

Another article taken from the scrapbooks of Miss Ruby Nash gives us even more of the flavor of the 1840's and 50's along my banks.

Margaret Fuller, Ganymede's Springs, and Margaret Fuller Island

(Gleanings from the scrapbooks of Miss Ruby Nash and the Oregon Public Library)

In her book *At Home and Abroad*, published in 1856, Margaret Fuller (Countess D'Ossoli) wrote of her visit to the Rock River Valley in 1843.

Her party left Chicago, traveling by lumber wagon which was loaded with their baggage and all the things they would need along the way. They spent a night at Geneva, stopping at the home of friends. Then they went by Ross's Grove to Paw Paw. At Paw Paw they had to stop at a public tavern where no private rooms were available. The ladies slept in the bar room, after waiting for the last roisterer to leave. Margaret Fuller slept on the supper table. At Dixon she spent three days at Hazelwood, then the home of Governor Chartres.

From there she came on to Oregon to visit her uncle, William W. Fuller. Since he was unmarried, she stopped at the home of friends, the Henshaws, an Irish couple. They lived in a double log cabin across the river from the Fair Grounds, just before the road turns to go up Heckman Hill. The cabin was set back in a grove of elms, surrounded by a sod embankment with a ditch on the inside, as in the old country. Traces of that embankment can still be seen.

Here Margaret spent a week, rowing on the river, climbing the bluff, driving about the countryside, and being entertained by the local people. It was during this time that she wrote "Ganymede to His Eagle." At a farewell party given for her she read the poem "Farewell to Rock River Valley."

When Margaret Fuller wrote the poem, "Ganymede to His Eagle," a large eagle's nest, in which for years an old eagle and his mate had reared their annual brood, was still extant. It was built in one of three or four stunted red cedar trees, growing on the highest edge of the bluff, immediately facing the river. She sat under one of these trees when writing. The eagle's nest tree has been entirely destroyed by relic hunters; but the stump of the tree under which she sat still remains. (This was in the 1880's.)

Ganymede Spring, also named by the celebrated authoress, is a mineral spring of great virtue, situated on the edge of the river directly at the foot of the cliff. It can be reached from the latter by a pathway, or from Oregon one and one half miles distant, by boat. The spring which flows at the rate of 50 gallons per minute, has been enclosed by a substantial and handsome wall of masonry. An hydraulic ram is utilized to force the water on to Margaret Fuller Island, a half mile below.

The citizens of Oregon perpetuated her visit by walling up the spring with masonry and placing above it a marble tablet which was engraved:

*Ganymede's Spring named by
Margaret Fuller (Countess D'Ossoli)
Who named this bluff Eagle's Nest
and, beneath the cedars on its crest, wrote
"Ganymede to His Eagle"
July 4, 1843.*

On September 17, 1880, 18 years before the arrival of the Chicago artists, the spring and the island nearby were dedicated. The island was named Margaret Fuller. After the dedication a general picnic was held on the island.

The river steamers, Rover and Occidental, plied a busy traffic from the city to the island.

Col. B. F. Sheets made the dedication speech. Music was furnished by Messrs. Ettinger, Washburn, Guilford, Charles Potter, Mrs. Will Snyder, Mrs. F. H. Marsh, and Mrs. Ettinger. John Mix was master of ceremonies. Letters received in answer to invitations sent were read. One was from Oliver Wendell Holmes, Beverly Farm, Mass. Another came from A. Bronson Alcott, Concord, Mass.

Selections from a pamphlet, "An Inimitable Summer Resort, Oregon, Illinois," was put out in the late 1890's by the Burlington Railroad.

Drinking cups and seats have been provided for visitors. The pretty little lawn at the north end of the island has been nicely cleared, and furnished with a boat landing. Nature had done its part by growing an everlasting canopy of beautiful trees, thus obviating the necessity of an artificial one.

The spring water, which will be found very beneficial, shows the following analysis:

	Grains
Sodic chloride	0.101
Potassic chloride	0.026
Potassic sulphate	0.156
Potassic carbonate	0.903
Magnesian carbonate	8.595
Calcic carbonate	9.200
Silica	0.962
Oxide Iron and Alumina	0.081
Organic Matter	None
Total in one U.S.	
gallon of water	20.024

In addition to the above analysis Dr. E. M. Hale, of Chicago, says, as a result of his examination:

"I have thoroughly tested the water from Ganymede Spring, Oregon, Ill., and am perfectly satisfied that it is as pure as, if not purer than, the water from any spring in Wisconsin. The test with permanganate of potassa shows scarcely a trace of organic matter."

As long as the steamers were on the river, and even later when launches were run, it was the popular thing to fill a water jug at the spring and picnic on Margaret Fuller Island. For a while there was a platform there and dances were held.

A local bachelors' club called the "Owls" held its annual picnic there until it disbanded.

FAREWELL TO ROCK RIVER VALLEY

Farewell, yet soft and sumptuous solitudes!

Ye fairy distances, ye lordly woods,

Haunted by paths like those that Poussin knew,

When after his all gazers' eyes he drew;

I go,—and if I never more may steep

An eager heart in your enchantments deep,

Yet ever to itself that heart may say,

Be not exacting; thou hast lived one day,—

Hast looked on that which matches with thy mood,

Impassioned sweetness of full being's flood,

Where nothing checked the bold yet gentle wave,

Where naught repelled the lavish love that gave.

A tender blessing lingers O'er the scene,

Like some young mother's thought, fond, yet serene

And through its life new-born our lives have been.

Once more farewell,—a sad, a sweet farewell;

And if I never must behold you more,

In other worlds I will not cease to tell

The rosary I here have numbered o'er;

And bright-haired Hope will lend a gladdened ear,

And Gorgon critics, while the tale they hear,

Shell dew their stony glances with a tear,

If I but catch one echo from your spell:—

And so farewell,—a grateful, sad farewell!

—Margaret Fuller

**EAGLE'S NEST CAMP (ART COLONY)
AND THE FIELD CAMPUS**

In the late 1800's the beauty of the land along my waters attracted other famous people to my banks. One of the most notable was Lorado Taft, one of America's greatest sculptors. The following article written by Betsy

McCall and with excerpts from the Rockford Morning Star tells how the Eagle's Nest Camp (Art Colony) and the Lorado Taft Field Campus came into being.

Many threads of area history entwine at the Eagle's Nest Art Colony. The artists and writers of that association left their tangible mark on the area through writings, artwork, and buildings. Intangibly, the people of the area have the memories and lore about the art colony festivities that will enrich the area for decades to come.

The colony itself consisted of many noted artists of the time. The best known was probably Lorado Taft himself, the leader of the group. Among his achievements are 39 monumental pieces of sculpture, including Black Hawk statue, completed in 1911, which stands in Lowden Park just 300 yards south of the Taft Campus.

One member of the group, James Dickerson, introduced the artists to Wallace Heckman, an attorney for the University of Chicago. Mr. Heckman and his wife owned a vacation home in Ogle county named Ganymede Farm after the spring which flows from Taft Campus into Rock River. Earlier, in 1943, poetress Margaret Fuller had visited the area and named the spring.

The Heckmans invited the artists to visit them for the Fourth of July in 1898 to inspect an area which they considered leasing. After a memorable visit, an agreement was reached: The artists would lease 15 acres of land from the Heckmans for \$1 per year for as long as at least one member of the group lived. Although rent was due on June 30, it was never paid until Labor Day. The artists had novel means of paying: One year it amounted to 89 pennies, 2 slugs, and assorted postage stamps.

The following is taken from unidentified old newspaper article:

Founded in Summer of 1898

In the summer of 1898 the artists led by Lorado Taft and Henry B. Fuller came out from Chicago and pitched their tents on the Eagles Nest bluff, bringing with them the remainder of their camping duffle from the Bass Lake, Ind., camp.

They began to erect small, simple, cheap houses, and the first building, the administration building, was erected one hot Fourth of July by Mr. Taft, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Clarkson, while the remainder of the colonists went merrily hayrack riding on the opposite side of the river.

Not far off from the colony is the welcoming and hospitable Heckman home where the widow of the Chicago lawyer who founded the colony resides and the Eagles Nest members have access to its swimming pool for which the Margaret Fuller spring supplies water.

Camphouse Erected in 1901

Worthy of description is the long living room of the camphouse which was erected in 1901. Here the Eagles Nest members take their meals together at a rounded rustic table and here they gather in front of a roaring fire for conversation of a chilly or a rainy evening.

At one end of the living room is the fireplace of natural rock and its huge chimney towering up to the ceiling. On the walls are photographs of members who have passed away and at the south end of the room is an inviting window seat. Off of the living room is the camp kitchen where the meals are cooked and a few rods west of the clubhouse is the water tank which supplies water from the Margaret Fuller spring to the cottagers.

On the bluff not far from the artists colony stands the majestic statue of the Indian warrior Blackhawk, modeled by Lorado Taft. The statue, which is 48 feet high from the foundation placed on an underlying rock on the edge of the cliff, is made of concrete and was built by funds supplied by Wallace

Heckman, C. D. Etnyre of Oregon, Frank O. Lowden and Lorado Taft.

Seton-Thompson Guest

Among the interesting personalities of the world of arts and letters who have visited the Eagles Nest colony and found rest, companionship with kindred folk and recreation there we find Cyrus E. Dallin, noted sculptor from Boston, Ernest Seton-Thompson, writer and naturalist; and Percy Mackaye, poet and playwright.

Ralph Clarkson, the portrait painter who is now summering at Oregon, is one of the outstanding portrait painters of the country and back in the woods at Eagles Nest bluff is the barn-like brown studio where he has accomplished some of his best work.

Associate members of the colony include two sculptors, Nellie V. Walker, who modeled the Keokuk statue at Muscatine, Ia., and Leonard Crunelle whose fine Lincoln statue is standing in Taylor park at Freeport, and the two sons of J. Spencer Dickerson, Dwight, a Chicago attorney, and Willard P., who is associated with the Bell Telephone Co. in Ohio.

An interesting bit of the romantic interest of the colony is related in Hamlin Garland's novel, Son of the Middle Border, where he tells how he wooed his future wife, Zulemie Taft, sister of the sculptor while both were residents at Eagles Nest.

Part of the rental agreement stipulated that artists annually donate artwork to the Oregon community. In 1981 those pieces were cataloged and evaluated by staff members of the Illinois State Museum. Oregon exhibits its valuable collection in a gallery especially designed as part of the Oregon Public Library by architects Pond and Pond, who were original art colony members.

Oregon gained another building when art colony members teamed with community leaders to develop and build a two-story red brick community center. The building, on South Third Street near the library was soon converted to other uses, however, and in 1978 was demolished to make way for a parking lot.

Upon the death of Lorado Taft in 1936, the spirit and enthusiasm left the Association. After the death in 1942 of Ralph Clarkson, the last original member, the Association terminated and the land reverted to the Heckman estate.

The Eagle's Nest Tree, after which Lorado Taft's art colony was named, no longer stands on a cliff high above Rock River. It fell during a high wind in 1972 and now lies in a garden of native prairie plants on Taft Campus where it continues to inspire people as it did in the days of Margaret Fuller and of the Eagle's Nest Association.

James Dickerson, the newspaper editor who introduced the artists to the Heckmans, kept the only records of the Association's activities. Charles Browne and Ralph Clarkson, both landscape painters, were members, as was Oliver Grover, portrait painter. Irving and Allen Pond, both architects have many famous buildings to their credit. Horace Fiske, English professor; Henry Fuller, painter; and Clarence Dickinson, composer, completed the list of original Association members.

In addition to the Association members themselves, many students and notables of the day spent time at the camp. It was a place of flourishing activity. Guests were greeted in novel ways: The artists dressed as a row of living statues depicting the Colossi of Memnon to meet a well-known archaeologist. At other times, they assem-



The Heckman House at Lowden State Park. Removed in mid 1960s. (Courtesy John Remour)

bled as wood nymphs or Indians or hapless pioneers in a covered wagon.

Labor Day was a special occasion, as it marked the end of the official summer season. Each year the artists dressed in costumes and carried banners to the Heckman home where they had dinner on the lawn. It was then they paid their annual rent. Although Labor Day was officially the last day of the season, some members stayed on to enjoy the gorgeous fall scenery. The latest recorded date was October 30, and the earliest opening date was May 4.

Each year, the artists spent their summer at camp. At first tents and temporary cottages were erected, but as time went by, permanent structures were built. The first of these, designed by the Pond brothers, was Poley. It served as the camp house and kitchen.

A tile-roofed limestone home built for the Lorado Taft family stands to the northwest of the colony site, now a part of the Lorado Taft Field Campus, a branch of Northern Illinois University. The wood panelling, large fireplace, and second story veranda reflect the natural and gracious lifestyle imparted by its original owners.

Besides Poley Hall and Taft House, one other limestone building was left by the art colony and continues in use at the Campus. The summer cottage of the Charles Brownes also was made of limestone hewn from the nearby bluffs. It has since been expanded and serves as a dormitory and clinic.

