formerly the Motiograph Theater, has now added the music of a five-piece orchestra to every show and the admission price still remains only ten cents. Where was the Dicke Theater? Sorry, I forgot that some readers are new in the town. Well, the Dicke stood at the corner of Warren and Forest now occupied by a branch bank. Other enterprises occupied the building (now gone) including a group of bowling alleys.

1908 was about the year Charles Haller, local businessman, bought a Saxon Six car from Kidwell's garage; Roy Andrus fell off his horse and broke his collar bone; and Charles Mochel, veteran businessman, moved his family into his new home at 811 Maple.

VIII

THROUGHOUT America the Chautauqua provided a source of varied entertainment for small communities during the early part of this century. Usually, the programs were in the form of plays, music, lectures (often religion, temperance), monologues, etc. The writer recalls with amusement hearing a lecture on craniology under the big tent on the field behind Lincoln Center. Following the talk, he was ushered to the stage and let the speaker run his hands over my cranium and through my tresses, then telling my mother that her son was destined to become an artist. Today, I can't even draw a salary! Most of the Chautauqua programs ran for a week and the money was usually well subscribed a year in advance.

Every age had several commonly used expressions which became very popular for a time and then simply disappeared. Do you remember these? That sure is a "darby" car; or, that's the "cat's meow" or the "cat's whiskers", or, she's as cute as a "bee's knees", or finally, did you see that "keen" movie?

In October, 1915 our new library opened with 3,000 volumes. Today, our magnificent library holds roughly 115,000 volumes. At first one librarian was on duty (Jessie Bryce in my day) and now many. And they are such a dedicated great group.

Six stalwart adventurers left the village in August, 1915 with their Saxon cars headed for White Pigeon, Michigan. The crews were made up of Stewart and Alex Burns (Alex to be our first sacrifice in WWI), Art Bordwell, Tom and Art Kidwell and Grant Dicke. It was said that Grant Dicke could fix anything.

On our sidewalks the girls were playing jacks and both sexes were playing "Sky Blue" and "Hop Scotch". The youth of those days had to improvise their own games. They didn't have TV to temper their senses.

The Paragon Theater (later the Curtis) had opened in competition to the Dicke at 17 East Curtis Street. The Paragon was featuring a double feature showing Douglas Fairbanks in "The Matromaniac" and William S. Hart in "The Devil's Double".

C.E. Baker, Charlie to everybody, opened a livery at 192 Burlington; Uhlhorn moved his dairy from Gilbert Avenue to 37 S. Main; S.J. Perkins began cutting hair at 13 Burlington (Railroad in those days); while Emil Hoehn did the same at 109 S. Main. Once heard, one would never forget the "Allo" that emanated from Hoehn's barber shop when passing it on a summer day and the door was open. Albert, his partner and brother-in-law, was a cheerful addition to that shop. J.D. Gillespie was on Main Street in the hardware business and L.H. Swearingen was running the News Agency on Burlington Avenue.

Potter Mfg. Co. was now in the car business and was selling Dodge cars for \$865 with a wheelbase of 114 inches and (listen to this) 30 to 40 horsepower.

Our old-timer's diary for 1913 tells of his killing a chicken for Sunday diner (a very common practice at the time). He paid 20 cents for two loaves of bread, got a shave and a haircut for 40 cents. He paid his monthly water bill of \$1.87 and electric bill of \$3.96. The old-timer found himself in the Chicago Presbyterian Hospital where he paid \$5.50 a day for a private room.

A lovely home once stood on Main where cars now collect in Mr. Value's parking lot. Inside the home was a well, providing, not running water, but certainly convenient water. It was occupied for several years by a man who had invented a shorthand system and who taught his method in Chicago.

Mr. Zindt took over as owner of Mr. Carpenter's drug store at 34 S. Main. Charles Haller, real estate agent, was advertising some choice properties for sale in 1917. \$4,000 would buy two acres, a seven-room house with a chicken coop. Prime rib beef was going for 28 cents per pound at Klein's market. Farmers and Merchants Bank began paying 3% interest on savings accounts. That bank building is now occupied by Muriel Mundy's woman's shop. If you look closely at the south side you can readily see where an arched door once stood, providing a side entrance to the bank.

IX

DURING this period of World War I, Marshall Field who owned vast acreage to the west of town, sold out all the mature black walnut trees to the government for use as gun stocks for the army's rifles. Near the end of the war a false armistice was reported. The village held a parade in celebration. In the parade, according to a witness, a wagon had a cage erected on it (probably our first parade float). The cage held a goat and a sign on it read, "We got the Kaiser's goat".

