

Sinnissippi Farm

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This is a history of land in Ogle County, Illinois, purchased by Frank Orren Lowden and his wife and operation of that land. Part of this land became Lowden-Miller Forest of State of Illinois. This document is intended to be used as supplement by visitors to that Forest.

History

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Kathy Miller, librarian at Oregon Public Library

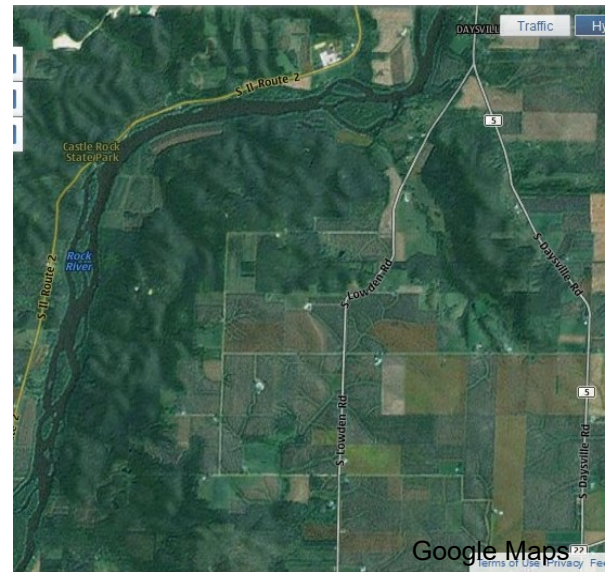
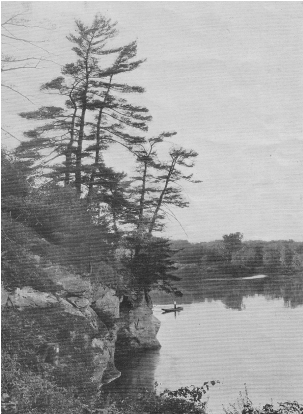
Blanch Schroeder, wife of "timber boss" Ted Schroeder

Don Leary and wife

Lowdens Arrive and Prosper

Mrs. Florence Pullman Lowden was a daughter of rail-road coach manufacturer George Pullman (very wealthy, died 1897, leaving her generous inheritance). May 15, 1899, in her diary she wrote: "[husband] Frank and I have been on a farm hunting expedition. We went ... to Oregon, Ill. to look at a very beautiful farm of 600 acres on the Rock River. We were most pleased and made an offer."¹

"The ... property, known as 'The Oaks', with its farm-house on a knoll



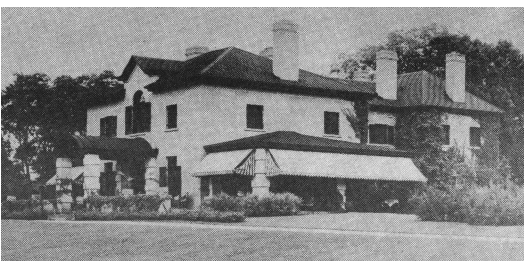
a few hundred feet from bluff known as

Squaw Rock at a bend of Rock River, seemed idyllic. ... The rolling land, fringed on north by the island-dotted river, was beautiful to look upon. Grassy meadows, cleared fields, and stands of hard-woods invited relaxation, as well as diversified farming and the raising of live-stock." Mrs. Lowden and husband (and future governor) Frank Orren Lowden (FOL) purchased the land on May 20, 1899 (the 576 acres cost \$27,500).¹ Later, they made additional 36 purchases (for \$265,000) of additional land: from 1900-1908: about 3124 acres, 1919: 700 acres, and 1943: 7 acres (about 4400 acres total)⁹. This tract extended to Rock River on north-west, east of Daysville road and south to Hays road^{A3}.

In and soon after an 1824 government survey of section on which Lowden's first purchase of land is located, this section was divided by purchase by individuals in tracts not exceeding 320 acres. 1840, first white man to live on land of first Lowden purchase was John Carr, a "squatter". (Oregon was founded in 1836.) 1842, James Moore purchased this land from U.S. government (when land in this area could be purchased at Land Office at Dixon). 1845, Luke Hemenway, pioneer from New Hampshire^{A1} purchased it and erected stone house, quarried from Plantz Quarry, near Lighthouse Church (this land is now owned by David Point); house was, large, square, of stone, with wooden shutters, to deflect arrows of indigenous people²². At one time Indigenous American burial mounds were on lawn by river in front of it. George Reed of Daysville recalled that after every heavy rain, Indigenous American artifacts could be found there. 1880, Hemenway's land was purchased by General Franklin C. Callender, then, 1885, Emma Asay, and, 1895, Mr. Kneeland.

At time of Lowden's 1899 and after purchases, this section contained 37 farms, of which 1250 acres were arable; balance, 3150 acres, being too sandy, rocky or hilly to farm.

Lowdens brought "The Gilded Age" to people of Oregon area, most of whom had experienced no more than clap-board houses and out-houses. Soon after purchase, with direction of architects Pond and Pond and landscape designer O.C. Simonds²⁷, both of Chicago, no expense was spared modernizing and enlarging house with telephones, gas, electricity, plumbing, laundry, furnace, and porches. Stables and barns were repaired and enlarged to hold carriage, ponies, horses, and cattle. Lawns were leveled and seeded, numerous trees removed or moved, and shrubs and flowers planted. In 1900 when Mrs. Lowden, two children, three nurses, a cook, a coach-man, and several maids arrived at the Oregon station in Mrs. Pullman's private car for a two-week stay at "The





house before Lowdens: "The Oaks"

Oaks" farm center, the size and complexity of the Lowden caravan out-ran imagination of villagers. Soon after, a new stock barn ("largest and finest" in Ogle County, at cost of \$10,000) was built.² Manager's house, guest-house, play house, office, and servants' houses were built. FOL's livestock partners assembled a herd



The Original House at "Sinnissippi" Farm

After modifications: note added portico and

and exercised general management over farm's operations.³ In 1901 8 short-horns won prizes, 25 miles of wire fence were erected and 8 miles of roads were constructed. In 1901 the *Oregon Reporter* stated that The Oaks farm center, with its Lowdens, servants, work-men and tenants, had become a "veritable village."³ It was living like English country nobility with American influence. In 1902 Mrs. Lowden changed name of property (originally Squaw Farm, then Point Bluff, then The Oaks) to Sinnissippi Farm (Sinnissippi was local indigenous people's word meaning rocky river or troubled waters).