LORADO TAFT FIELD CAMPUS

The need for a place such as Taft Campus was first expressed by the late Leslie Holmes, former president of Northern Illinois University (1949). Senators Adlai Stevenson and Everett Dirksen also contributed their influence in getting the acres transferred from Lowden Park to the University's jurisdiction.

In 1951 Lorado Taft Field Campus was established. Work was begun restoring weathered, damaged art colony buildings. In a few years buildings were restored, courses were offered, and overnight facilities were used.

Elementary education students now come to Taft, first to learn about outdoor education, and later to teach grade school children in the outdoors.

The campus is used on weekends for conferences by

associations that appreciate and respect the history and natural beauty of the site.

The purpose of the academic programs offered at the Campus closely related to the beautiful setting. College staff instruct children, and their teachers as well, on how to learn directly from experiences outdoors. Learning from textbooks is secondary during the half week that children stay at Lorado Taft Field Campus. Nature inspires their classwork in such diverse areas as math, science, history, and art. Adventure activities and compass orienteering help the children develop such personal skills as self-reliance and group cooperation.

A Master's degree in outdoor education was approved in 1963. The program has developed an international reputation as an outdoor education center. Professors and graduate students come from throughout the world to teach and learn.

In their 1983 SCIENCE YEARBOOK, World Book Encyclopedias features the Taft program with the title "Classrooms in the Clearing." Each year elementary schools are willing to come from farther and farther away to provide their students the unique learning experiences found at Taft.

Shortly after becoming Taft Campus Director, Michael T. Pitzen arranged for the renovation of Poley Hall in 1983; further preservation measures for other historic structures are also a priority. One group of conferees was especially appreciative of the efforts to maintain the historic qualities of the site. In Autumn, 1984 the descendants and students of Lorado Taft were joined by other researchers for a weekend studying and celebrating Taft's life and works.

Taft's daughter, Emily Taft Dirksen, widow of the late Illinois Senator Dirksen, found the "climbing tree" she had played on as a child, gladly pointing out the sites of many happy childhood memories to her daughter and nephews. For their benefit, the pageantry that was so much a part of art colony life was reenacted by the graduate teaching assistants.

Professor Donald Hammerman, past director and current faculty member, has enjoyed a career at Taft Campus that has shaped the development of programs and facilities there. He has seen the 66 acres expand to 114; the number of buildings has expanded to twelve. He has insured the new buildings are traditionally named for participants in the Eagle's Nest Art Colony to honor the heritage of the site. In 1979 he wrote a poem to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Taft Campus. It reflects the inspiration felt by the many visitors and students who come to learn and enjoy the area:

*A place to search,
a place to wonder,
a place to ponder,
a place of grace,
a place of serenity.
I am a magic place,
a mystique,
a place called Taft.*

THE STATUE CALLED BLACK HAWK

While a member of the Eagle's Nest Camp, which he had helped found, Lorado Taft erected one of his most famous statues upon my eastern bank overlooking my waters.

The History of Ogle County—1976 relates and tells some of the trials and labors involved in the creating of this magnificent and well-known work of art.

Tradition says that the site of the great Indian statue by Lorado Taft on the east bank of the Rock River north of Oregon is the place where Black Hawk, chief of the Sauk and Fox, used to come to ponder the fate of his people and yearn for the days that once were but *were* now long past."

Ada Bartlett Taft, in "Lorado Taft-Sculptor and Citizen" says that this spot had a special appeal to Taft, who would stand there and picture "Black Hawk standing there with folded arms, as he himself was standing, and he felt that the Indian must not be lost to the land, though the white man had driven him out."

Convinced that he could build a concrete statue honoring Black Hawk, Taft received help from a student, John Prasuhn, who had once supervised the construction of concrete bridges, and from Leland Summers, an engineer, who explained the necessary engineering. Beginning with sketches eight inches high, Taft showed the Indian wearing a long blanket, standing with folded arms, gazing out across the river. The eventual working model was six feet tall.

Beginning the work in 1910, Taft had to contend with the winter weather in working on his statue. Lumber, twisted steel rods, wire netting, burlap were collected during the summer of 1910. A special derrick was constructed. Special machines were readied. The cement was a gift of the Portland Cement Association which later used the picture of Black Hawk in its advertising. Water for mixing the cement was drawn from the river one hundred twenty-five feet below.

On December 20, 1910, the workmen began pouring the concrete for the statue. The pouring continued night and day for ten days, with up to twenty-eight men working on the project. Once poured, the concrete was left until spring to set.

There was no way of knowing whether or not the project had succeeded until the forms were removed in the spring. Mrs. Taft described the fateful moment when the mold was removed: "A stout rope had been fastened to the top inside the figure. Mr. Prasuhn nimbly and eagerly climbed it; and pushing himself up and out of a hole between the folded arms and figure's breast, he was able to reach with his chisel a place under the eye and pry off a block of the mold. It was an ominous moment. But look! It is the eye as perfect as in the original clay. One can imagine the relief and joy with which my husband saw this. If the eye, the most carefully modelled part, was perfectly cast, he was reassured as to the larger plans of the blanket."

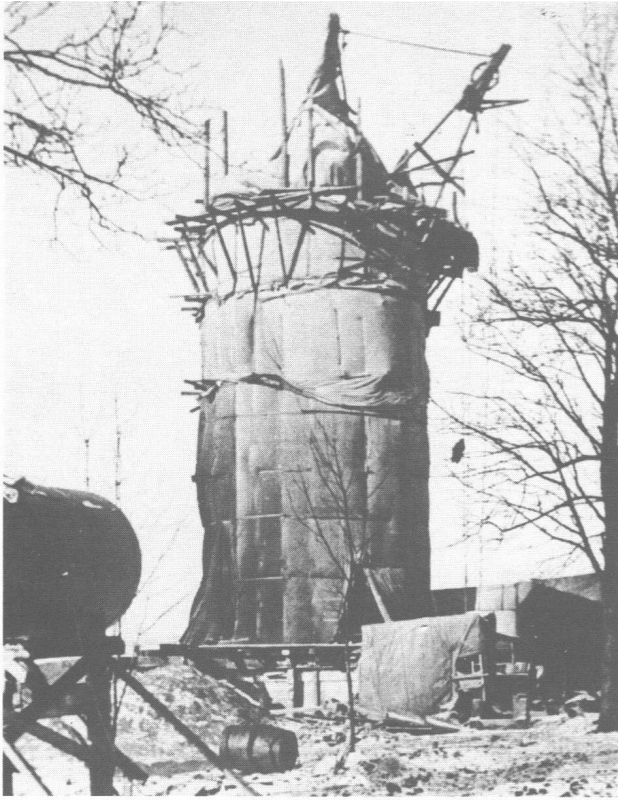
The statue was dedicated on July 1, 1911. Among those on the platform with Taft and Frank O. Lowden who presided over the event were Dr. Eastman, an eminent scholar, Laura Cornelius, the daughter of a chief of the Oneida Iroquois, Edgar A. Bancroft, Elia Peattie, and Hamlin Garland.

Created by Taft, built with the labor of many, the Black Hawk statue remains a Northern Illinois landmark and a memorial to the "Eternal Indian."

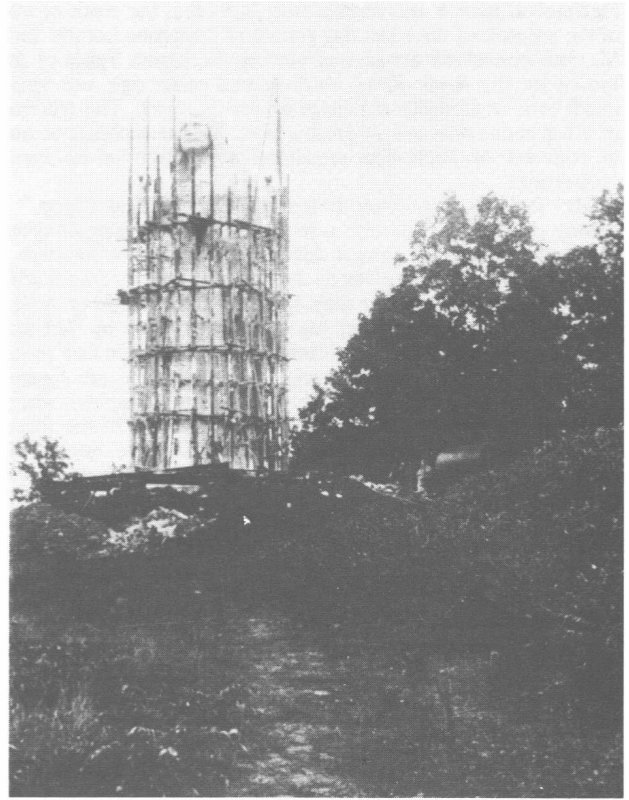
An article from *Popular Mechanics*, and pictures taken and enlarged by Warren Shetter from other sources gives an accurate and interesting account of the actual construction.

Colossal Indian Statue Built of Concrete

The world's biggest Indian now stands with arms folded on a high bluff overlooking the Rock River near Oregon, Ill., visible for miles around. In solemn, silent dignity the massive form rears itself boldly against the skyline from almost every point of the compass, its height of 48 feet added to an 18-foot base and the 250-foot eminence on which it stands giving it an altitude of more than 300 feet above the surrounding countryside. The Indian is made of concrete and marks an epoch in statue building as it is not only a work of art but an example of

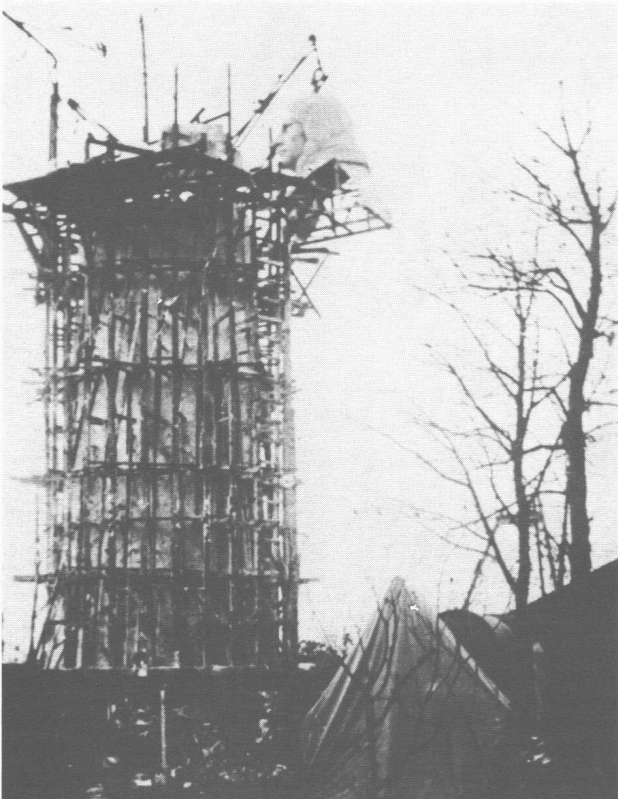


During the pouring process the entire scaffold was wrapped in burlap to hold in the heat generated by the steam engines heating coils and warm cement. Cement was poured through the openings in the shoulders. (Courtesy Warren Shetter)



The external plaster piece mold is chiseled off the concrete. Spring 1911. (Courtesy Warren Shetter)

(Courtesy Warren Shetter)



Putting plaster head in place prior to pouring concrete. Mid-December 1910. (Courtesy Warren Shetter)



The head went up twice. This is important. It went up as a plaster model and was positioned so the piece molds could be constructed. Then it was removed and went up the final time. (Courtesy Warren Shetter)

mechanical genius and engineering skill. It is the work of one of the greatest of the latter-day school of sculptors, Lorado Taft. Mr. Taft conceived the idea of placing the heroic figure of the Indian on the Rock River bluff several years ago and spent much time in working out the plans for the work. The erection of a big statue was not so great a task, but the molding of one in concrete of such size presented a problem of no mean proportions.

Mr. Taft has a summer home at "Eagles' Nest Camp," a colony of Chicago literary and artistic people, near Oregon, Ill., and the unusual natural advantages of the site for such a statue suggested themselves to the sculptor and his friend with added force each summer they spent in their charming sylvan retreat. A six-foot model of the statue was made by Taft and then he and his assistants set ahead making the mold and laying the foundations for the big work. They found the job fraught with difficulties. The body of the statue had to be molded where it was destined to stand forever and the erection of the forms for this body occupied much of Mr. Taft's time during the summer and fall. A frame the shape of the figure without the head was made with timber and wire netting, the whole being covered with burlap when the proper proportions were made. This finished, the whole thing was covered with plaster of paris to a thickness of about 3 in. Ten tons of plaster were required to make the mold and heavy timbers were used to support it. Concrete was poured into the plaster mold and thus the statue was cast. The mold for the head was made separate from the body.

The foundations for the statue extend 30 feet below the surface, exclusive of the base, which is 18 feet square and stands 18 feet above ground. From the bottom of the foundation to the top of the statue, steel rods were run to reinforce the concrete. The total weight of the statue is estimated at 536,110 lbs. and 2,215 cubic feet of concrete were used to make it. Engineers were consulted in the building of the huge figure, so that every precaution should be taken to insure its standing unscathed by the elements. These have estimated that the wind pressure against the statue would be 28,980 lbs. and, with these figures, they devised construction of a character that the wind pressure necessary to overturn it must be 613,185 ft. lb. The total resistance to wind pressure acting through the center of gravity through the 18 ft. base is 4,830,390 ft. lb.