Winters were often rough in those good old days, but the winter of 1918 was a devastating monster. The little community was isolated, by rail and road, by heavy snow which fell for two and a half days, creating drifts four to ten feet deep. Seven trains became stalled between Chicago and Aurora and had to be abandoned. Railroad coaches froze to the rails. Temperatures dropped to twenty below zero with sixty mile an hour winds. Local merchants struggled vainly with deliveries under horrible conditions.

It was then a village responsibility to keep the sidewalks clear of snow but during this storm it was an impossibility. The sidewalk plow was horse drawn guided by a single man who walked or rode as he chose. Children used to love to watch the plow go by. On the railroad ten engines were required to push the Minneapolis Flyer onto a siding in Aurora where the passengers were housed for two days. Schools closed. Coal was in short supply. The Lord Lumber and Coal Co. located on Forest Avenue where the Federal Savings and Loan now stands, was the only firm in town with coal to sell. Freight movements were seriously hampered and hoarding was prevalent.

Sugar became another serious shortage as well. Nash Brothers received one hundred pounds of the sweet stuff and it was gone in one day. As the year moved into 1919 a lingering coal miner's strike zapped the country. Many trains were cut from suburban service, businesses closed early to conserve heat and there was barely enough coal to keep the village warm.

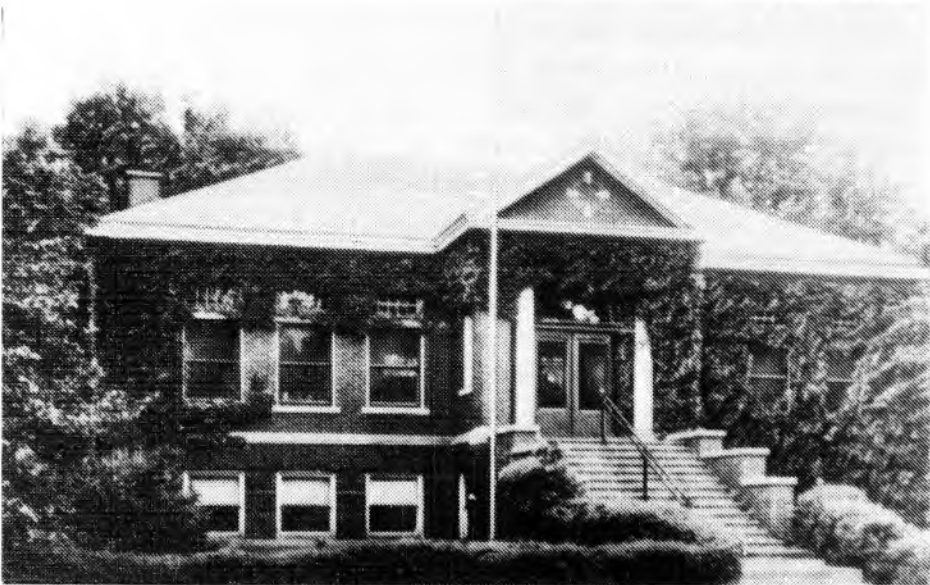
The Dicke theater was showing a twin bill consisting of Dorothy Gish in "Nobody Home" and Mary Pickford in "The Hoodlums".

The rival theater on the south side featured Fatty Arbuckle in “Backstage” and William Farnum in “Wolves of the Night”.

Many houses were moved to new locations for various reasons and it was an exciting sight for kids of all ages to watch. A capstan was the answer for a successful job of moving. A capstan is a device that turns on a vertical axle. The axle would be dropped into an open manhole in such a manner that the axle would be in the manhole and its rotating wheel would be above the hole and horizontal to the street. A long pole would be attached to the wheel and a team of horses hitched to the pole. The horses would be driven in a circle causing the capstan wheel to turn and wind a chain which was attached to it and to the house. When the house, which was moving on hardwood rollers six to eight inches thick and eight feet long, reached the capstan, everything stopped. The capstan was pulled from the hole and with the chain unwound again, was dropped in the next manhole along the route. The winding process was repeated. As the house passed over the rollers, they were taken by a crew of men and placed in front of the house so that the moving building was continually on rollers.

The old Blodgett home formerly on the site of the Historical Society home was moved in 1892 to 812 Randall and is still there. The old Dr. Puffer house was moved to 5430 Washington from Curtis Street where the DuPage building is today. The house at the northeast corner of Washington and Randall was once a store on Curtis. The house that was about 5148 Washington now rests at 910 Summit.