The Rock River as Seen from the Lowdens' Front Porch at "Sinnissippi" Farm

Lowdens enlarged original house to limit permitted by its foundations, adding porches and servant's quarter, but still found it too small for their needs. Unwilling to relinquish the wide vista of river (Rock) and farm lands afforded by its front windows, they had no choice but to raze it and erect a larger dwelling on same site.²³ [Apparently, cost was no constraint.]

This Tudor style residence, designed by architects Pond and Pond, cost nearly \$100,000. Its 20 rooms were supplemented by a guest house, constructed several years before. Servants were employed to staff it. It assured hospitality of "Sinnissippi" to their many friends during years ahead.⁸ The Lowdens first occupied this "big house" in 1906.

Chicago Journal, October 6, 1906:

**“Lowden Home Now Complete
Substantial Residence Crowns Scenic Beauty of Sinnissippi
Farm.**

**Efficient Water Works System Gives Protection From Fire
and Supplies all the Buildings.’**

“Sinnissippi farm, the great country estate of Frank O. Lowden and which henceforth will be his permanent home, unless his duties may, in the future, take him to the national capital, has now reached that stage of its development which makes it the finest country seat in the west. Buildings costing a fortune have just been completed. Situated two miles from Oregon, it covers 4,000 acres, through which the Scenic Rock river flows for three and a half miles.”

“Some idea of its size may be imagined when it is known that there are twelve miles of roads on the farm and 15 miles of woven fence.”

The new house which has just been completed is a marvel of comfort and convenience. It contains twenty-one large rooms. In building it, special care was taken that an attractive view be obtained from every window, and the result is that from each room the river is plainly seen either up toward Oregon or down toward Dixon. The dining room is 25 by 38 feet and has at the north end a huge fireplace, so wide that regular cord wood only is used. There are eleven fireplaces in the house and one on the porch. It is said that Colonel Lowden now has the finest law and agricultural library in the country, and this is housed in a splendid room.”

Aside from the home of Colonel and Mrs. Lowden there is a guest house containing six bedrooms and a living room. Then there is a lodge for the housekeeper and the maids, a house for the superintendent and his family, and accommodations for engineers, foresters, coachmen, farm-hands and other employees on the estate.

Sinnissippi farm is a stock farm exclusively, only enough hay, oats and corn being raised to carry the stock. Some of the finest stock in the country is raised on the farm, and Sinnissippi wins prizes at the stock shows every year. They have a fancy herd of shorthorn cattle, a herd of fine thoroughbred Percheron horses, 150 of the finest Poland China hogs, and a flock of Shropshire sheep. Two years ago a lot of Angora goats were put on for the purpose of keeping the forest clear of underbrush.

Later at this house, FOL hosted meetings with *Chicago Daily News* owner and US Treasury Secretary Frank Knox, presidential candidates Alf Landon, Wendell Wilkie, and US President Herbert Hoover, among many. Two of Lowdens’ daughters and their son were married here. It served as social center for people living on SF. As time progressed, both Lowdens valued their life at SF and increasingly thought of it as home.⁴

During the early 1900’s three mansions were located in this region. 1893, Walter Heckman completed his, located near entrance of now Lowden State Park. 1928, Mr. Heckman sold 600 acres to Walter Strong, where Strong had constructed “Stronghold Castle”. Another estate in Ogle County at this time was located by Kennedy Hill near Byron: “Rock River Farms”, owned by Hanna McCormick.

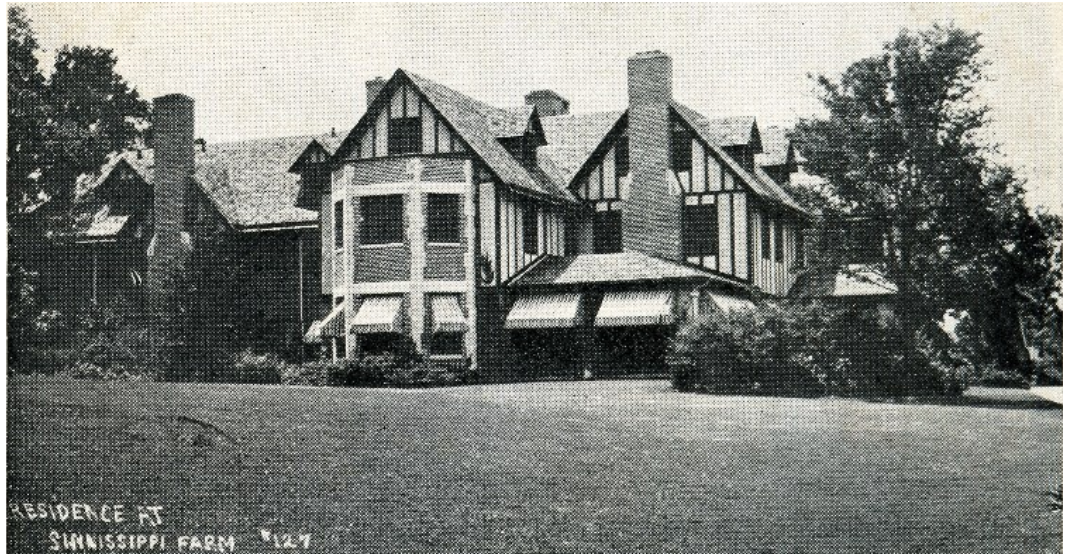
Pictures of house, out-side and in-side, follow.