Mr. Taft disclaims having attempted to reproduce the form and features of any individual model, aiming rather at an ideal type, although the statue is more or less a portrait of the *lat* "Black Hawk," a famous chieftain of the Sac and Fox tribe. The attitude of the big, blanket-draped figure is contemplative.

Another statue by Taft, although not as famous as Black Hawk, also still stands on the campus grounds. It is called *The Muses*.

The following story as told by Homer Kuethe, a long time Oregon educator, relates a funny meeting with the Muses.

Late one summer evening, two of our local school teachers had been fishing north of Oregon and finding the fish not biting, decided to call it a night and head for town.

There was no moon that night and the roads leading to town were very dark, and true to form, as on all moonless nights, the teachers ran out of gas!

One of the men decided to walk to the nearest house to call for someone to bring gas out to them or to pick them up, leaving the other with the car.

Starting out through the woods, he soon discovered he had no idea where he was, but decided to continue, hoping to spot a light soon. However, what he found sent him scampering back to the location of the car.

Breathless, he shouted to the other teacher to bring a flashlight! "You won't believe this, but I've just run into four guys carrying a casket through the woods!"

Indeed, our teacher had run into four carrying a casket; he'd stumbled into the statue at Eagle's Nest of the *Muses*, an impressive piece of art in broad daylight and even more impressive in the dead of night!



Taft Indian Statue Encased in Mold.



Built by Lorado Taft in 1911 as a gift to the people of the State of Illinois. Stands 48 feet high on a base 18 feet square. Contains 2,275 cubic feet of concrete reinforced with steel rods, weighs 536,770 pounds and will withstand pressure of 675,785 wind pounds. Called by Popular Mechanics in issue of March 1911, "The World's Biggest Indian."



Lawrence Rippberger, Custodian at Lowden Park at the time, with "The Muses." (Courtesy Warren Shetter)

LOWDEN STATE PARK

The Eagle's Nest Camp leased fifteen acres from the Heckmans. In 1943, at the death of Ralph Clarkson, the last member of the Eagle's Nest Camp, the land went back to the Heckman estate as was stated in their lease.

Governor Lowden, who was governor during World War I, had hoped that these acres could some day become a state park. One of the state's commissions had \$35,000 which was to be used to honor former Governor Lowden. This commission approached Mrs. Heckman who offered them 300 acres for \$50,000. The commission raised \$13,000 by donations and the remainder was given by the Department of Parks and Memorials. In October of 1944, 274.25 acres were purchased by the Commission and in 1945 was transferred to the state as Lowden State Park. (The above information furnished by Nancy Miller—grand daughter-in-law of Governor Lowden).

Today Lowden State Park is one of the most beautiful and historic places along my banks. Hundreds of school children and young teachers-to-be come to Lorado Field Campus every year. Thousands of visitors come annually to stand beside the Indian Statue called Black Hawk and gaze across my waters at the beauty on my other side.

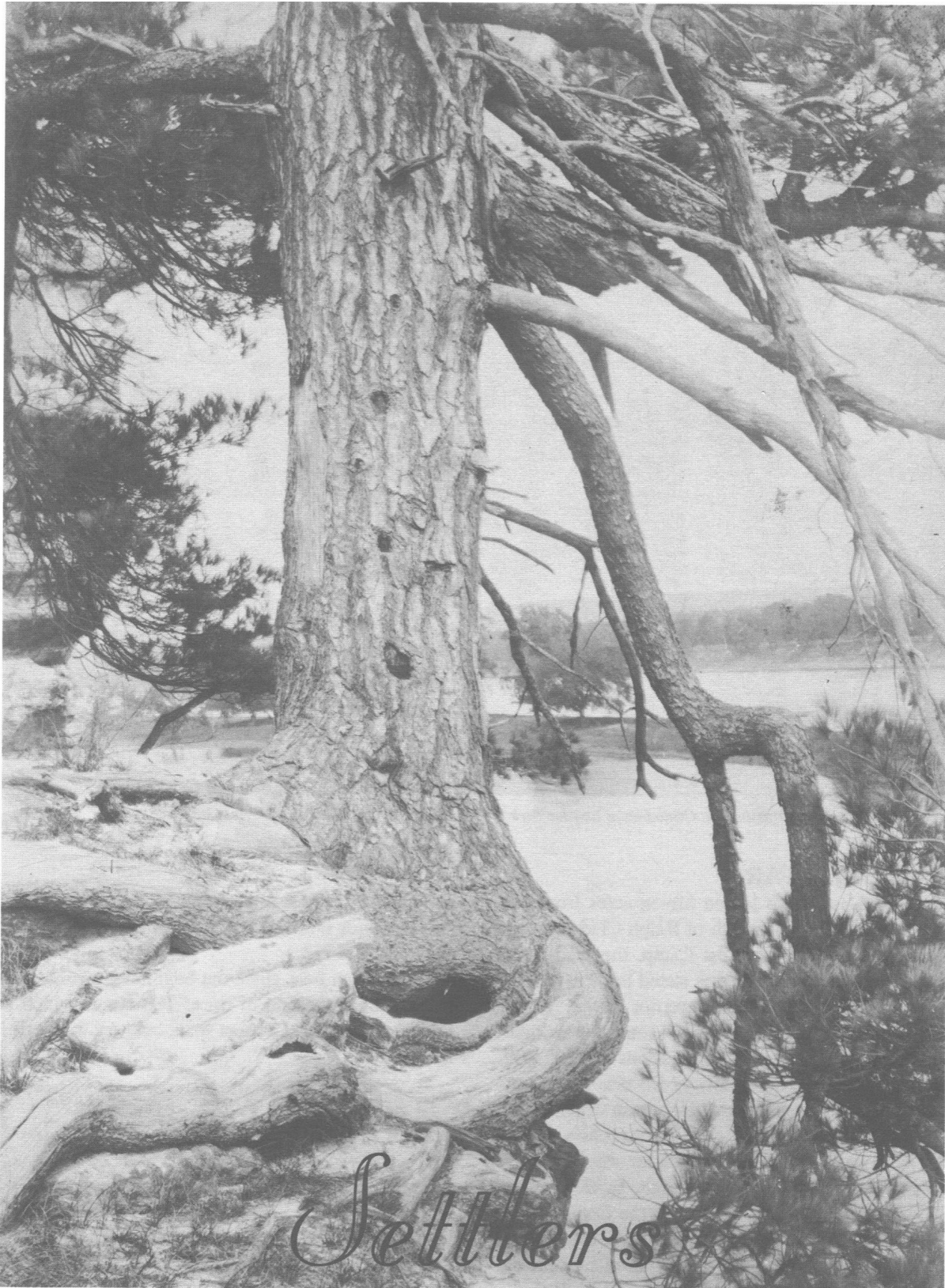
Perhaps the greatest users of this beautiful park are the

campers who spend many happy hours in tents, campers, and/or motor homes each year from early spring to late fall.

I have been here since the beginning of time and will be here until the end of time. The events which I have told about cover but a short span, but how wonderful they all are!



Entrance to Lowden State Park on River Road located on East side of Rock River. (Courtesy of Warren Shetter)



This section compiled and written by Mary Louise Hardesty.

Mary Louise Hardesty has been a life-long resident of the Oregon area. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Holm, graduated from Oregon schools and Rockford College, and married Robert Hardesty in 1942. After raising two sons, Michael and John, and teaching

school for 24 years, she retired to become an active partner in the family business, Hardesty Excavating.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed helping the committee with this section of the book. History is especially fascinating so close to home. Hats off to all those who have labored so hard and so long to produce this splendid book!"

North-West Territory

By virtue of the discoveries of Spaniards, and under Spanish auspices, Spain claimed the greater part of North America from the time Ponce de Leon discovered the mainland April 2, 1512. He named it Florida and though so little had been explored, Spain applied the name of Florida to nearly all the eastern half of North America. Included in this designation, was what is now the state of Illinois, though it is doubtful if a Spaniard set his foot on Illinois soil, during the time Spain claimed it for her own.

Several years after Ponce de Leon landed in Florida, the French prosecuted their discoveries in the valley of the St. Lawrence. They had three motives; acquisition of territory, trade with the Indians, and the spread of Christianity. The Jesuit priests advanced side by side with the explorers and traders.

Thus, in 1673, while Pere Marquette, a Jesuit priest, and Louis Joliet, a trader and explorer, with their guides and "voyageurs" were floating down the Mississippi, they were the first white men to see Illinois and may be called its discoverers.

Another brave and dashing Frenchman, Robert Chevalier de LaSalle, voyaged down the Illinois River in 1679. In 1682, he descended the mouth of the Mississippi and there on April 9, 1682, he erected a cross and a column. With appropriate ceremonies, LaSalle claimed for King Louis XIV of France all the land drained by every stream that flowed into the Mississippi. The claim of France was far more valid than that of Spain, and from that time until the end of the last French and Indian War we may consider Illinois a part of the Great Empire of France.

By capturing Quebec and winning the fourth and last French and Indian War, Great Britain won from France her large dominion in America. Peace was made at Paris on those terms on February 10, 1763. On October 10, 1765, the ensigns of France were hauled down from the ramparts of old Fort Chartres, and was replaced by the flag of Great Britain.

During our Revolution, the Illinois country was wrested from Great Britain by the heroic efforts of Col. George Rogers Clark. He descended the Ohio River with one hundred fifty-three men, landed near Fort Massas, marched to Kaskaskia, and captured it easily on July 4, 1778. He left garrisons there and at Cahokia, and, after a march, on which he overcame obstacles which seem almost unsurmountable, he captured Vincennes, February 24, 1779.

Virginia had raised and equipped Clark's little army. She afterwards organized the territory as a county of Virginia, and called it the County of Illinois. But on December 31, 1780, Virginia ceded all her rights in the North-West Territory to the United States of America. This cession would never have amounted to anything, had we not succeeded in winning the Revolutionary War. But when, owing to our success, peace was agreed to between Great Britain and the United States, the Northwest Territory became indisputably a part of our young but

energetic country. The date of this treaty was September 3, 1783.

The United States held that part of the North-West Territory as government land until June 6, 1842.

However, before this date, men had come to the Rock River valley and had succumbed to the beauty found here.

The City of Oregon, whose name literally means, "River of the West," owes its origin to natural beauty of the valley in which it is located. Because of the awe-inspiring splendor of this forested and river fed valley, an early pioneer by the name of John Phelps decided in 1833 to build a cabin and settle in this land where the Potawatomi and Winnebago Indian tribes had lived and roamed for generations.

Shortly thereafter, other pioneers felt this same attraction and began settling within this site of the Rock River Valley, sometimes referred to as "The Hudson of the West." Included among these early settlers were men of vision and the specialized talents required for the establishment of a permanent community. Because of this factor, the town of Florence, later changed to Oregon, soon had within its boundaries a blacksmith shop, a grocery store, a post office, a church and a school.

By 1836, Oregon was not only a thriving little village, but was the county seat of Ogle County as well. Commissioners selected by the General Assembly had chosen Oregon as the county seat because of its rare beauty and convenience to other citizens living within the county. It goes without saying, this event had a profound effect upon Oregon's future.

Because these early founders of the city of Oregon realized the necessity of incorporating the economical, intellectual, and spiritual elements into their plans for the future of their community, a healthy and sound growth was assured. From the simple log cabin of 1833 to the modern small city of many homes, churches, schools, businesses, factories, beautiful state parks, and the branch of a state university, this policy of balanced development has been pursued.

The following account of the life of John Phelps has been taken from *The Phelps Family Heritage Book*—printed in 1982. Paragraphs in italics are not part of the *Phelps Family Heritage Book*.

John Phelps was the first white settler in Ogle County and was the founder of Oregon. The biographer needs the pen of inspiration to do ample justice to the life and character of him whose name stands at the opening of this personal sketch. The annals of Ogle County can show no name more honored in her history or one that had her best interests more genuinely at heart. April 2, 1874 marked an era in the local records, for it was the day when life and its relations ended with John Phelps, and Oregon donned the sable of mourning in memory of one whose place must be vacant henceforward and forever. It is not possible within the scope of a work of this character to give a full and comprehensive account of the life work of a man like Mr. Phelps. Only a volume could accomplish all that might be included within the signification of the term.

John Phelps was born Aug. 8, 1796, in Bedford County, Va. The records of the early history of his father and mother have disappeared. In an account he made of himself for a purpose which it is hoped will be fulfilled, he says that the formative



JOHN PHELPS
1796-1874



Mrs. John Phelps

period of his existence included the happiest days of his life. He tells of the toil that commenced with his eighth year and the discipline of his parents, which molded his character and laid the foundation of all he became. With true filial reverence he ascribes the credit wholly to them.