Public Library



X

PICTURE for a moment, a hot summer day. Kids are running around in bare feet and three or four have sneaked off into a garden to make and smoke cornsilk cigarettes. Suddenly, their attention is caught by the approach of a familiar wagon. It's Uhlhorn's ice wagon!

Customers had cards about 10 by 8 inches in size with the numbers 25, 50, 75 and 100 printed on them, two to a side and large enough to be read for quite a distance. The numbers were arranged on the card so that only one number would be right side up at a time. These cards would be placed in a prominent position in a house window so that the iceman could readily see how much ice the housewife needed. The ice man would cut the desired amount of ice from a large block and carry it into the house to the refrigerator. While the iceman was away from his wagon, the kids in the neighborhood descended on the ice like ants to sugar. Very often a sympathetic iceman would see to it that several chunks and splinters of ice were available for his young friends.

Among some of the mischievous youngsters were those of inventive leanings. Many of you will recall taking a spool and cutting notches on its outer edge and rubbing it against a window to create a harsh noise. Some lads took a string and rubbed it with resin from a pine tree, then securing a pin on one end, they would weave the pin into a screen (window). Pulling the string tight, they would retreat several feet away where they could hide. With the string kept taut, they would strum the string creating a peculiar noise that could readily be heard inside the house and would prove difficult for any one to locate its source. It was harmless fun, yet it often proved exasperating to the victims.

I'm sure the present generation never saw a Stanley Steamer automobile. The Towsleys on Maple Avenue owned one and once the writer witnessed that gentleman fingering the horde of valves under the car's hood. As the name implies, it was propelled by steam and of course would not move until steam had been created. They were known to blow up. The Batterham family owned a black sedan

that ran on batteries.

Did you know that gypsies often clattered through town in their wooden-wheeled, highly decorated wagons? Mothers would hang on to their children or call them to come inside for weren't gypsies known to kidnap children? They did bear close watching for they had "taking ways". Scissor grinders and fruit peddlers also frequented the little village's streets in summer.

Neighborhoods sprouted the inevitable tree huts and "club houses" every summer as youngsters learned the use of dad's hammer and saw. The fruits and vegetables of those days reached local stores in sturdy wooden crates which provided a youngster with a constant source of building material.

The town fielded a fine baseball team the days following the war. You may remember some of those athletes. John Mochel played third; Mel Binder, second; N. Jorgenson, first; A. Johnson, shortstop; Alderson, left field; R. Carpenter, centerfield; June Ehninger, right field; and Herb Ehninger, pitching.

The junior class of the high school presented its first annual stage play in December, 1920. "Hicks at College" was the play with Jack Reed, now a Rockford resident, having the lead. Others in that first cast were Dorothy Towsley, Ellsworth Bogart, Richard Drees, Preston Snow and Herb Kellogg. Do you remember any of them?

New faces on the business streets in 1920 were Ross' Bakery where the Citizen's National Bank is today. Joseph Mazza opened a tailoring and dry cleaning shop next to Nash's Grocery. C. Penner opened a shoe and harness shop at 101 S. Main in a building that once stood on the northwest corner of Main and Curtis. While there it had housed an auditorium on its second floor until it was considered unsafe for large gatherings.

In 1920 an election was held in regard to the then existing law which banned public cigarette smoking. The ordinance was repealed by a vote of 330 for and 174 against; 94 women voted for its repeal.

XI

ALL was not honey and roses in Downers Grove as it grew. Many things happened to whet excitement and stir ill feelings such as the incident where a prominent woman took a buggy whip to a local doctor in front of the post office one morning. Then there was the girl whose body was found in the brush along Fifty-fifth Street sixty years ago. Her assailant later committed suicide under a train.

Our village also sheltered blackmailers. Shortly after the turn of the century, a local woman became involved in such a situation, although she was active in local women's civic organizations. The names used in the story are fictitious although there are no known living relatives.

A local business man of unquestionable integrity, entered a Main Street drug store to pick up a prescription and soon became aware of angry voices emanating from behind a partition that shielded the drug department from the rest of the store. The business man, embarrassed at the language, wanted to exit unheard, but a woman suddenly emerged from the rear of the store and stormed out the front door, in her anger not noticing the business man standing to one side. A few moments later the Pharmacist came forward and was jolted at seeing the business man in the store. They were friends and the following conversation is pretty close to the actual experience.

"Good Lord, Ben! How long have you been here? Did you hear—?" The druggist asked.