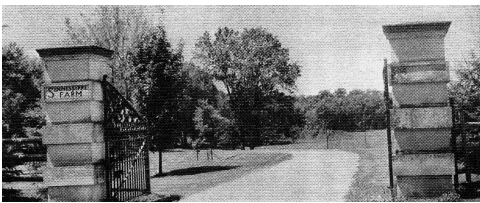
At far right is house front entrance. At right drive extends away in distance to Lowden road. Center of picture is like island between branches of drive. At far left drive continues on to coach house.



view from north-west



view from east



entrance



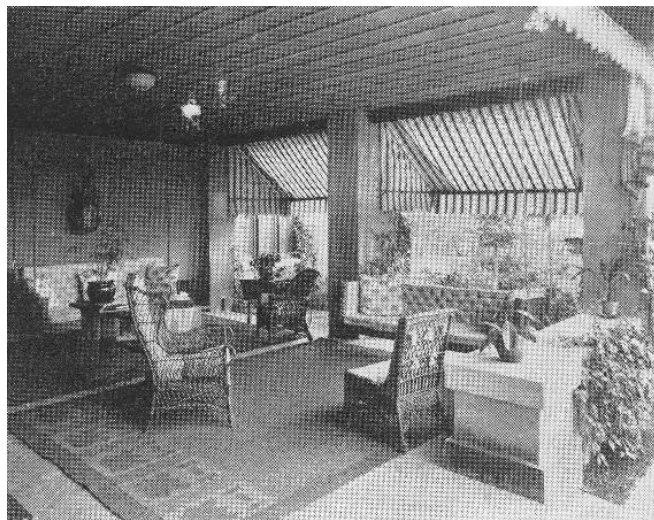
view from south-west



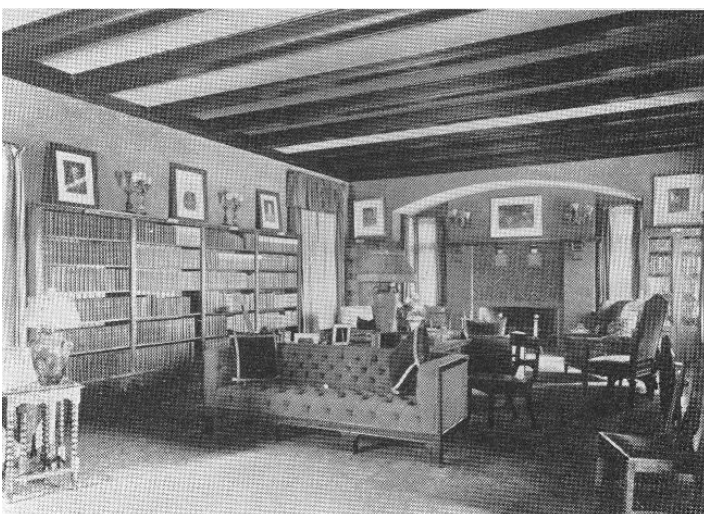
view from south-west



living



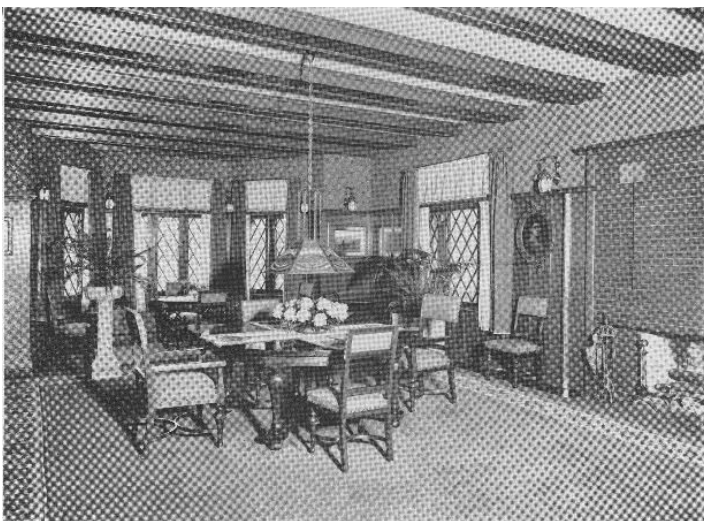
porch



library



Mr. & Mrs. Lowden



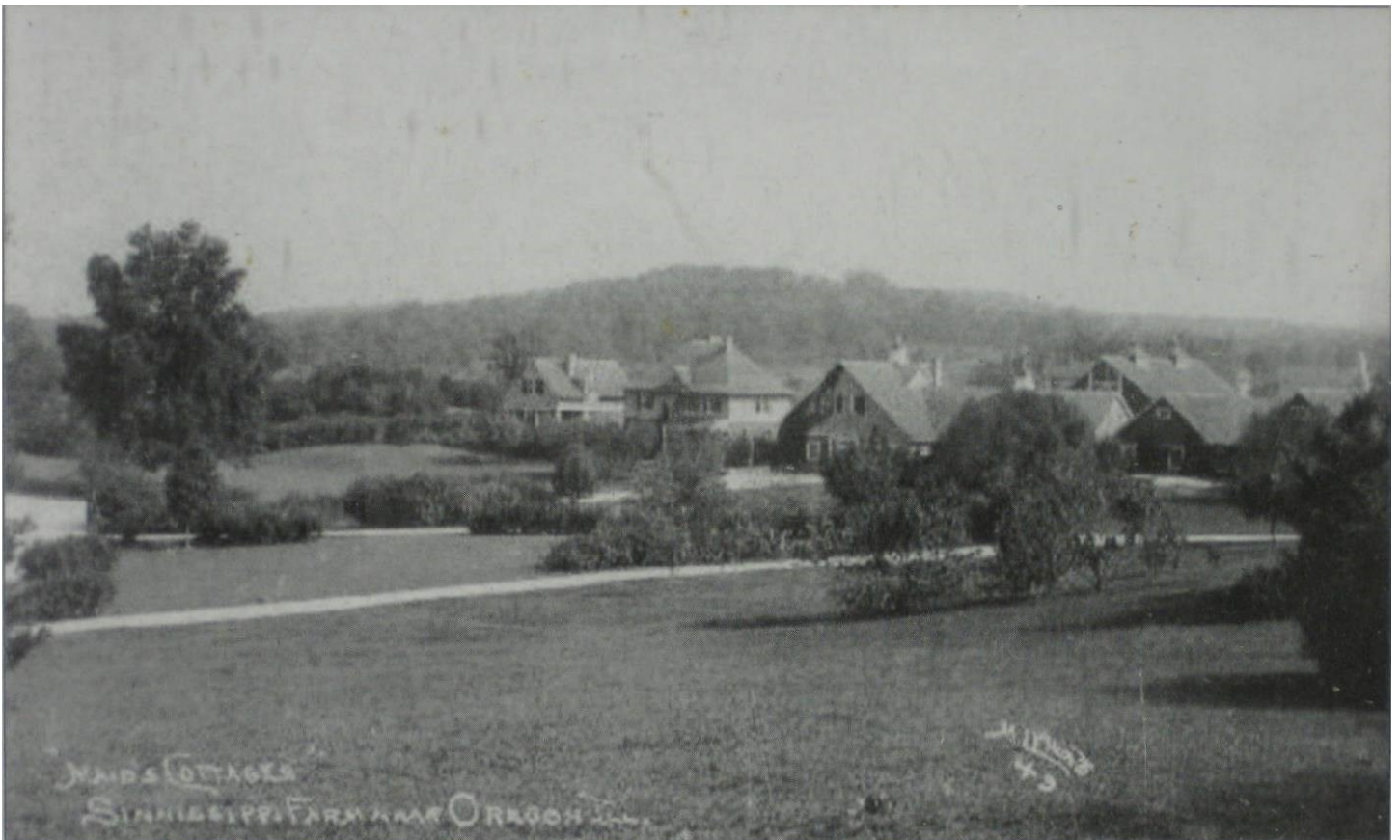
dining



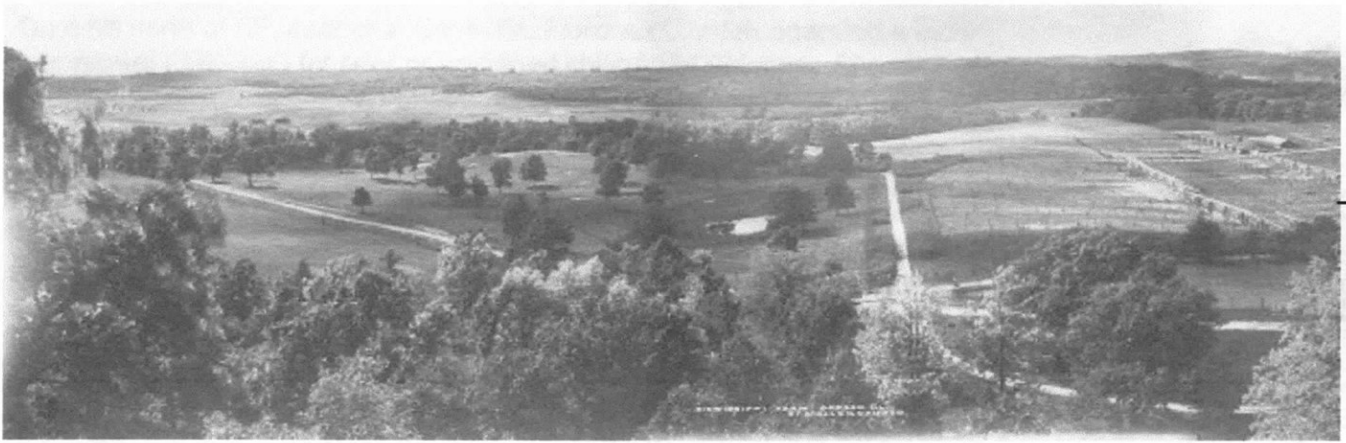
reception



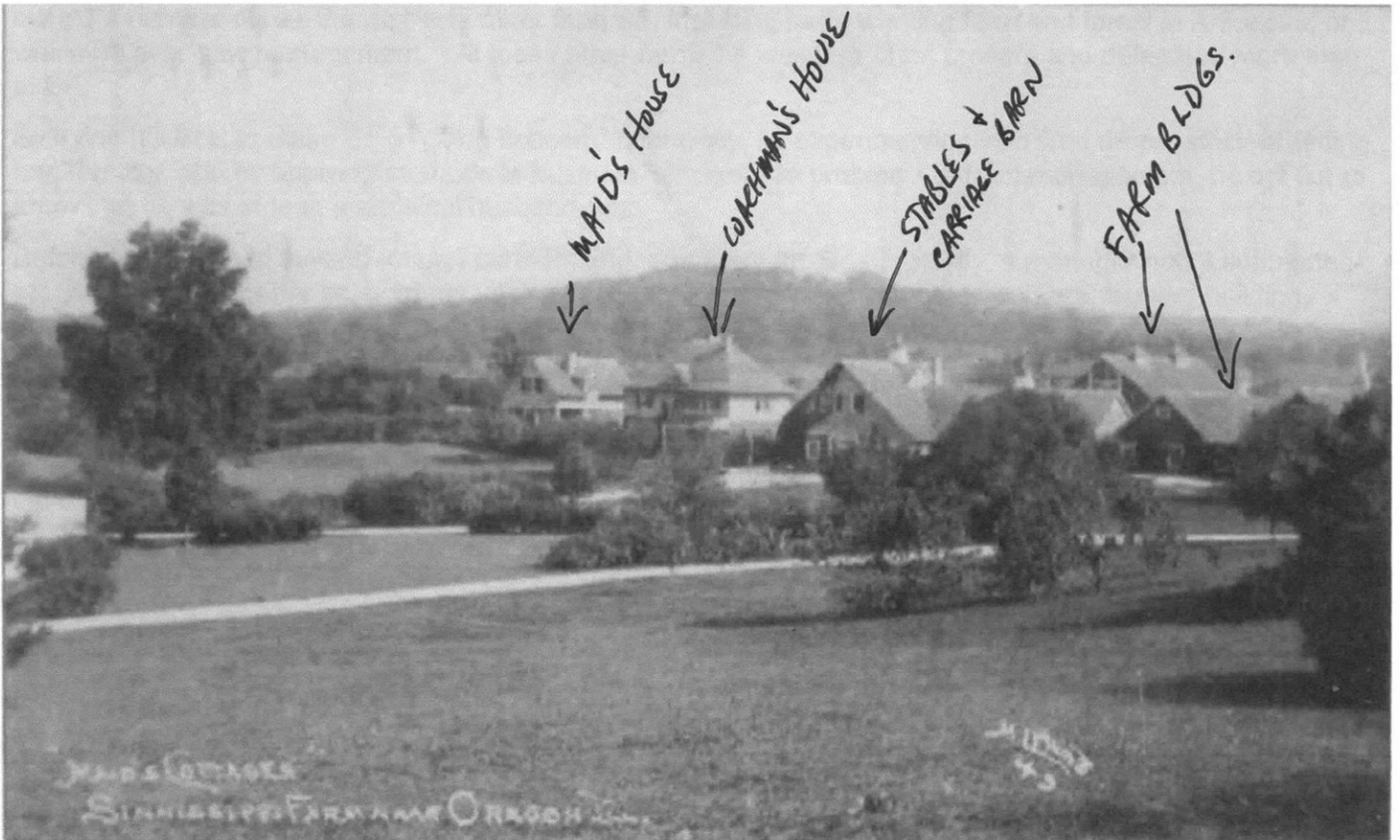
SF buildings, from Wolf Hill, 1904. On top of Wolf (Picnic) Hill was a gazebo. (image: above to left, below to right)



This photo, taken from Flagpole Hill adjacent to the Rock River, shows the maid's house, coachman's house (where stable-boys were also housed) and the stables and carriage barn as well as the roofs of a couple of farm buildings.



7 SF buildings, from Wolf Hill, 1904. On top of Wolf (Picnic) Hill was a gazebo. (image: above to left, below to right)



"maids' cottages"



guest cottage, near main house

"Between 1900 and 1919 'Sinnissippi' grew from less than six hundred to about forty-four hundred acres. 'Any time I get a little money'. Lowden remarked to Frederick Landis in 1907, 'I buy a farm adjoining mine somewhere and turn myself loose on it.' The expansion comprised some three dozen purchases of contiguous land, costing about \$265,000 in all. Considerably less than half of that was arable and not much of that was unusually fertile. Hundreds of acres were in meadows and pasture infested with hazel brush, a timbered fringe of river bank three or four miles long, several small wooded islands, and hills covered with hard-woods. Thin soil of slopes, as well as many of level stretches, invited grazing or silviculture rather than agriculture. Outcroppings of rock here and there along river rose high enough to be called bluffs.