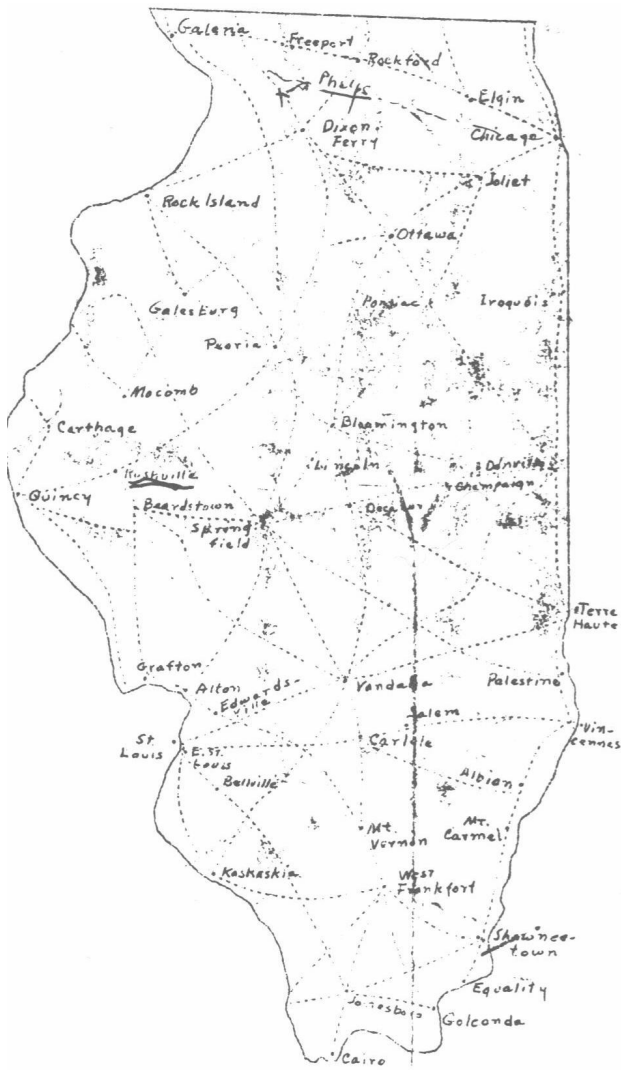
In the fall of 1810 his father removed his family to Wilson County, Tenn. The work of opening a farm in the heavy timber was then begun and was the all-engrossing work for several years. Young John assisted in this arduous labor, and when war with Great Britain had been declared and the government had called for troops to enter the army, with a boy's unrest and craving, he longed to help defend the frontiers, but was deterred by the opposition of his parents. He then waited with impatience for his 18th birthday, when the law would set him free from parental control. In Sept. following, he enrolled himself as a defender of his country. He joined the army of Jackson and was a participant in every fight after the landing of the British, from Dec. 23, 1814, to the memorable 8th of January which closed the war.

His marriage to Sarah Rogan Carlin took place March 14, 1816. The following year he resided on the homestead of his father. In 1817 he bought a farm, on which he operated a year, and on the 18th of June, 1818, started for St. Louis with a boat load of whisky. He rented the ferry at St. Louis, for which he agreed to pay \$180 a month. He moved his boat up the Illinois side and found his wares at last in demand for the interior trade. He found he had builded better than he knew in renting the ferry, as the emigration from Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee was extensive and required the assistance of three men, who were kept busy in the work of transportation. Mr. Phelps loaded his boat and sent her back to Tennessee.

After an unfortunate tobacco speculation at New Orleans, Mr. P. set out for the lead mines at Galena, Ill. At St. Louis he

bought a quantity of merchandise for the lead country. His goods were loaded for the trip up the river, when Governor Cass arrived with the intelligence that there was an Indian outbreak, and the goods were placed back on the wharves and the boat pressed into the service of the government to carry troops to the point where they were needed. But John Phelps was equal to the occasion. He approached the commanding official and told him that the goods were his and that if they could be placed back on the boat, he would enlist in the service and pay his own expenses to the seat of the war. The proposition was accepted and they were soon under way. He reached the mines and established his business, but was somewhat interrupted by rumors of war, which was, however, averted.

His affairs went on swimmingly, his family joined him in 1827 and he continued his operations and extended his relations until again the inflations ruined him in a financial sense. His friends proposed that he take charge of a hunting and trapping expedition to the Rocky Mountains, and he accepted. His family were to be sent back to Tennessee, and he started for St. Louis, where the outfit was to be made up. He went on horseback to Ogee Ferry, now Dixon, then kept by a half-breed Indian. At that time he first saw the territory now included in Ogle County. He went to St. Louis to find further disaster that cannot be told here. His family were on the boat on their way down the river and he joined them at Alton. He there met Thomas Carlin, a relative of Mrs. Phelps, who was afterward Governor of Illinois, and from him received a proposition to take possession of a farm, owned by the latter near Alton. He remained there until the Spring of 1831, when he went to Beardstown in answer to the summons of a man who was indebted to him and who promised to pay him. But the promise proved futile, and Mr. Phelps found himself and family wholly dependent on chances. He settled in Schuyler County, on the banks of the Illinois River, and commenced



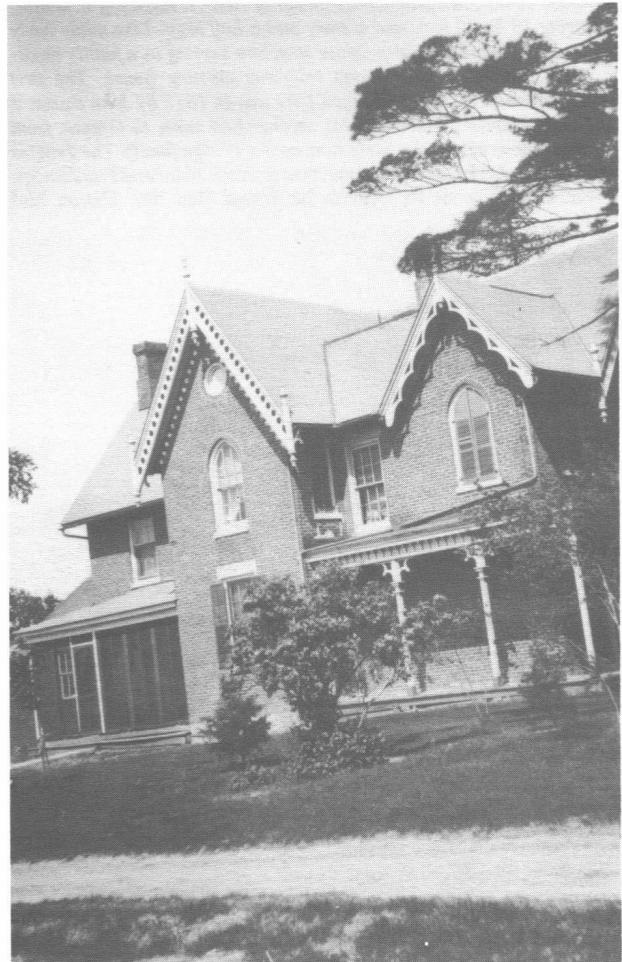
ROADS AND STAGE ROUTES, 1837

operation of a farm. Then came the Blackhawk War. Mr. Phelps was placed in command of a company and went to Rock Island.

In the summer of 1833 Mr. P. started for his old haunts in the lead regions of Galena, to try to collect some of the debts owing to him. He succeeded in the collection of about \$1,400, with which he returned to his family. He again returned to Galena, but finding no prospects there decided to explore the Rock River in order to secure a location on what he believed a promising point for future development when the country should be settled. In company with Stephen A. St. Cyr he started in a canoe from the vicinity of Mineral Point, on the Pecatonica River, expecting to reach the Rock River in two days. But instead, seven days were consumed in the trip. They proceeded to the place where Rockford now stands, but on account of scarcity of timber decided against a location there, and came to the place where Byron is located. There they looked the ground over and came to like decision on the same account. They reembarked and came to a point about a mile from the present site of Oregon. They descried a tent and landed to obtain something to eat. To his astonishment Mr. Phelps found in the tent the son of Alexander Hamilton, Col. William S. Hamilton, whom he had met in the lead mines, and their surprise was mutual. Mr. Phelps told him he was in search of a place to locate. Col. Hamilton responded that he had gone far enough, as he had a contract with the government to survey a large portion of the Rock River country. Col. Hamilton told him he would direct him to the most desirable location on the river, and gave him provisions for a week. Mr. P. at once made a claim, and was the owner of the same tract as long as he lived. This claim is situated on section 31 in Rochelle Township. (I think they mean Rockvale Township)



Column atop granite base is imposing grave marker . . . Befitting memorial to the founder of the City of Oregon



JOHN PHELPS' HOUSE (Courtesy Family Heritage Book)

Mr. Phelps had in view a scheme to secure a location at a point where the direct route of travel to Galena from Chicago should pass, and he decided that such a route could cross the river where Oregon now stands. Accordingly he made a second claim there. He and his companion went across the country to the lead mines, and in the winter following he went to Springfield and procured the passage of a Bill for the building of a road from Chicago to Galena, and secured the franchise of the ferry at the point where the road was to cross Rock River.

In the spring of 1834 Mr. Phelps and two brothers and a hired man started from Schuyler County with the necessary paraphernalia for settling on the claims. They broke, planted and fenced 40 acres on the farm on which Mr. Phelps lived and died. There, also, they built a house and in the fall went back to their home. They came back to the Rock River, and when they arrived at Dixon learned that the commissioners had laid out the road through Naperville, by the way of Dixon, to Galena. This procedure increased the length of the road 30 miles to Galena to accommodate Messrs. Naper and Dixon. This discomfiture determined the course of Mr. Phelps. He was determined to have a road at any cost, and after the crop was gathered he returned home and went again to the Legislature of Illinois in the succeeding winter, and secured the passage of a Bill for the building of a road from Chicago to Galena, to be built at his expense. He was appointed a commissioner and in the spring of 1835 removed his family to his farm on the Rock River. The party arrived May 17th to find that the Indians had taken the corn, and there was nothing but grass for the teams. Their provisions were brought from Galena, and Mr. Phelps proceeded to lay out the road. In the early spring of 1835 he laid out and platted the town of Oregon. *The name of Oregon City was given to the new community by Phelps' daughter, Sarah, later Mrs. Wesley Johnson. The certificate for Oregon City was filed with the county clerk December 4, 1838.*

Prior to the legal formation of the city, Jonathan W. Jenkins erected the first house on the town plat in the summer of 1836. It was a log structure, measuring 18 by 22 feet, and a story and a half high. Like many early buildings it became a multi-purpose structure serving as a family dwelling, hotel, boarding house, and religious meeting house. The first known sermon preached in Oregon City was in 1837 by John Baker, a Hard-Shell Baptist. Baker and his brother had come to Oregon from Schuyler county about the same time as the Phelps family. The Jenkins home was at what is now the intersection of North Third and Franklin Sts.

While on a visit to Galena he found that Mr. Dixon had

posted notices that he should apply for the creation of a new county, which would effectually prevent Oregon becoming a county seat. This did not agree with his plans, and he posted notices that he should petition the State Legislature for a new county, of which this town should be the county seat. This he did, and the result was the creation of Ogle County. In the spring of 1837 the county was formed, the county seat was located, and in the fall ensuing the county was organized.

Mr. Phelps in 1841 formed a partnership with Wesley Johnston to carry on a mercantile business at Oregon, and the firm of Phelps and Johnston was in existence from that time until the death of the senior partner in 1874.

In the fall of 1873 he went south and returned in the month of (copy missing) . . . to the northern blasts resulted in a congestive chill, from which he died April 1st, at the age of 78 years. He was the first Probate Judge of Ogle County and was elected to the position by the State Legislature. The first Circuit Court held at Oregon convened in a building that belonged to him. He went in person to Washington and secured the first mail contract for this region. He entered into a partnership with the noted Frank & Walker and secured the passage of the mail through Oregon. He built the first saw-mill in Ogle County and it was located on Pine Creek, where it was operated until it was worn out.

When the discovery was made that the surveyors had made a mistake and located the claim of Mr. Phelps wrongly, the county commissioners endeavored to dispossess him of his land, where he had laid out his town and expended a large amount of money. The suit went to the Supreme Court at Washington, where the cause of Mr. Phelps was defended by Francis Barton Key, the author of the Star Spangled Banner. The case was lost and Mr. Phelps was compelled to buy his lots over again.

In estimating the character of Mr. Phelps all that can be said here is that he was probably the most remarkable man that had a share in the settlement of Ogle County. He had the resolute will which is indispensable to the genuine pioneer. All obstacles fell before it. No stain rests upon his honor, and when he died the people of Ogle County without exception were common mourners.

Mrs. Phelps died in 1879. She bore to her husband three children, two sons and a daughter. The latter married Wesley Johnston, and is still a resident of Oregon. James C. T. Phelps, the only surviving son, is a resident of Kansas City, Mo. The youngest son, Napoleon, died at New Orleans in December, 1857.