"I heard enough to know you're in some kind of trouble. She was nasty!" the business man responded in concern.

"Trouble is right!" the druggist groaned. "You're looking at the world's biggest fool, Ben. Tell me, what would you do?"

"Hey, I can't help without some idea of your problem."

"Of course, I'm not thinking too clearly. Let me tell you what's been going on. I – uh, I've been having a romantic affair with Mrs. Buchanan who sorts the mail at the post office."

"I can't believe that! You with such a lovely wife. How – !"

"I know! I know!" the druggist lamented. "It was just one of those

things that started so innocently. Then we began to exchange love letters through the post office, using a pre-arranged box that she knew was empty and unrented. With her distributing the mail, it was easy.”

“Several weeks ago,” he went on, “we began using Mrs. Ames postal box because everything was rented. You just saw her leaving here. She planned to visit in Colorado for the summer and had so notified the post office. She had gone into Chicago and stayed a couple of days before entraining for Denver, but she became ill and cancelled her trip. She returned home unexpectedly and in picking up her mail, intercepted a letter I had just written to Mrs. Buchanan.” He paused to wipe perspiration from his face.

“Mrs. Ames was clever enough to use that letter to blackmail me, threatening to tell my wife everything. What could I do, Ben? I began paying her a little, but her darned price kept going up and right now I’m the poorest merchant on the street. I’ve mortgaged my house to the hilt. My store rent is overdue and I’ve lost my savings. This woman has bled me white and today she wants more!”

“I can hardly believe all this,” the business man murmured. “I’ve known this woman for years. I’ve always wondered, her being a widow, how she got along so well with her nice clothes, but I never—.” He watched the misery on his friend’s face. “What did you tell her today? She didn’t seem happy.” he asked.

“I told her I’d have to have some time. I simply didn’t have more money.”

“Does your wife suspect anything?”

“Not yet, Ben! She’s been worried about me. Says I’m getting so cross.”

“Well, I’d be honest and confess it all to her.” the business man urged. “Knowing your wife, I feel sure she’ll stick by you. I’d close the store and get out of town. Don’t tell a soul where you’re going, not even me. Just pick up and go!”

A few days later, customers found the drug store closed with the owner’s whereabouts unknown. A pertinent comment here might be this – don’t permit your children to play post office!

Years later an old-timer merchant remarked that they never figured why this druggist left town when he seemed to have such a good business going.

XII

HALLOWEEN was always a night to “batten down the hatches” for the young men of the town had to have their fun. One year a cow was lured, cajoled goaded, or whatever it took, up three flights of stairs to the principal’s office in Lincoln School, there to greet that dignitary in the morning. Another time a buggy was taken apart and piece by piece pulled to the roof of Lincoln School, there to be reassembled. In the quiet of a Halloween evening one could often hear the crunch of an outhouse being tipped over to be followed by the pounding of fleeing feet. One such incident at the corner of Main and Summit provoked the owner to considerable anger – he was in it at the time of the tipover.

One of the so-called local “characters”, so called because they seemed a little “different” was Captain (never a captain and perhaps never in the grand old army) Parker who lived at 1115 Gilbert. He claimed to have been a drummer boy in the Civil War. For many years he gathered building material from many places for the construction of his house which he said he would start to build when he was seventy years old. And he did it! He dug the house foundation, the cistern, mixed the mortar and laid the brick and stone, wired for electricity, plastered and did all the carpentry. It took him three years to complete. He claimed some Indian blood and one summer several teepees stood on the parkway in front of his house while several Sioux Indian families were his guests.

Bing Martin, popular old-timer, operated the Curtis Theater projector in the twenties. It was a tough job, especially in the summer when the heat from the projector, a small room, hot humid weather and frequent breaking of the film combined to make it a challenge.

In October, 1920, four rattlesnakes were killed on Oakwood Avenue. It was not surprising since that area was then largely undeveloped. All of the snakes were about two feet long. The finders were F. Lower, Bob Schrank, Paul Wenzel, and Bob Bryce.

August, 1920 saw the sale of Marshall Field’s vast real estate holdings on the southwest corner of the village. Some six hundred acres were involved. In September the northwest holdings of Field went on

sale. By that time over \$125,000 worth of property had been sold in the southwest section. The local forest preserve was also a part of Field's holdings.