"Shortly after acquiring property, Lowden began to supplement its extensive stands of timber with plantings and evergreens. Although he hoped to demonstrate in distant future that Illinois farmers could be hoped to profitably harvest merchantable timber annually, his initial purpose was to increase beauty of 'Sinnissippi' and experiment with conifers on sandy soil and steeply pitched hill-sides unfit for cultivation. He also wished to give evidence of his sincerity when urging reforestation in Cook and Ogle Counties and elsewhere in Illinois. He resolved to prove to his own and his neighbors satisfaction that tree planting retarded erosion and gullying, so costly to farmers with tilted land. Evergreens were scarce in Northern Illinois, but he believed they would thrive there as well as deciduous trees. During remainder of his life he urged State Legislature by tax-exempting land newly devoted to trees.

"Between 1902 and 1940, beginning on Flag-pole Hill near the farm-house and continuing there to other partially covered hills or brush covered fields, he had planted 130,000 seedlings. Over 70% of these were white pines, with larch, spruce, firs, and red, Scotch, Austrian and mountain pines composing balance. Finding many of these trees growing well in 1910, he thereafter increased yearly planting to over 50,000. Hard-woods and young evergreens soon covered about one-third of the entire estate, Before long his oldest seedlings required transplanting, and this work, in turn, necessitated thinning of hard-woods. As result he had much timber and fire-wood to sell. All this activity and his need to protect his pines against saw-flies and blister-rot started Lowden on his long search for a competent forester. Thus what had begun as an interesting experiment became by World-War I an important aspect of 'Sinnissippi's' business life. But Lowdens derived much pleasure from driving thru their ever-greens in early autumn and noting lighter-green needles marking amount of year's growth. By 1917 they could walk erect beneath pines on Flag-Pole Hill, although fifteen years earlier they had been scarcely a foot in height." ³⁴