This picture of John Phelps' cabin was taken in 1919. On the roof we see (left to right) Harold Roos, John Roos, Adolph Roos and Peter Roos. In front (left to right) are Andrew Buhs, Helen Buhs, Fredricka (Oltmans) Roos, Jennie Roos, Grace (Mammen) Roos, Grace Buhs, Jennie Buhs and Martha Buhs. (Courtesy G. Suter).

The following has been provided by Ash M. Wood of Arcadia, Calif. Here we find an account of the tragic events occurring at the time of the printing of John Phelps autobiography. Also included is an excerpt from that book, showing us the love John Phelps must have felt for his home. The Phelps family tree is included, together with copies of military papers of Mr. Phelps when he was with the Tennessee Volunteers.

**RECORDS
OF
AN OGLE COUNTY PIONEER**

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY
BY JOHN PHELPS**

WOOD PRESS SAN FRANCISCO

On the morning of Friday, February 17, 1967, all thirty-five copies of James Phelps' autobiography, RECORDS OF AN OGLE COUNTY PIONEER, had been printed and bound and were in the office of the Cardoza-James Binding Company in San Francisco where the title of the book was to be embossed on the cover. The preparation of the thirty-five copies had taken approximately two years, having been prepared from a manuscript and related documents.

A three-alarm fire, set by an itinerant, jobless shoemaker in the early pre-dawn hours at the Cardoza-James Binding Company destroyed all thirty-five copies of the book before they could be distributed to family and friends. The arsonist, Lanson L. Smith, Jr. of New York, was captured and confessed to touching off the blaze, saying that he had entered the building intent on burglary but became angered when he could find only three bottles of whisky. Some 150 firemen and 26 pieces of equipment fought the blaze and damage was estimated at \$75,000.

Gummed
Tobacco
Vols.

TO: Ash Wood

FROM: W. J. BARRON COMPANY
1406 SO. GRAND AVE.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90015
213 - 748-6191

Subject: John Phelps DATE: 10/11/71

MESSAGE: Huntington Library Art Gallery and Botanical Gardens

While there are several by this name listed in the index cards by subject and/or author, your John Phelps reads thus:

F547 Phelps, John 1796-1874
O 3P5

Records of an Ogle County pioneer; autobiography, by John Phelps. (Edited by Marilyn Jo Wright Wood)

San Francisco, Wood Press (1967)
94 P. Illustr. 22cm
50 copies #27

REPLY: LC 395765

DATE: Signed: *Al Pollock*

SEND WHITE AND PINK COPIES WITH CARBON IN "ACT. PINK COPY IS RETURNED WITH REPLY.

An insurance policy with California Casualty has provided funds to pay for the major portion of reproduction and binding costs.

The reproduction, taken from a few copies which were not completely destroyed by fire, has been done by Reliable Lithograph Company, Inc. of San Francisco. The binding has been done by The Schuberth Bookbindery, San Francisco.

Editing, typing and compilation of all information contained herein has been prepared by Marilyn Jo Wright Wood. Financing of the book was provided by Ashford Miller Wood. . . .

On my return to Illinois in 1861, I spent my time on the farm clearing up a wood lawn, planting a variety of fruit trees, setting out a fine vineyard and a large quantity of dwarf and fancy fruits. After completing that work, I commenced in the year 1863 on the farm, building a commodious and fine Gothic brick residence, together with suitable outbuildings and planting ornamental trees and shrubbery near the house for the adornment

13 JAN 1970

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

RECEIPT NO. 93411 DATE 1-22-70

SEARCHER

FILE DESIGNATION: *John Phelps*

ORDER FOR PHOTOCOPIES CONCERNING VETERAN (See reverse for explanation)

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

P 2 Mounted Gunmen. (Williamson's) Tob. Vols.

John Phelps
Private, { Capt. Beverly Williams' Co., 2 Reg't Tennessee Vol. Mounted Gunmen. War of 1812.

Appears on Company Muster Roll for Sept. 25, 1814, when mustered into service, to Dec. 27, 1815, when discharged.

Roll dated Washington, D.C. 1815

Date of appointment or enlistment, Sept. 28, 1814

To what time engaged or enlisted, Dec. 27, 1815

Present or absent, Present

NOTE:—Each non-commissioned soldier, musician, artificer and private travelled 100 miles from Lebanon in Wilson County, placed his residence, to Fayetteville in Lincoln County when mustered into service.

Remarks and alterations since last muster:

L. Tolman

P 2 Mounted Gunmen. (Williamson's) Tob. Vols.

John Phelps
Private, { Capt. Beverly Williams' Company, 2 Reg't Tennessee Vol. Mounted Gunmen. War of 1812.

Appears on Company Pay Roll for Sept. 25, 1814 to Dec. 27, 1815.

Roll dated Washington, D.C. 1815

Commencement of service or of this settlement, Sept. 28, 1814

Expiration of service or of this settlement, Dec. 27, 1815

Term of service charged, 2 months, 5 days

Pay per month, 8 dollars, 35 cents

Amount of pay, 57 dollars, 35 cents

Travelling allowance for forage and rations not drawn in kind @ 25 cents per day, 1.25

Travelling allowance for pay of horse from Sept. 28, 1814, to May 2, 1815, at 40 cents per day, 2-17 days, 86 dollars, 80 cents

Amount, 145 dollars, 78 cents

Remarks: *Added 5 days travelling allowance for marching to the place of rendezvous.*

L. Tolman

P 2 Mounted Gunmen. (Williamson's) Tob. Vols.

John Phelps
Private, { Capt. Beverly Williams' Co., 2 Reg't Tennessee Mid. Vol. Gunmen. War of 1812.

Appears on Company Muster Roll for Sept. 28, 1814, when mustered into service, to March 28, 1815.

Roll dated Fayetteville

Date of appointment or enlistment, Oct. 2, 1814

To what time engaged or enlisted, March 28, 1815

Present or absent, Present

Remarks and alterations since last muster:

L. Tolman

of the premises. I also planted three acres of forest trees, consisting of sugar maple, elm honey, locust, cherry, Scotch pine, Norway spruce, balsam of fir, and larch, in front of the house and extending to the State road from Chicago to Galena as those acres are a lawn to the house. In fact, I have done everything that was necessary to make a pleasant and happy home; the improvements are substantial and elegant and it will make a beautiful home for those who follow me. These things have all been done within the last six years, ending the first of January, 1867.

Editor's Note: House burned down in early 1930s.

Here we find two copies of letters written by Phelps family members, in which there are references to the John Phelps family.

To Mr. Robert Phelps—Lebbanon
Wilson City Tennessee
(Mailed from Oregon, Ill.)

State of Illinois
Ogle County
October 29, 1848

Dear Brother

I avail my self of the oppertunity to inform you that we are all well at present and hoping thes few lines will finde you all enjoning the same Blessing I my self had avery long spell of sicknefs last summer, first attack was in the neck it turned to bulues feavor then infamation in the Bowels. I was confined to my Bed six or seven weeks, and the house to gether not being to work. Elizabeth then was taken with the long measall all except Sarah they are all in good helth at this time. Wheat crop was very good this season corn is good we can get 50-cts for wheat sometimes. corn worth 12½ - 16 some wants 20 cts per bushell. my land is afford for sail I sent of my land to land I haven't hard from it sens I dont no etete is solde or not. If it is I may land in some of the Suthern cuntry I cat tell where, John Phelps family are all well Benjamin Phelps family is all well the las tim we hard from them

Deare Sister

I avail my self of the oppertunity to inform you the reason why we didnt Rite wee was waiting to get weell thank God wee are all well wonest more I was glad to hear that you all was able to work and was getting along with your cloth making and if I could be in some wountry where I could where cotton grow I could make cloth it would be grattifyin to me Store goods considable cheaper then they were when you ware heare in this cold cuntry, Victory I halve got some newes. Sarah Phelps is married to Wesley Johnston. they live in the mines I halveen sen them sens they were married. Mrs rolen dide last spring with the polsey. John & Mary & Susan was up heare at Schol this summer at the Seminary Started home 27th of this month Uncle Henry had sevar attack of infamation in the bowels and intermiting he lay two weeks with out much change he is up and move on foot. Henry Palmer rote Allar he expected it was the last Henry would Rite he was lying very low with the same Diseas. Elizabeth we give Alonzo as much meet and Bread as he can eat he is walkin and talking and says what he pleases Victory is going to school in Mt Moris Shee goes very fast and learnes fast Sarah would like to see the children and her Aunt Victory and her uncle Boob Give my love to farther & mother and all the connection and my enquire friends. I wold like verry much to see them all. I Remainn your effectale Sister Give my Best love to all the family. no more at presant Rite as soon as you get this letter Fore-well
George W Phelps
Elizabeth Phelps
Bette Smith Phelps

In a letter from Gordon Merritt, Seattle Wash., we gain more interesting information on the family of John Phelps. Mr. Merritt also enclosed some excerpts from the

Ogle Co. Gazette of April 17, 1852, Apr. 17, 1879 and from the *Ogle Co. Press*, Polo, Ill. Sept. 9, 1893

Charlie Mongan
Rt. 3
Oregon, IL 61061

27 Feb. 1986

Dear Mr. Mongan:

Doris Vogel suggested that I write you since you are writing the Oregon history.

I have written her and Ruth Baker and Arman Van Briesen for a few years about my ancestors John Phelps and wife Sarah and Nathaniel Swingley and wife. We exchange information and sometime we put together some information in a new way that teaches us something about the old days.

I have a letter written by my greatgrandmother Rilla Phelps in 1871 in Oregon. She was a daughter of Oregon merchant James CT Phelps and granddaughter of Oregon merchant John Phelps. She wrote the letter when living above a dry goods store. She describes the store, which must date from the 1840's, and was probably the store of "Phelps and Johnston" (sometimes Johnson). This store was probably the Oregon store advertized in "The Ogle County Gazette" ("Coffee 10 to 11 cents per pound") of April 17, 1852.

In the summer of 1850, the US Census was taken, and John Phelps was apparently living above this store. He was 52 years, his wife Sarah was fifty, and son Napoleon was 16 years. Also his daughter Sarah (30) lived there with her husband Wesley Johnston (30) and son Timoleon Oscar Johnston (1) (he was future publisher of "The Ogle County Reporter"). There was also a stage driver living there then, a Jas. A Crumby (42) born in Pennsylvania. He was possibly employed by a stage line that brought goods from Philadelphia and New York for the stores; John Phelps was a partner in this company: "Frink and Walker." There is a lot that can be said about John Phelps' wife Sarah. She planted early the shade trees in front of the Oregon store. She also served with southern hospitality sumptuous meals to welcome the early pioneers who settled in and near Oregon. She had the strength to hold the family together when they had no money and the father was gone for long periods trying to raise money. She could probably not read or write much, but she was of sturdy stock.

My greatgrandmother Rilla married Henry Merritt in Oregon in October, 1873; she died there in 1879 of consumption. She is buried near her brother and grandparents Phelps' in Riverview Cemetery.

I enclose a picture of John Phelps and wife, and other biographical data. Please contact me if I can provide any assistance. Most of my material is in Doris Vogel's library, too. Sincerely,

"Ogle County Gazette", Oregon, IL,
Saturday, April 17, 1852
From microfilm photograph,
Roll M-24A, #1-315
Illinois Historical Library
Springfield, IL

March 19, 1985
Gordon Merritt
8542 19th NW
Seattle, WA 98117

page 4:

"Phelps and Johnson

Having determined to make a change in their manner of conducting business for the future propose selling goods for cash, at such prices as will defy competition. Their motto will be always sell, if the offer covers the cost. In doing this they wish it understood that their low prices are not limited to a few isolated articles, but to their entire stock, consisting of a general assortment of Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Crockery. The following list of prices will be strickly adhered to

Coffee from 10 to 11 cts. per lb.
Sugar, 6¼ 8¼
[illegible]

and every variety of goods in the same proportion. We will give in payment for goods Pork, Corn, Wheat, Beans, Dry Hydes,

Furs and good Butter, if delivered when the goods are purchased, for such produce they will sell at their *former Book prices*, and give the highest market prices for this the produce. We respectfully solicit our customers and the public in general to give us a call before purchasing elsewhere, as we have resolved to let no house undersell us this side of New York.”
Oregon Dec. 10-26-6m

Letter to: Henry S. Merritt
107 South Water St.
Chicago, Ill.