It is possible some few of the readers will remember another village "character" – Mrs. Ald. Little is known of the woman other than she lived in the woods in the area of Grant and Montgomery streets and was often referred to as the old "witch" by the older boys who pelted her occasionally with apples and who, in truth, were afraid of her. Often she would be seen smoking a corn cob pipe with its ingredients for burning unknown. She kept a cow but it is doubted if she owned shoes since she was usually barefoot. She never harmed a soul, but her appearance could be fearsome. She made a slight income from herbs gleaned from the forest and concocted into remedies for "ailments". One old gentleman who suffered from rheumatism was so shaken by her appearance that one treatment was enough. It may have frightened the affliction as well, for it is said he was cured.

Billy Mitchell, the cashiered army officer who predicted and proved the power and efficiency of aerial bombing, gave a lecture in the Curtis Theater before a packed house.

Naughty! Naughty! Police chief Mike Venard arrested nine young men of the town for playing African golf (gambling with dice) in a house on East Franklin Street. The owner of the house was fined twenty dollars and each of the participants five dollars each.

Roller skating was immensely popular where cement sidewalks could be found. At the first sign of spring, and the sidewalks were clear of snow, out would come the skates and their unpleasant, grinding whine could be heard all over town.

Both sexes enjoyed their skating, but the boys had another version or use for their skates. Taking one skate apart, they would nail each pair of wheels to opposite ends of a stout board two and a half to three feet long. A sturdy wooden box such as an apple crate would be nailed to one end and a cross bar of wood nailed to the top of the box to serve as handles. Thus a suitable skooter was made. This was long before commercial skooters were on the market.

The principal objection to these affairs by adults was the incredible noise they made. Noisy they were! The box acted like a drum and expanded the skate's drone. Some ingenious lads nailed a half tin can in front of the box to simulate a headlight, while others built shelves and secret compartments inside the box to carry their "valuables". Many had their names painted somewhere on the box.

XIII

DID you ever drive a Model T Ford car? You did! Then you remember vividly what a challenge you faced to start the motor. Should you have to do it alone, you faced an even greater challenge. Pull down the gas lever on the steering post, retard the spark lever, step around to the crank hanging out just below the radiator and prepare to turn the engine over. Careful now, how you held that crank or you'd join the thousands who endured a broken arm in that process. Pull out the wire attached to the choke and threaded through the radiator. Crank away! Once the motor coughed encouragingly, you raced back to the dashboard to retard the gas and advance the spark lever. Try to keep it going by manipulating the gas lever because you sure didn't want to have to do it all over again. And again!

Only old-timers can recall what a nightmare it was to change tires on those old cars, especially those with the split rim. It could take an hour or more of sweating, knuckle bleeding, cursing maneuvers. The tires had innertubes (after the original solid type were banned from the roads) which could be patched with the application of a rubber patch and adhesive with a clamp to hold it in position over the tube's hole. Then you applied a match to the flammable coated patch which vulcanized it to the tube.

The gasoline tank of those old Fords was above the engine in front of the windshield and its contents were measured with a stick usually kept under the front seat. Gasoline then was running about fifteen cents a gallon and had to be pumped by hand at the service station. Windshield wipers also needed a hand to wave them back and forth manually.

A friend drove a 1925 Dodge touring model with removable isinglass sides. It had a long, narrow thirteen volt battery with an absolutely quiet starter. Nothing like the horrible sounds of today's more "modern" starters.

The gear shift was exactly opposite to the standard shift of most cars. That was probably one of that car's greatest assets because in high gear the lever was away from the seat and a fellow's girl could

sit closer.

In 1921 the telephone men were busy burying the telephone lines in the business section of town to eliminate the poles.

February, 1921 saw the local fire department receiving a new truck. To celebrate the arrival of the new vehicle, it was paraded throughout the village with cars of interested citizens trailing. Hundreds of people gathered to watch a demonstration of the new apparatus at Prince Pond. The pressure from the truck was so great that it required four men to hold the hose. Later, a large fire at the Jones' home on the corner of Elm and Chicago Avenue was quickly controlled by the new truck, proving its value to the community.

In the spring hail stones the size of golf balls flayed the local greenhouses for close to five minutes with devastating effect. The Kidwell greenhouses, formerly Foote Street greenhouses located on Forest Avenue where the telephone building is today, suffered the greatest loss with many Easter plants destroyed.

Ellsworth's Belmont greenhouses lost one thousand dollars worth of glass but were the only ones in the area with hail insurance. John Gollan at Washington and Prairie and Wolf's Greenhouse across the street to the north lost a thousand dollars worth of glass. W.D. Herrick on the south side lost half of his glass. Kidwell kept a crew working all night covering his place with tarred paper and two thousand yards of unbleached muslin was rushed from Chicago to cover the plants to prevent frost damage.