"By 1917, about three-fourths of the total 'Sinnissippi' property was included in nine tenant holdings, varying in size from sixty to six hundred acres. Remaining 1200 acres, of which much was woodland, composed the Park ['composed of the residence and its surrounding grounds'] and home farm." ³⁵

Frank Orren Lowden and Family

Lowden was born in Sunrise Township, Minnesota, the son of Nancy Elizabeth (Breg) and Lorenzo Orren Lowden, a blacksmith. He lived in Iowa from the age of seven, on the farm in Hardin County, Iowa, in poverty. He attended school when chores on the family farm allowed. At age fifteen he began to teach in a one room school house in Hubbard, Iowa. After teaching five years, he entered the University of Iowa at twenty, graduating in 1885. He aspired to be a lawyer, but taught high school for a year while learning stenography. That skill got him a job in 1886 at the Dexter law firm in Chicago, and he took evening courses at the Union College of Law, completing the two year curriculum in one year, finishing as valedictorian in 1887. He was admitted to the bar the same year and practiced law in Chicago for about 20 years. His wife, Florence, was the daughter of George Pullman and namesake of the Hotel Florence. In 1899, he was professor of law at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

Political career

In 1900, Lowden declined the first assistant postmaster-generalship, offered him by President McKinley, whom he had supported. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1900 and 1904, and from 1904 to 1912 was a member of the Republican National Committee. He was also a member of the executive committee in 1904 and 1908.