From: Urilla S. Phelps

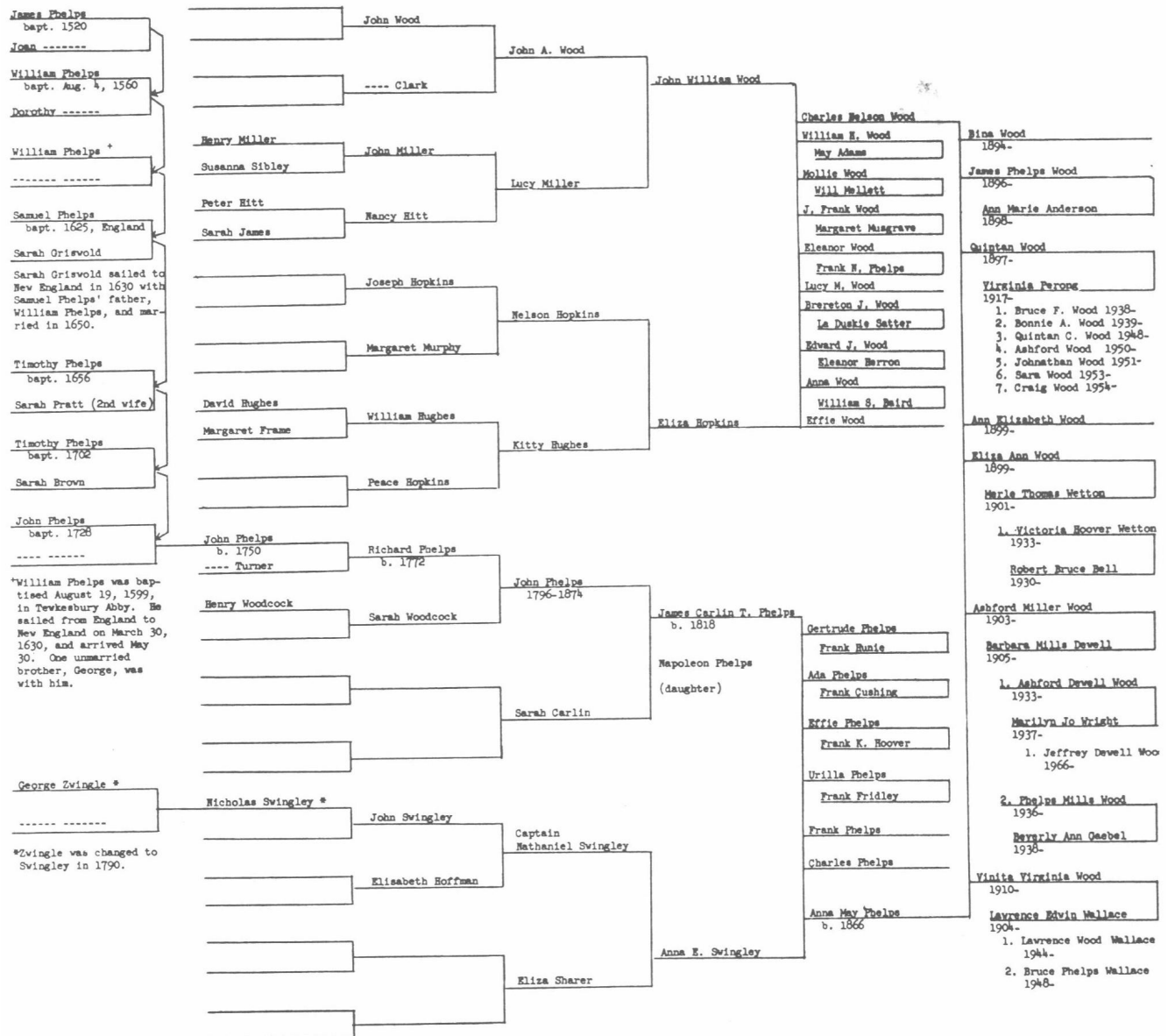
Oregon
Tuesday June 20, 1871

page 3
“Notice

Persons knowing themselves indebted to the late firm of Phelps and Chaney, either by note or Book account, are hereby notified that the said Phelps and Chaney have placed the notes and accounts of said firm in my hands for collection.—Persons to whom this Notice will apply, will do well to heed it, and call the *Subscriber*, at this office in the new stone building, opposite the Court House, in Oregon—cost may be saved by so doing.
March 6, 1852 R. C. Burchell”

page 4
“R C Burchell
Attorney at Law”

“My own dear Henry:
It is a bright glorious evening. Just a few moments ago I received your short letter . . .
. . . I wish you could come out the day before (July 4th), the train does not leave Chicago before about four o’ clock in the evening, and gets here at nine, it does not take so long as when we came the road is smother now.
You want me to write you all about our new home, I hardly know how to begin. Our house is quite pleasant on the inside, we are right on the principal business corner, part of the building we are in is used as a dry goods store we have the rooms above the store. Then there is a wing on one side one story and a half, we use all of it, the wing addition was built about seventeen years ago, and the other part is just about as old as Chicago which is thirty years, the style of architecture is quite ancient



as you can well imagine but it was the best we could do until we move into our new house, which Pa intends to have excel anything here. From our sitting room upstairs we can overlook Rock River, the dam and mills are just below us, and the banks opposite are so beautiful. I always sit at this window and sew. It is so cool and pleasant, an old apple tree nearly covers it with its foliage, in front of one part of the building are two massive . . . weeping willows they were planted many years ago by Grandma Phelps, my piano is right by the window that is shaded by them. Oregon is nearly surrounded by bluffs. The situation is as handsome as anyone could desire. This week the grand time in all the year will pass in Mount Morris, the commencement exercises at the Rock River Seminary, everyone from far and near will flock to the Mount on that day . . .”

Truly your loving

Rilla

WESLEY JOHNSTON

Ogle County Press, Polo, Ill.
September 9, 1893—Saturday

Wesley Johnston, one of the pioneers of Ogle County, died suddenly at the home of his daughter, Mrs. A. H. Wagoner, Tuesday Morning, September 5 (1893), of heart failure. The REPORTER says: “He had been confined to his house for several days, though he attended to business as usual and had dressed preparatory to coming down town, just before he passed away.

The funeral was held at the residence, Thursday afternoon, at 2 o’clock. Last winter Mr. Johnston was in very poor health, but during the summer he regained his usual health and strength. He was in Polo a few weeks ago and seemed to be in usual health. We met him also at the Exposition in Chicago and he attended the Old Settlers meeting at Rochelle, when he seemed in good spirits.

Mr. Johnston was born in New York City April 1, 1817. At the age of 10 he lost his father, and his mother removed to Canada, where he served an apprenticeship in a drug store. The year 1837 found him in St. Louis, where he was employed as a clerk in a store and then on a Mississippi steamer. In 1841 he became a resident of Oregon, (Illinois) and in 1849 he formed a partnership with C. T. Phelps, and the firm of Phelps and Johnston did an extensive mercantile business in various towns in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois. They had stores in Polo, Milledgeville, Brookville, LaSalle, Peru, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Elizabeth and several other places. Just prior to the war they had a large store at Austin and one or two in other points in Texas. By the war they lost heavily but were able to retain their landed property after the war. Since the war He (Mr. Johnston) has resided in Oregon and has been engaged in the real estate and loan business. He had extensive real estate interests in Texas, Chicago, Oregon and other points.

In June 1848 he was united in marriage with Miss Sarah L. Phelps, daughter of “Jack” Phelps, one of the pioneers of Galena in 1827. Mrs. Johnston had the honor of naming Oregon, when her father layed it out in 1835. Mrs. Johnston died a few years ago.

Three of their children survive them: T. O. Johnston, editor of The Reporter, Mrs. Eva E. Wagoner, wife of the editor of The Independent Democrat, and James W. Johnston, one of the proprietors of the last named paper and a mail clerk for the C. and N. W. Railroad.

The Ogle County Reporter, Oregon, Ill., April 17, 1879

Published by Timoleon Oscar Johnston

In Memoriam

The deceased lady, whose biography appears below had been suffering for several months prior to her death. Her debility was due to old age and its attendant train of infirmities, rather than to any inherent physical ailment. We have never seen more intense suffering or a more heroic fortitude displayed, than by the lady whom we mourn. While tortured in body, her mind was clear and peaceful. Well spent days—reaching out to the infinite, without a murmur. The gentle spirit was “wafted across the river” in the silent hours of the early morn, when the turmoil of the world was hushed,—the solitude of the night unbroken—fit time to part with sorrow and enter the radiant mansions of eternal joy. Mrs. Phelps character is happily depicted by the poet:

“Beautiful lives are those that bless,

Silent rivers of happiness,

Whose hidden fountains but few may guess”

Deceased was relict of the late John Phelps, who founded the city of Oregon and surveyed the old government road from Chicago to Galena. Mrs. Phelps died at the residence of her son-in-law, Mr. Wesley Johnston, in this place. Mr. J.C.T. Phelps of Rockvale, and Mrs. Sarah L. Johnston are the surviving children, Napoleon, the third child, having died in New Orleans in 1858. The funeral, April 8th, was largely attended, at the M.E. church. The remains were buried in the family lot at Riverview cemetery. During the funeral discourse Rev. H. Crews read the following sketch, embodying some facts with reference to the departed not given elsewhere:

Mrs. Sarah R. Phelps was born in Franklin County, Virginia April 29, 1797, and on the 29th inst. would have been eighty-two years old. She was married in Tennessee, on the 14th of March 1816. She survived her husband five years and six days. Her maiden name was Sarah R. Carlin and was a cousin of ex-Governor Carlin of this State. She was a very exemplary woman, had a pleasant smile for all, a kindness of disposition that endeared her to all of her many acquaintances in this county and in Tennessee. She with her husband settled here in the year 1835, on their farm three miles from Oregon. We can give you some insight of the appreciation in which she was held by her husband from an extract of a letter from him to her in 1860: “I am now entering my sixty-fourth year. My life has been, on the whole, rather an eventful one. Sometimes flushed with success and at others sunk in the deepest despair, sometimes basking in the sunshine of prosperity, at others, overshadowed by gloom.—When I have been beset with troubles without, I have always found comfort and happiness at home in the bosom of my family. You, my dear companion, whose destiny has been chained to mine for the last forty-three years, sharing with me the toils, troubles and disappointments which us poor mortals have to encounter through the rough journey of life, always bearing your part with noble fortitude and always submitting to what could not be helped, without a murmur when borne down by misfortune, and destitute of common comforts, you did not complain, but always ready to assist in trying to elevate our condition. It is your kindness, prudence and forbearance under the most trying circumstances of misfortune, that has always inspired me with new zeal, and made my rough paths smooth.”—Mother Phelps was a model wife and woman. You have evidence of the one who knew her the longest, taken from a private letter, which was written when the heyday of youth was gone. Her life will remind you of the beautiful expression of Ruth. “Entreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.”

Published in the same newspaper; April 10, 1879:

Sarah R. Phelps—This esteemed lady departed this life Sunday morning [April 6] about one o’clock. . . The funeral was held at the M.E. church Tuesday afternoon [April 8] and was largely attended. . .

Jan. 11, 1984

Gordon Merritt

8542 19th NW

Seattle, WA 98117

This poem, written by J. Willard Glidden of DeKalb, April, 1874, in memory of Mr. Phelps, is a fitting tribute to a man of such courage & will, such devotion to the area in which he settled & which is now home to so many of us.

He hath gone to his rest; how calm he lies sleeping,
No rude windy storms shall disturb his repose;
Though fond hearts will mourn, and loved ones are weeping,
They would not recall him again to life’s woes.

He hath gone to his rest; no more we behold him,
The soldier, the hero, the true and the tried;
With the good and the brave they have proudly enrolled him,
Ah, well may we mourn when the noble have died.

Ah, there let him rest, by the "beautiful river,"
Whose waters flow on to the far distant main;
Mid the scenes that he loved, made glorious forever,
By nature's grand impress, on grove, hill and plain.

Long years may depart—and fond hopes may perish,
The spring flowers fade and the gay summers bloom;
Yet dear ones will come, who his memory still cherish,
With sweet immortelles to regarland his tomb.

Like a sheaf fully ripe, when the harvest we gather,
He bowed his aged form when the death-angel passed;
A husband beloved, a kind gentle father,
A patriarch faithful and true to the last.

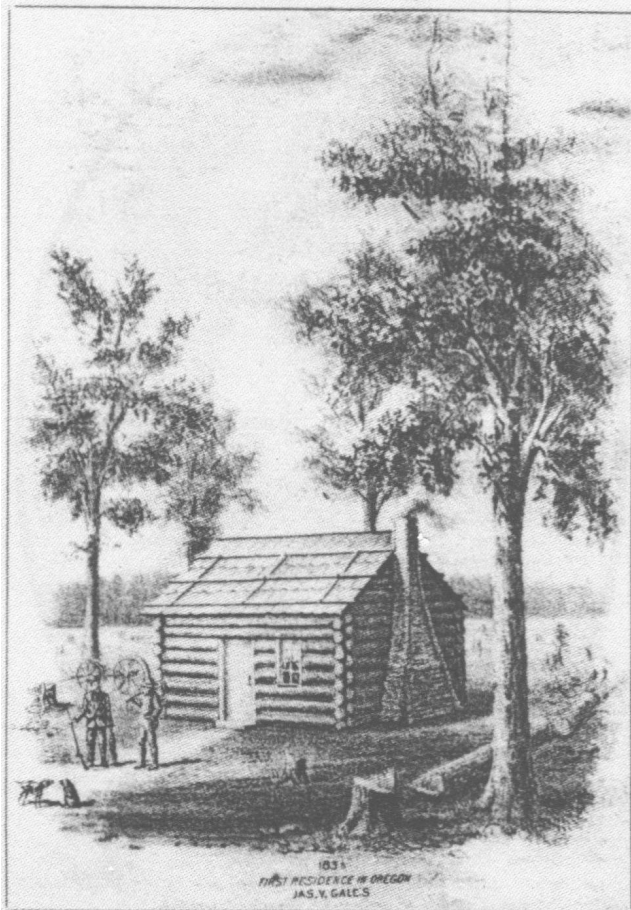
His was the warm soul that thrilled with emotion,
In free social converse he well bore his part;
His was the spirit of tireless devotion,
To home, friends and country he gave his whole heart.