Sledding was always a very popular sport with many good hills available in the village and in those early days, car traffic presented no hazard. One good run was from Summit Street on Washington to the creek (Masonic Temple). That was called Ambrose Hill for a Mr. Ambrose a painter and paper hanger who lived near the top. Many south side kids gathered on Fairmount Avenue. The ride was short, but fast. That was known as Straub's Hill for Straub the piano manufacturer (factory was located on the southwest corner of Forest and Warren) whose home graced the top of the hill and still does. On the north side, the kids enjoyed the hill on Bryan Place from Prairie to Rogers.

Probably the best hill in town, at least for the older lads, was the Main Street hill. Starting by the water tower on Main, its run extended to Curtis and then turned west as far as the library. Present residents probably do not realize that the steepness of Main had been graded down some as it was paved. This was the era of the bobsled. A bob was simply two sleds placed at opposite ends of a sturdy plank, usually

twelve to fifteen feet long. The forerunning sled would be mounted to the plank on a spindle so that it could be turned and some degree of control could be had. These grand old bobsleds were usually home-made with the steel runners attached by one of the cooperating blacksmiths. Often the west side of Main would receive additional slickness from the boys pouring water on it. By the time a loaded bob reached Maple, it would be really moving as one Tom Potter found out to his chagrin. He misjudged the speed of an approaching sled and was hit and thrown several feet at Maple Avenue. He was unscathed, but shaken and violently angry.

Some of the best skating in winter was on the big and little “barkers” in the woods west of downtown. The name for these two shallow ponds may have come from the large number of frogs that inhabited the area and voiced their several opinions in the spring. At least, that’s the best story of the origin of the name that we’ve heard. The ice was usually very smooth because of the sheltered location of the ponds.

About this time did you know there was a lot of talk about our village annexing the little settlement of Westmont to the east? This talk had persevered for some time and some people were anxious to consummate the thing before Hinsdale beat us to it. When Westmont people began hearing about the idea they let it quickly be known that they didn’t want to be annexed by anybody. That ended the idea.

Edward Lemon was selling Real Estate by this time and Marion Dexter operated an art store. W.S. Hamblin did home garden plowing and just about everyone had a garden. Bert Moore was tailoring at 135 North Main and Seibert and Norris had taken over the Puffer Pharmacy at Curtis and Main.

Curtis Street looking east



XIV

LET'S consider another "character" in the vilage whom we'll call Duncan for sake of a name. Duncan was proven to be clever and very, very fond of whiskey. His problem was that he was a relatively poor chap and couldn't afford to drink. Lacking in finances, but not in ingenuity, Duncan found an inexpensive way to keep himself stocked with the finest liquor money could buy. At this time pharmacists concocted much of their own medicines using whiskey as a basic ingredient. The whiskey was shipped to the drug stores by way of railway express directly from distillers to the store in barrels. These barrels were held together with brass hoops.

Duncan was an employee of the express company under the jurisdiction of John Remmers as a handy man doing general clean up work. A low paying job to be sure, but in Duncan's case, a most rewarding one and he wouldn't have changed it for the world.

For a considerable period of time the distilleries had received complaints from the local pharmacies that the barrels of whiskey were arriving with part of their contents gone, yet with no visible sign of any tampering with the barrels in evidence. The problem persisted until the distilleries in desperation turned the problem over to the railroads who in turn put detectives on the matter. The railroad detectives followed the alcohol from the distillery's warehouses to the railroad, to the local village depot, to the local drug store finally where they were consigned. It was a baffling affair. Duncan came under suspicion because he had so little money and yet he often seemed to be well fueled. At last the detective's watchful eyes brought reward.

One evening when Duncan was on duty alone in the freight-house and he was busy with his work, a detective managed to secrete himself where he could watch the man. He saw Duncan approach a barrel of whiskey consigned to a local store and carefully remove the screws that held the brass hoops in place. When the hoop was completely loose, Duncan slipped the hoop from the barrel and then, with a gimlet, drilled a hole in the barrel where the hoop had been.

From the gimlet hole he extracted a quantity of the exotic liquid, letting it run into one of his own containers. Then he plugged the hole with a piece of wood, pulled the hoop back down to its original position and replaced the screws. The barrel looked as though it had never suffered tampering, yet some of its contents were now Duncan's. A masterful job! Constant and persistent surveillance finally paid off for the detectives and Duncan's source of liquid balm was eliminated.