Lowden was elected a U.S. Representative from Illinois in 1906 to fill the unexpired term of Robert R. Hitt, deceased. He was re-elected for succeeding terms until 1911, when he declined to run for another term.

From 1917 to 1921, he was the Governor of Illinois. While governor, he won wide notice for the major reorganization of state government he spearheaded. He introduced the budget system for state expenditure, thereby reducing the rate of taxation in spite of rising prices.

He was a strong supporter of the death penalty, and when in 1918 both houses of the Illinois General Assembly voted to abolish capital punishment, he vetoed the bill. He was energetic in marshalling the resources of his state in support of the United States' World War I effort.

In 1917, when the mayor of Chicago refused to interfere with a meeting of the People's Council, an organization accused of pro-Germanism, he ordered out the state troops to prevent the meeting. He favoured woman suffrage and the enforcement of the Volstead Act for war-time prohibition. He was opposed to the League of Nations without reservations, on the ground that it would create a super-state. He gained nationwide stature for his handling of the Chicago Race Riot of 1919 and a simultaneous transit strike in Chicago.

He was a leading candidate for the Republican nomination for president in 1920. His campaign was embarrassed by reports of profligate spending. His Missouri campaign manager gave out \$32,000 to promote his campaign, including \$2,500 (a laborer's annual wage) to at least two convention delegates.

Delegates at the Republican convention deadlocked over several ballots between Lowden and General Leonard Wood, resulting in party leaders meeting privately to determine a compromise candidate. Their choice, Warren G. Harding, went on to win the nomination.

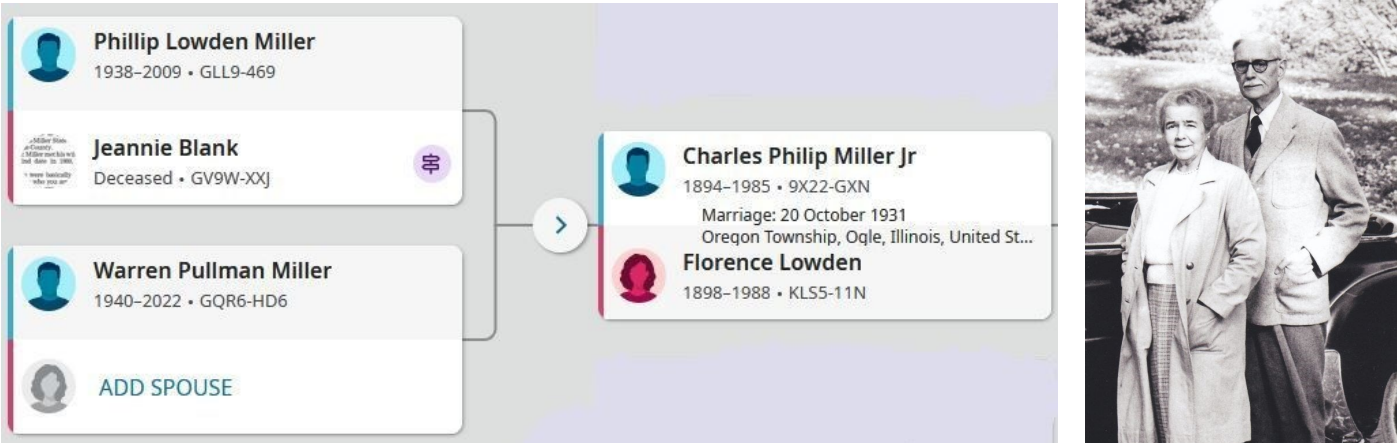
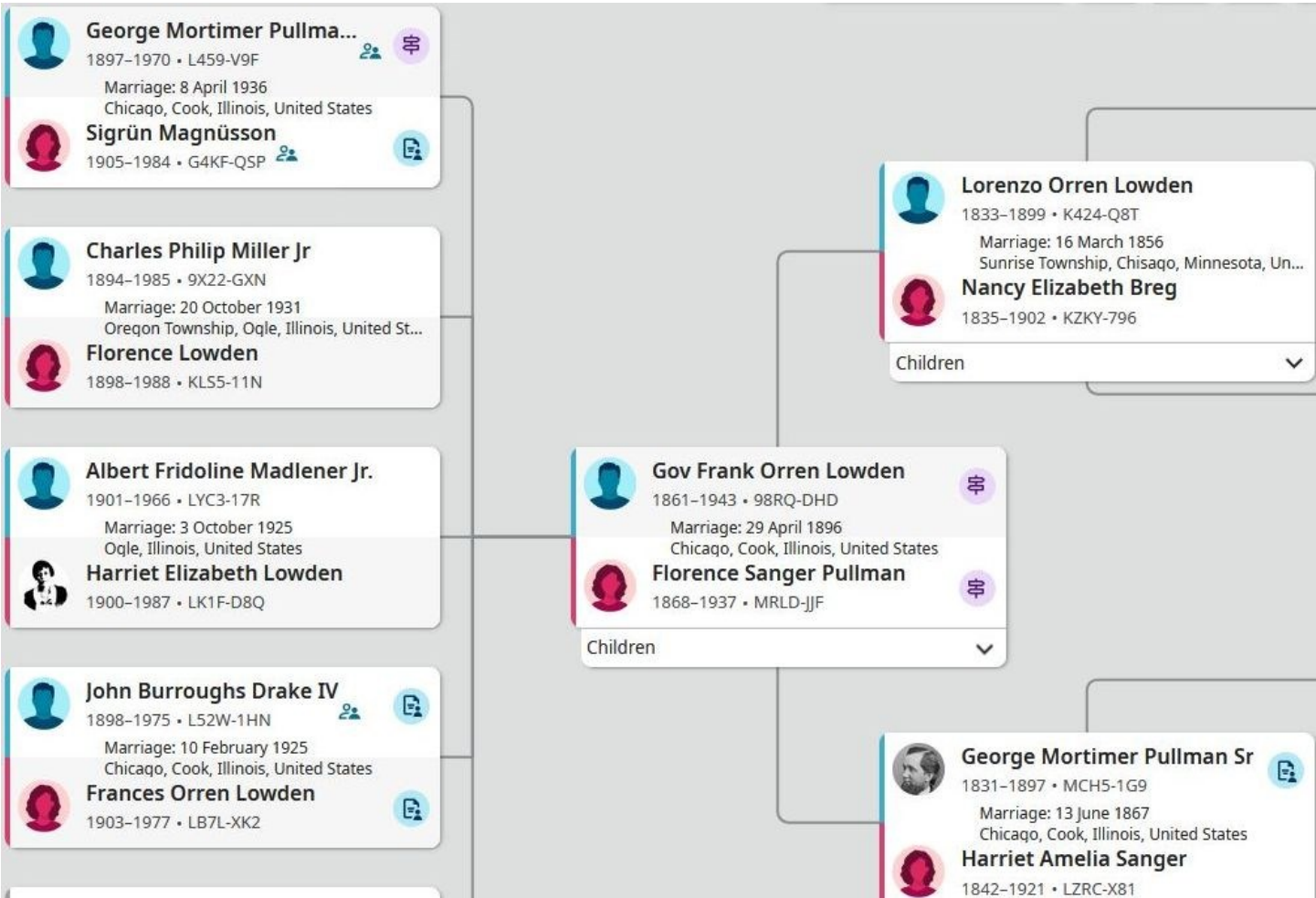
In the 1924 election, he declined the Republican nomination for vice president. In 1928, he again positioned himself to run for the party's nomination, but he was never much more than a minor threat to front runner Herbert Hoover, who went on to win the presidential nomination and the election.