He came to the West, to the wilds lone and dreary,
He feared not its hardships, he shrank not from toil;
His work was well done, all care-worn and weary,
He was laid down to rest on his chosen soil.

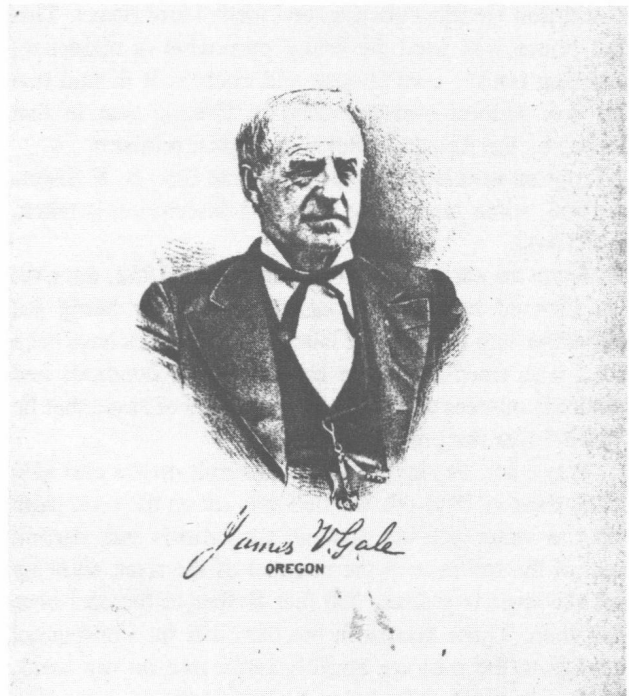
Shall we still follow on—with the dear pleasing story,
Beyond the dark vale to a realm ever fair,
Where spirits immortal will gaze on the glory,
Too dazzling and bright for earth's children to bear.

Oh! blest star of faith, mayest thou ever shine o'er us,
And light up our homes with the soul-cheering ray;
With glory illumine the pathway before us,
That leads thro' the pearly gates to Heaven's bright day.

First House Built in Oregon By James V. Gale in 1835



1835
FIRST RESIDENCE IN OREGON
JAS. V. GALE'S



James V. Gale, an early settler, was elected Oregon's first mayor in 1870. He served from 1870-1872. Mr. Gale built the first building used exclusively as a residence at the site of what is now the Nash Recreation Center. He was the first Recorder of Ogle Co., the first Justice of the Peace and the first public administrator as well as the second postmaster.

From an old Ogle County history published in the seventies, this picture, made long before the days of photo engraving, is taken. It is a pen and ink sketch, undoubtedly made into a wood cut, which was the process in use before metal plates were brought into play for reproducing photographs. It is the log house of James V. Gale, the first to be built in Oregon, according to a footnote beneath it. Its construction was completed in 1835 and the house, it is claimed, stood near the present site of the Oregon grade school on Madison street.

Mr. Gale was born in Concord, New Hampshire, Nov. 2, 1806, and in 1824 entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he remained for a year, but in 1835 came to Illinois locating in what was then open country around the later Oregon City townsite and built a log cabin. He engaged in farming until 1838, when the infant town had grown considerably and then he opened a mercantile business, later retiring from this business and opening a saw mill. He was the first Recorder of Deeds in Ogle County, also the first Justice of the Peace, elected in 1836 when the township was organized, served as supervisor from 1853 to 1854, and was the second postmaster at Oregon, being appointed by President Harrison in 1841. In 1863 he was elected by the Republican party as state representative. In 1870 when Oregon became an incorporated city, he was elected the first mayor, and that same year was also elected a director of the Chicago and Iowa railroad, later being made vice president of the railroad.

The first house on the town plat of Oregon was built by Jonathan W. Jenkins. This house was of logs and stood on the site of the present building occupied by the

Restitution Herald Pub. Co. on North Third Street. This first house was used for many purposes—a residence, boarding house, court house and church. It is said that the first sermon ever preached in Oregon was in that house, by the Rev. John Baker, a Baptist minister.

From an article prepared by the late Col. B. F. Sheets in 1904, some interesting facts and description is taken, as follows:

“From the earliest days of Oregon until 1852, the river was crossed by a ferry-boat, the first ferry being put below the dam forming the islands. These holes have been filled with trees and stone until there are hundreds and hundreds of trees and thousands of cords of stone that lie buried under the present dam.

“When Mr. Petrie and I built the mill on the east side of the river in 1861-62, the mill was set on the river bank and the water passing through the wheels was carried west in the tail race to the channel of the river, showing that the river is at least 200 feet farther to the east now, than then. These breaks in the dam and the consequent damage to the mill are forcibly impressed on my mind, because in those deep holes lie buried the earnings and savings of my young manhood. We have at least \$30,000 safely buried and covered by fathoms of water.”

The first male child born in Oregon was Lamon T. Jenkins, son of Jonathan W. Jenkins, and the first female child born in the township was Martha E. Mix, mother of Mrs. Charles M. Gale.

Early Days in the Town of Oregon

This is the sixth of a series of interesting sketches of one of the oldest cities in northern Illinois. The data was carefully gathered and prepared by Dr. G. R. Vanhorne, who has arranged to similarly write up other towns and villages in this territory for the Register-Gazette. They will all be well worth reading.

“He came to the west, to the wilds
lone and dreary,
He feared not its hardships, he
shrank not from toil:
His work was well done; all careworn
and weary,
He laid down to rest, on his own
chosen soil.

Rev. Barton Hall Cartwright.

No one man in Oregon or Ogle county was so well known and whose memory is so tenderly cherished and respected as that of Rev. Barton Hall Cartwright. For much of this sketch I am indebted to M. G. Kauffman, who has gathered valuable data, touching this heroic pioneer minister of the Methodist Episcopal church.

Early Life and Ministry.

Mr. Cartwright was born in Cayuga County, New York, March 9, 1810. His father was a Baptist minister, who died when young Barton was only twelve years of age. In the early spring of 1833 he started alone from Syracuse, N. Y., with a knapsack and staff walking through mud and over frozen ground to Olean Point on the Alleghany river. From there he took passage by flat-boat to Pittsburgh, PA; thence by steamboat to Cincinnati. Here he met Black Hawk, the big Indian chief, and shook hands with him.

Mr. Cartwright continued westward till he reached Burlington, Ia. From there he came over to Warren county, Illinois.



BARTON H. CARTWRIGHT



MRS. BARTON H. CARTWRIGHT

Being an active Methodist, and a minute man, he was sent by Rev. Barton Randall, who was ill, to hold a religious service in a settler's cabin on the first Sunday in May, 1833. Here began the long and faithful ministry of the remarkable man of God.

Mr. Cartwright organized the first Protestant society in Iowa territory, which fact is commemorated by a memorial window in the Methodist Episcopal church at Muscatine, Ia.

The Buffalo Grove Circuit.

In the fall of 1834 Mr. Cartwright became a member of the Illinois conference, which included Illinois, Iowa, and part of Wisconsin. He preached the first sermon where Rock Island is now located in the cabin of Judge Spencer, the father of Rev. William A. Spencer, D. D., so well known in Rockford and Oregon. In the summer of 1837, he was appointed to the Buffalo Grove circuit, which included a territory extending from Fulton on the Mississippi river to a point near Rockford. He rode on the average of fifty miles each Sunday preaching three to four times a day. For this heroic service he received the sum of \$50 per year.

His Marriage.

On April 10, 1839, Mr. Cartwright was united in marriage with Miss Chloe Jane Benedict, who was the first school teacher in what is now Ogle County. Mr. Cartwright rode over to Mt. Morris to engage Rev. Thomas Hitt, father of the late Hon. Robert R. Hitt, to perform the marriage ceremony. He represented to the minister that he wished him to go with him to settle a claim. Mr. Hitt declined on the ground of incompetency to adjust such claims. Then Mr. Cartwright solved the riddle to Mr. Hitt and they started at once for the home of the prospective bride, where the couple were happily united.

Mrs. Cartwright was in many respects a remarkable woman. One can judge of the golden fiber of her character by what she did in that early day and the heroism of her long life as the wife of a pioneer itinerant. I give the contents of her letter to Mr. Kauffman.

Mrs. Cartwright's Letter.

"We left Ohio and came to Lafayette Grove, Ill., in the fall of 1835. We traveled by wagon most of the way. I rode on horseback, frequently carrying my youngest sister on the horse with me. There were three cabins along the grove. We lived in a log cabin of one room. We had no floor for about a month; finally made us a puncheon floor. A stick and mud chimney was built from the ground on the outside of the house. Our nearest market was Chicago, where father had to take all his grain and produce by wagon. I spun and wove the clothing, as well as the bedspreads and other necessary articles used by the family and made by hand fine lace for trimming.

"In the spring of 1836 I taught the first school in Ogle county—

From this point the rest of her letter is missing. But more is written of her life after her marriage.

For weeks she would stay alone with her children in a log cabin in the woods, with no near neighbors, while her husband was going the rounds of his great circuit preaching the gospel to the people, she modestly said of herself. "I tried to do what I could to be of some assistance in the work I so dearly loved." A boulder has been placed on the spot where Mrs. Cartwright taught this first school. On the boulder is this inscription: "Site of First Public School House in Ogle County, 1836."

Chaplain Cartwright.

Mr. Cartwright was a faithful preacher and he filled a number of appointments in northern Illinois. He was pastor at Byron when the stone church was built. He hauled the stone for that church with his own team and carried hods of mortar to assist the masons in laying up the walls.

Richard Yates, then governor of Illinois, commissioned Mr. Cartwright as chaplain of the 92nd Illinois mounted infantry in the spring of 1863. No better or more devoted chaplain ever served a regiment. His rank was that of a captain of cavalry. He went with his regiment on that immortal march of Sherman to the sea. "He attended to the mail, looked after the sick, was with the men in the trenches and gained the sincere affection of

every member of his regiment." Chaplain Cartwright was mustered out by the Divine Commander at Oregon, April 3, 1895.

Some Personal Recollections.

I have some very pleasant recollections of Chaplain Cartwright. I was with him at the commencement exercises at Mt. Morris seminary in 1836. A lady at the piano played a very musical instrumental number. Chaplain Cartwright, who sat on the platform, paid strict attention and at the close of the musical number said: "Sister, that was well done, but won't you please play a tune that has words to it?" That brought the cheers from the large audience, and it also brought the "tune with words to it."

At a session of the Rock River conference a number of years ago Chaplain Cartwright asked the presiding bishop if he might be allowed to say a word to the class of young ministers then entering the conference. Permission being given, the chaplain said, "Young men, let me give you a recipe for always keeping young: Plant flowers about the parsonage, and mingle with the children." This is just what the good chaplain did himself.

A Bit of Army Experience.

When Mr. Cartwright began his work as chaplain, his big sympathetic heart nearly burst as he saw his "boys", as he called them, trudging along in the dust or through the mud carrying their knapsacks, overcoats and heavy rifles. The chaplain would dismount and load down his horse with knapsacks, overcoats and accouterments, while he would march along on foot. After a few such experiences he discovered that his "boys" were taking advantage of his sympathy and he was compelled to change his tactics. However, he would at any time dismount and let a sick or disabled soldier ride his horse into camp.

Digging Sweet Potatoes.

At the G. A. R. campfires, Chaplain Cartwright delighted to tell this story on himself. Passing a potato field in the south the boys were over the fence in a jiffy and raking out the sweet tubers with their hands, the chaplain among them. While doing his stunt a tall man appeared on the scene and protested against the soldiers taking his potatoes. Said he to the chaplain: "It is too bad to take my potatoes; I am a minister of the gospel." "Are you a minister?" asked the chaplain. "Certainly, I am," was the reply. "So am I a minister of the gospel," said the chaplain, and proceeded to dig more sweet potatoes, leaving his brother minister in a quandary, and to reconcile as best he could, that sweet potatoes of a rebel preacher could be legally and morally confiscated to supply the need loyal chaplain, or of the union.

G. R. VANHORNE

The following article gives us a little more description of Barton Cartwright and also tells about the life of his son James, who later became Judge James H. Cartwright. This article is from the Republican Reporter of Mar. 7, 1974.