Did you know that on September 20, 1921, Jake Klein, a farmer on Seventy-fifth Street, was charged with the murder of Leo Neumann, who was travelling past Klein's home when shot? Witnesses said Klein was intoxicated and he was sentenced to the Joliet penitentiary. Fred Towsley and Stanley Brown, local men, were on that jury.

Thanksgiving Day saw Red Grange score six touchdowns and kick nine points after to help defeat a Downers' team 63 to 14. Grange was completing four years of high school play.

January, 1922 again saw the North Side Grocery change hands; this time Stewart Burns became the new owner. The firm of Mertz and Mochel Hardware became Mocheland Son as Mochel bought out Mertz. Doctors Gourley and Tope were "operating" in the village.

Mrs. T.E. Brooks and Mrs. Ballard Waples opened the Wa-Brook Inn on the first floor of the Brook's home at 27 East Curtis on May 1, 1922. A local advertisement for the new restaurant read – "one of our features will be a public rest room."

About this time the St. Andrews Church initiated their first annual revue at the Dicke Theater. The enchanting music of Rich Shurte, Ed Garrison and Roy Bruns filled the time between acts. One act performed by Miss Edith Snyder was "The Dance of the Luna Moth". She floated gracefully among the four "flowers" on stage who were Mary Fox, Betty Coleman, Barbara Meyers and Martha Blakely. The affair was so successful that it was planned to be held again the next year.

Ice cream was melting at fifty cents a quart at the Candy Kitchen (Main and Burlington). C.H. Staats was the village postmaster. Buick four-cylinder cars were selling for \$895 to \$1395 and the six-cylinder models were \$1365 to \$2375.

The Alpha Sigma Beta was a local fraternity formed of local lads. You may recall some of those members – Grant Nash, Bob Bordwell, Ben Allison, Frank Dewey, Herb Ehninger, Carl Kellogg, Russ Stephens, Don Hawkins and C. Stair (later mayor).

In July an exciting incident occurred at the home of William Wirth on Forest Avenue. The Lord Lumber Company was delivering a load of stone and as the team of horses pulled into the yard, one of the animals broke through the rotting cover of an abandoned well. The horse's hind quarters sank into the hole and Kidwell's tow truck was summoned to pull it out. The attempt failed and it wasn't until after several hours had elapsed that a derrick used in highway construction was brought in to rescue the poor animal. It suffered no injury other than bruises.

A typical early residence



XV

DID you know that in the November, 1922 elections, Mrs. Lottie Holman O'Neill became the first woman to be elected as State Representative? "111" cigarettes were selling for ten cents a pack. Who remembers that brand? Patrolman W.H. Edgeton chased a band of gypsies from town. It was rumored that they had tried to break into a Westmont store.

Some of our school leaders in 1922 were S.S. Vernon, principal and also science teacher. G.H. Brown handled manual training for the boys. Stella Bradbury taught French and English and Carl Moser taught history. The great little coach, Glidden Reeves also handled math classes. Mr. John Reed from Michigan was the superintendent.

A second severe fire occurred at the Downers Grove Laundry at Grove and Main. Fred Heinke, plumber was living next door south and he turned in the alarm. It is reported that the firemen were on the scene within a minute and a half. Schmidt's Livery (long gone) on Grove also caught fire. It was jammed with stored automobiles but all were driven or towed to safety without any loss. The kids at Lincoln school had several lads tardy as the fire proved most fascinating to watch.

The Christmas shopping period of 1922 was said by local merchants, to have been one of the very best ever. it was estimated that \$45,000 in sales were consummated.

Most of you readers are familiar with the way present day high school homecoming are handled. There is a dance at the school with king and queen inaugurations and then the youngsters take off for night spots in the area. In the twenties things were done differently. In 1922, for example, they had the afternoon football game but then it was the high team against the alumnae. Some of the local high players were George and Bill Ray, Bill Boon, Don Stevenson, Bob Andrus, Bill O'Neill. Among the alumnae were Russ Stephens, Paul Grumhaus and Roy Phelps. The evening following the game, a dance was held at the high school where the gym had been decorated in purple and white for the gala occasion.

Did you know that a peculiar crate of oddities arrived at the post office at this time? It was addressed to F. Steinberg, but it was never claimed. Among the unusual contents were three-quarters of a pound of bacon, two ladies' brassieres (size unknown), three packages of punk, a pair of ladies' handkerchiefs and some ladies' hose. No wonder it was never claimed.