Rail-road career

In 1933, Lowden was appointed to be one of three receivers for the bankrupt Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. He served in this capacity with co-receivers Joseph B. Fleming and James E. Gorman (the latter had been president of the railroad since 1917) until his death in 1943 in Tucson, Arizona. His remains are buried in Graceland Cemetery, Chicago.

Family

Frank Lowden married Florence Pullman (daughter of rail-car magnate George Pullman). They had 4 children: 1 son (George Mortimer Pullman, 1897-1971) and 3 daughters (Florence, 1898-1988; Harriet Elizabeth, 1900-1987; and Frances Orren, 1903-1977).



On a hill north of SF, near or in Daysville, Florence Lowden operated a summer retreat ("Hill-top") for poor or orphaned children of Chicago. She also presented children of SF with Christmas presents.

Farm Operation

FOL believed that .. with modern science... the intelligent farmer could double his acreage production and improve the quality of his live-stock.⁵ As politician, FOL urged maintenance and, if possible, increase in quality and extent of arable land by means of flood control, reforestation, forest reservations, crop diversification, and the greater use of fertilizers care-fully adapted to varying types of soil, the encouragement of the Mississippi Valley live-stock industry and of better breeds of live-stock ... the study and control of plant and animal diseases; the appropriation of more public money for agricultural experimentation and education; and the co-ordination of governmental and private efforts to bring science to the aid of husbandry. His visit to the rural areas of France, Germany, and Switzerland in 1909 opened his eyes to the meaning of truly intensive and efficient agriculture. ... With the hope that he might have some influence in halting the flight from the farms, he accepted membership on the National Committee of the Boy Scouts of America. ... He sought to demonstrate at SF that forestation was practicable on marginal lands in northern Illinois.⁶ No field of study so fascinated Lowden as the application of science to agriculture in all its aspects. Soil chemistry, the development of better seeds and hybrids, the elimination of insect pests, the cure of animal and plant diseases, the discovery of more efficient systems of field drainage and cultivation, the adaptation of electricity and gasoline motor-driven implements to agricultural uses, and the drive for hard-surface roads and improved rural schools all meant better days to the farmer. ... his gratification of a strong personal desire to indulge in agricultural experimentation on his own acres, with the hope that it might benefit farmers everywhere, supplied reason enough for his extensive farm land purchases, but he anticipated financial profit as well. He owned a number of real estate tracts other than SF, including large working farm and forest in Arkansas, of which he over-saw management.⁷ At these other farms he was less often present and delegated more than at SF.

By trying his best to make SF a "going concern" financially, by experimenting with field drops, stock-breeding, and forestry, and by applying methods of business efficiency to problems of farm management, he set out to show that he was indeed a practical husband-man.¹⁰

Before 1937, FOL had several (many) partners and managers for SF. Typically, a manager had 3 submanagers: for Park (manor house, gardens, orchard, quarters for servants and other workers, laundry building, coach barn, tennis court, etc.)¹¹, farms, and live-stock¹².