Cartwright grave plot in Riverview Cemetery

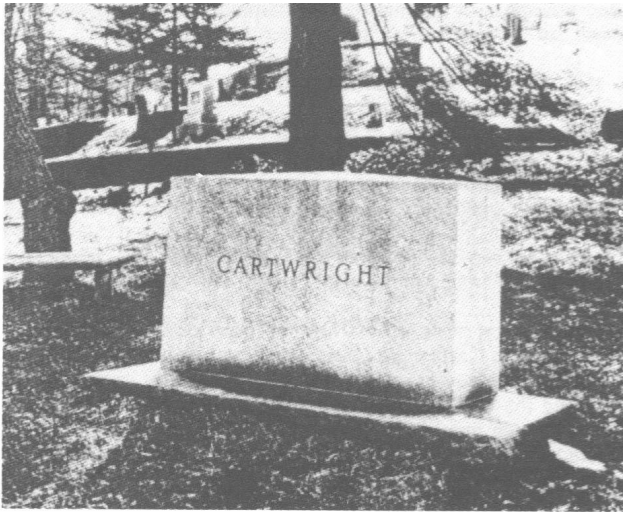
Editors note: A recent article by Kathryn Gelandner in the Rockford Register Star on "Citation", a world-famous pacing mare, owned back in 1908 by the late Judge James H. Cartwright, was brought to the attention of the Judge's son, Horace Cartwright, by Mrs. Catherine Spoor of Oregon.

Of Judge Cartwright's six children Horace is the only one still living. He now resides in Lynchburg, Virginia.

In conversation with Mrs. Spoor, Mrs. Gelandner suggested that, if possible, Horace Cartwright provide some information about his father, Judge James H. Cartwright to the local library for future reference material. James H. Cartwright was a member of the Illinois Supreme Court from 1895 until his death in 1924. The Judge also owned and operated Springvale Farm, located just north of Oregon, where track-worthy trotting and pacing horses were bred and developed.

Last week, Mrs. Gelandner received from Horace Cartwright a copy of an address given by the late Frank O. Lowden, governor of Illinois from 1917 to 1921.

The address was delivered at Memorial Services for Judge



Cartwright grave plot in Riverview Cemetery (Courtesy REPUBLICAN REPORTER Oregon, Illinois March 7, 1974 - Page 6)

Cartwright, held in the Supreme Court of Illinois during the October term, 1924. It describes the life, character and public services of Judge Cartwright and will be given by Mrs. Gelande to the Oregon Library as a part of its permanent collection.

This document is a valuable addition to Oregon's historical data since it gives insight into the life of one of Oregon's "distinguished sons" and was written by another one.

Excerpts from this document follow:

James Henry Cartwright was born in Iowa territory on December 1, 1842. He was the oldest of three sons in a family of six children. His forebears were among the early English settlers in this country. Barton Hall Cartwright, the father of James, married Jane Chloe Benedict, who was also a descendant from an old English family which had settled in New England. Barton Hall Cartwright was a Methodist preacher, and as such he had gone as a pioneer to the Iowa territory. When the family moved to Illinois, the year after James' birth, the elder Cartwright "rode the circuit" for the Methodist church throughout the northern part of this State. No one familiar with the history of Illinois can over-estimate the influence nor the hardships of the pioneer preachers of those early days. They were a rugged band. The frontier is always peopled by the young and hardy and adventurous. Without the restraint which an older civilization imposes, the pioneer preacher was often the single force which held the young community within bounds until it rightly found itself. He it was who established the early schools and who stood sponsor for all civilizing things. It was in the environment of the home of such a pioneer that James H. Cartwright spent his youth. With his father and family he lived first in LaFayette Grove, in Ogle County, and then in Prophets-town, Monmouth, Macomb and Centerville. About the year 1850 the family returned to Ogle County and Barton Hall Cartwright built a home at Mt. Morris. Here for the first time the log cabin gave way to the more modern board house.

At Mt. Morris Judge Cartwright was able to obtain something of a grammar school education, which enabled him to enter the Rock River Seminary, at that place. This seminary played an important part in the early history of Illinois. Many men who afterward became eminent in our public life were educated here. I recall an interesting incident in connection with this institution. Some years ago Shelby M. Cullom, then senator of the United States from Illinois and chairman of the important committee on Foreign Relations in the United States senate, was a guest at my home. One day we drove over to Mt. Morris, a distance of about twelve miles, to visit Robert Reynolds Hitt, who lived at Mt. Morris and who then represented that congressional district in the house of representatives and was chairman of the house committee on Foreign Affairs. Mr. Hitt, it will be remembered, began his public career by reporting

stenographically the famous Lincoln-Douglas debate. These two men, already well advanced in years, visited together the old Rock River Seminary and indulged in reminiscences of their early years, for both had received their education at this institution. It was an impressive scene, for though there were numberless more famous educational institutions in the land, I cannot learn that any of them ever furnished at the same time both chairman of the committees of the senate and the house which largely determine our relations with all the world.

Judge Cartwright was unable to finish his course at the Rock River Seminary but must have made satisfactory progress, for he was the first to be recommended by the faculty of that institution for a position as teacher in a nearby country school. He was obliged to accept because of shortage of funds.

When the Civil War broke out Judge Cartwright, then a boy of nineteen years, volunteered his services in behalf of the Union cause. His first regiment was the Sixty-ninth Illinois, in which he enlisted in April, 1862. His enlistment expired at the end of three months. Meanwhile his father had become a chaplain under Gen. Sherman, and the younger Cartwright, finding that his services were more urgently needed at home than in the army, did not re-enlist in the Sixty-ninth but returned to Mt. Morris to assume the responsibility of caring for his mother and younger brothers and sisters. However, he could not long remain out of the army, and in June, 1864, he enlisted again, this time in the One Hundred and Fortieth Illinois Infantry. Young Cartwright, twenty-two years of age, was elected captain of the company. His selection, however, though highly pleasing to the company, seemed to have been against the wishes of his superior officers, who would have preferred some more experienced man in his stead. Accordingly the matter was taken up with Gov. Yates, and young Cartwright was summoned to Springfield and asked to resign in order that someone of larger experience might be selected by the company in his stead. University of Michigan: he graduated in the spring of 1867, received his law degree and returned to his home in Illinois. The early years of his practice were at Oregon. A little later he became general attorney of the Chicago and Iowa Railroad Company, a new corporation which had planned to build a railroad from Aurora, through Oregon, to Forreston and west. He remained in this position until 1876, when the company went into the hands of a receiver. He then resumed the practice of law in Oregon, and from that time until 1888 was a master in chancery of the circuit court of Ogle County. In 1888 he was elected to a circuit judgeship, succeeding Judge Eustace. He was re-elected in 1891 and assigned to Appellate Court duty in the Second District, at Ottawa. In 1895 he was elected to the Supreme bench to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Justice Bailey, of Freeport, and was re-elected in 1897, 1906 and 1915. Last spring he was renominated by his party for the ensuing term without opposition, no nomination being made by the opposition party. If he had lived he therefore would have been elected by a practically unanimous vote.

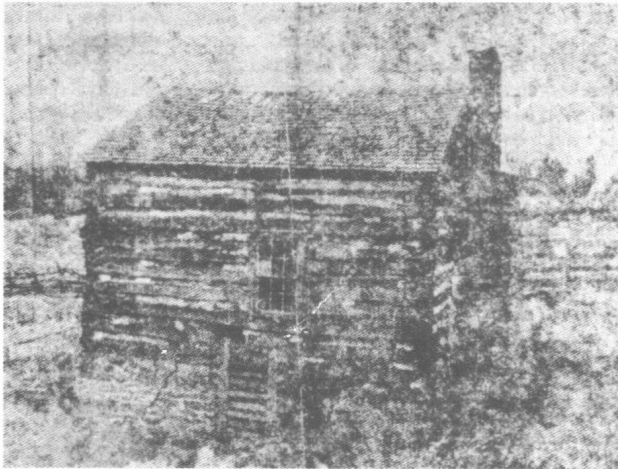
On November 26, 1873, Judge Cartwright was married to Hattie L. Holmes, of Oregon, Illinois. Six children were born of this marriage, five of whom survive him, two sons and three daughters.

Something should be said, I think, of Judge Cartwright's recreations. He had purchased a very attractive farm just north of Oregon, where he lived and spent his vacations in breeding and developing trotting and pacing horses. He was recognized as one of the leading authorities of America and the pedigrees of trotting horses. He developed many of great merit. One, particularly, should be mentioned, if for no other reason than its name, -Citation,- which for one year was an undefeated champion on the Grand Circuit. He loved his horses and enjoyed nothing more than being with them. During one of my last visits to him, but a few days before his death, I asked him how his horses were coming on. His face lighted up with pleasure, though he knew that the shadows were fast gathering, and he replied, "Jim (his son and namesake) tells me that we have some of the most promising youngsters we have had in years."

This memorial will be spread upon the records of this court. Nothing that I can say will add to the fame of James H. Cartwright, for his great opinions, running through more than one hundred and fifty volumes of the Reports of this tribunal, will disclose for all time his greatness as a judge.

(Information from 1976 History of Ogle County.)

Judge Ford and the Regulators, 1841-1842



Cabin of Gov. Thomas Ford which stood east of the Phelps' cabin



Thomas Ford

Thomas Ford is acknowledged to have been one of early Illinois' most productive governors, a good and possibly even a great one; in Milo Quaipe's words he was "among the foremost . . . in the order of their usefulness."¹ And as an interpreter of early Illinois Ford is without peer, either in terms of the comprehensiveness of his *History*, or the quality of his insights into the political and social character of frontier communities generally. Yet a potential biographer of Ford will find frustration in his task. The outlines of Ford's early life are reasonably well known as are the earliest years of his legal career.² And of course his governorship is quite well documented and evaluated, especially his involvement with the Mormons in Hancock County.³ But the reputation that led to Ford's nomination as state chief executive in the summer of 1842 was established while he was a prosecutor and most importantly, a judge, between 1830 and the time of his nomination, for the most part on circuits in the Military Tract and the Rock River Country. These were newly-settled or relatively unsettled areas, beyond reach of many

newspapers or other traditional forms of historical documentation. The circumstances of Ford's itinerant life and tragic death seem to have insured that whatever personal papers he might have accumulated have been dispersed. The investigator's view of Ford's activity during this crucial time has been therefore fleeting, deriving from occasional references in pioneer reminiscences, scattered newspapers, or accounts of especially notable local cases in county histories.⁴ To produce a full treatment of Ford's careers as prosecutor and judge would require a systematic perusal of the court record books and case files of the old Fifth, Sixth and Ninth Circuits, an enterprise yet to be undertaken by any researcher.

Specific cases in which Ford was involved were of course occasionally rather well and widely publicized. One of these was especially notorious, involving an incident of vigilantism in Ogle County, where Ford maintained his residence. Chronologically, at least, the Ogle County lynching case represents a culmination of Ford's judicial career, for its trial occurred less than a year before Ford's election as governor on August 1, 1842. Frontier mob violence is a subject of great importance in Ford's *History*; he recognized the vulnerability of established legal institutions in turbulent new communities without long-established patterns of legal and social constraint. Protestant missionaries might have looked upon the Western country as a field "white for the harvest," but to Ford the introduction of peace-keeping agencies was no less vital, and a great deal more urgent. He perceived the unorganized frontier as a social environment which could master those who immigrated to it. Though he was a Democrat, his years as a judge must have instilled in him a distinctly Whiggish concern for social order, if not indeed a moral authoritarianism.⁵ And of course dealing with organized violence was critical to Ford's career as governor, not only in Hancock County but in Massac County toward the end of his term. The perspective on frontier violence that is present in the *History* was certainly conditioned by Ford's very recent experiences with those two counties.

In his *History* Ford devoted four pages to the earlier Ogle County outbreak, as a prelude to some general reflections on violence, which in turn introduce an extended account of the early years of Mormonism in Illinois.⁶ What is somewhat striking about this is that Ford does not mention his own involvement as presiding judge in the rather strange trial of the Ogle County vigilantes; nor is his presence mentioned in most of the other bench and bar reminiscences that deal with the case, one of which is by John Dean Caton who was also involved in it, as counsel for the defense.⁷ Only Usher F. Linder, who sometimes got things all wrong, alludes to Ford's judicial involvement with mob murderers, but he erroneously has Ford sitting on the trial of the killers of Colonel George Davenport!⁸

In the light of the importance of Ford's favorable judicial reputation to his somewhat sudden elevation to the governorship, his preoccupation as a historian with frontier violence, and yet this omission of Ford's from his own *History*, and from similar accounts by fellow attorneys (all of whom, like Ford, were Democrats), it seems proper to raise some further questions about Thomas Ford, Ogle County vigilantism, and Illinois' political culture in the early 1840's, and in the pages that follow, to try to answer them as successfully as I can. 1) Is there reason to believe that Ford's situation on the bench was complicated by the occurrence of so acute a crisis as organized violence and vigilantism in his home county, where he had friends and interests of long standing? 2) How responsive was the Illinois circuit court system, of which Ford was the chief local representative, to organized violence in Ogle County in 1841-42? 3) Was Ford's involvement in the vigilante case an issue that was held against him in the gubernatorial election of 1842, less than a year after the events in Ogle County? 4) Could his diffidence about his involvement in the case, in his *History*, be construed a response to some public or private outrage about it?

Thomas Ford seems to have been present at the creation of Ogle County, both ceremonially and as a resident. Most authors are simply vague about the location of his home between 1830 and 1842; but there seems reason to argue that he felt that he had a particular stake in the Rock River Country. He is alleged to have suggested the name for Ogle County; as Sixth Circuit judge he issued the order for the first county election, to be