Professor Breasted, a local school graduate, then serving the University of Chicago, went to Egypt to help decipher the heiroglyphics found in King Tut's famous tomb. 1923. April that year saw a vote over Sunday movies being permitted in the village. The referendum went 1012 for and 987 against permitting the showing of Sunday pictures. The north side of town went strongly in favor of the Sunday opening while the south side was almost as strongly against the Sunday showings.

1923 saw A.B. Snow elected mayor with Dicke, Bryce, Otto and Sweeney elected commissioners. The Wa-Brook Inn was serving business men's lunches for fifty cents. Art Chester, later to lose his life racing planes in California, was thrilling local residents with stunts and rides in his airplane, taking off from a field at Ogden and Highland avenues.

School enrollment in the fall of 1923 was like this: high school, 220; grade schools, 666; parochial schools, 324; Avery Coonley, a private school, 60. Both St. Mary's and St. Joseph's were crammed with students. Avery Coonley was located in an attractive building in what is now Fishel Park.

At one time, many people referred to the northwest section of town as Sylvandale. A public committee was named to consider changing the village's name. Some thought that the "Grove" in the name made the town sound like a picnic area. Some real estate people felt that property values in this town were twenty percent less because of our name. The issue never came to a vote since the committee failed to find enough agitation for a name change. "DuPage" was one of the most often suggested names as a substitute for Downers Grove.

The sparkling new Masonic Temple opened February 14, 1925 with a grand ball featuring the nationally-known dance band of Husk O'Hare. The Wa-Brook Inn moved into the Temple's basement, sharing it with four lanes of bowling alleys. A village-wide popularity contest resulted in naming Gwen Griffith as the town's most popular girl. Adelaide Lynch was runner-up.

The local jailhouse, located between Giesche's shoe store and the

cemetery, was moved to Washington Street on the south bank of the creek. There it was converted into a home. The municipal building was then built on the jail's former site. The accepted bid for the construction was \$29,846. Two captured German naval guns were placed in front of the building.

If you have read this far, you must have found some pleasure in its reading. We surely hope so. I'm sure old-timers in town could name innumerable other anecdotes that could have been included in this booklet and perhaps some of these included would have been better omitted. Why don't you write a booklet of your town treasures and trials?



Memorial Hall



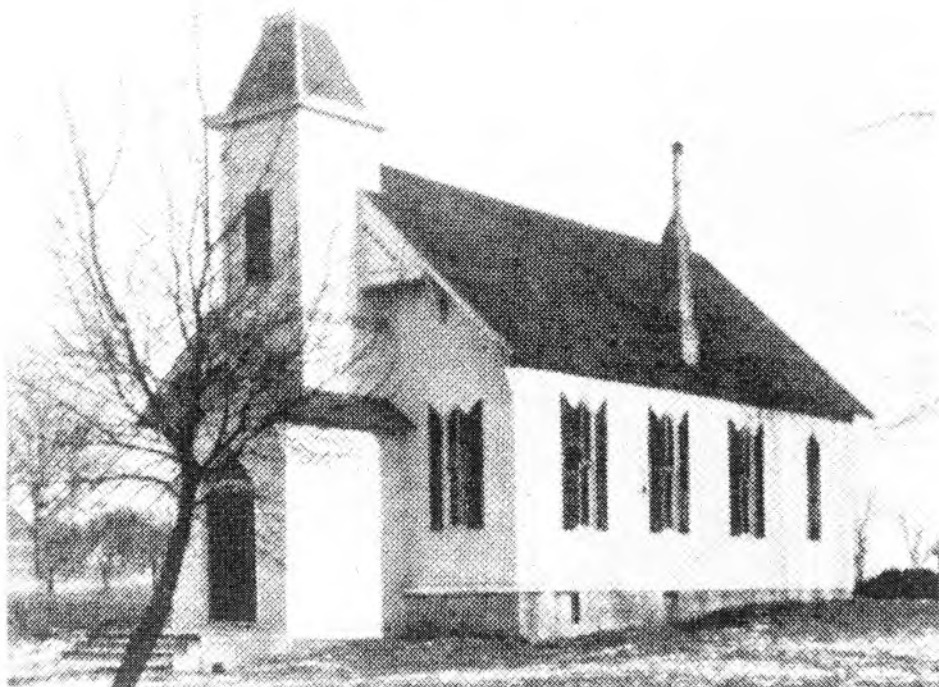
Old 1st Methodist Church on Maple where present church stands



Prince Pond



Congregational Church



Evangelical Association Church