1900 : FOL soon began molding agriculture activities of SF. SF Live-stock Department included 60 or 70 Po-



FOL^{A2}, old horse: aging rapidly

He combined supervision with exercise by riding horse-back almost daily over some part of his property.¹³



at SF

land China and Berkshire hogs, about 100 Shropshire sheep, some 2 dozen work horses together with a few thoroughbred Percherons, and up to 500 Angora goats assigned job of clearing meadows of hazel brush, but was known principally for its Scotch Shorthorns (for beef production only). Lowden's interest in these cattle remained at a high pitch for nearly ten years. Few awards

during his life-time brought him greater satisfaction than the blue ribbons won by his bulls.¹³

1903-06: Production of chickens and eggs was conducted, with large investment and resultant large production: about 25,000 chickens producing 200 dozen eggs per day. However, available market for chickens and eggs could not absorb such large production, so production was completely abandoned.¹³

1910 : FOL discontinued production of Percherons and Shropshires, retaining some Shorthorns.¹⁴



Col. Lowden takes pride in making his farm pay. The flat lines of horizon, land, and woods are repeated by cattle, crops, and hawthorns

1912-13 : Oregon had creamery, operating at less than full capacity. FOL, becoming aware of growing market for milk convinced him-self that he should adopt milk production. He gradually assembled a mixed herd of Holsteins, Guernseys, Jerseys, and milk-strain Short-horns. After a 2

month tour of dairy farms and co-operative creameries in Netherlands, France, and England, he came back singing praise of European methods and Holstein-Friesian cattle. After care-fully watching milk out-put of each of his cows for 2 years and judging between the several breeds in his mixed herd from stand-points of quantity and quality of milk, their sturdiness, intake of food, and other traits, he decided that Holstein-Friesians were making best over-all record. Therefore, in 1917 he disposed of his other bovines*.¹⁵ SF had creamery.

By 1917 about 3/4 of total SF was included in 9 tenant holdings, varying in size from 60 to 600 acres (3300 acres total), each under 1 of 3 carefully detailed agreements. The remaining 1200 acres, of which much was wood-land, was used for Park and home farm.^{14,16}

1917: Judson T Williams became partner of FOL in management of farms, for working Holsteins and producing crops.¹⁶ FOL contributed \$100,000 to this expansion. FOL joined Holstein-Friesian Association of America.¹⁵

1918: SF's arable land yielded about 25,000 bushels of grains and nearly 225 bovines yielding milk sales of nearly \$2,000/month.¹⁸

But, tuberculosis among animals, falling market prices and other operational problems led, in 1921, to dissolution of partnership.¹⁷ In that year, FOL hired Lee M Gentry as farm manager, who remained in that position for many years and provided effective professionalism. By 1924 FOL covenanted with his tenants such that in exchange for furnishing land, buildings and other improvements, and half seeds, livestock, and most operational expenses, he received half of each lessee's gross income from farming. Average size of a tenancy was about 200 acres, divided nearly equally between arable land and grass pasture. In time, SF would have maximum 11 tenant farms, later, as result of mechanization, amalgamated to 5.



*First successful permanent introduction of Holstein-Friesland cattle to U.S. was in 1861. In 1885 was founded Holstein-Friesian Association of America. In 1892, after about 8800 had been imported, "foot and mouth" disease occurred in Europe, causing importation to cease.

1920s : Although price of milk at Oregon creamery continued to be low, cattle paid their way. Increasing publicity accorded to Lowden's herd as it broke local and state milk production and butter fat records and won awards.¹⁹ 1921: FOL was elected president of Holstein-Friesian Association of America.¹⁹ By 1924 he was also associated with the National Dairy Council and the National Dairy Federation.²⁰

1929-: The nation-wide depression brought serious economic problems to the Lowdens and their children.²¹

1948: A barn on Farm 9, operated by Wayne Canfield family, burned in 1947?. Replacing it was a "dream barn".²⁴ Later, Don Leary famed this plot.

Land Conservation and SF Forest

1902-15 : In a 1902 speech, FOL spoke of value of crop rotation, nitrogenous cover-crops, soil analyses, carefully selected fertilizers, scientific stock-breeding and forecast that metrology would become service to farmers. FOL publically urged that soil be protected from erosion and over-cropping. Ardently embracing proper land use and strongly believing in reforestation as a way to retard soil erosion, he initiated on land of SF that was not good for agriculture reforestation program. Between 1902 and 1910, beginning on Flag Pole Hill near



his manor house and continuing from there to other partially timbered hills or brush-covered fields, he had planted nearly 130,000 seedlings. As of 1906 these consisted of about 60 varieties of deciduous trees, 12 of coniferous trees, 62 of shrubs, and 25 of other hardy plants. Of conifers planted, over 70% were white pine, remainder larch, spruce, fir, red pine, scotch pine, Austrian pine, mountain pine. As much of this land was sandy*, deciduous trees did poorly, but coniferous trees did well, so beginning 1910 FOL increased yearly plantings to over 50,000. Hard-woods and young evergreens soon covered about 1/3 of SF.¹⁰ White pines planted here are believed to be first in current geological era in Illinois. (interrupted by WWs 1 & 2) were planted. Cumulatively and in total over half million trees were planted, some by FOL himself. "I like to think of this beautiful and fertile spot as the place where my children and my children's children and their children after them will gather long after I have become dust, and in the shade of old trees my own hand had planted."⁴



* Across Rock river is a large silica mining operation.

1914-15: FOL leased (for nominal cost) of all of his land to State of Illinois (administered by Game and Fish Department) for prohibition of fishing and hunting. (Adjacent land of Henry Dixon (south along river) was similarly covenanted.) Some-time before 1957 this lease lapsed.

After Christmas tree production began, damage to young trees from deer was conscioned, and hunting prohibition was altered to allow and promote hunting of deer,



Lowden daughters Florence and Harriet, who were active at SF, were proud of their top-rated Holstein dairy herds, and of being joint recipients of the first Friend of the Soil and Water Con-



servation District award for out-standing service in areas of conservation, education and soil and wood-land management in Ogle County.²⁷



beaver work



Later Years

1937: Florence Pullman Lowden died at SF, willing FOL, with stipulation that upon his death this property pass to their children, a \$4.5 million estate that included SF, Castle Rest (Pullman's estate in New York), Florenden (Pullman's large farm in Arkansas) and the other Pullman real estate in Washington, Memphis, and Sioux City. These added to extensive real-estate previously owned by FOL. FOL (age 76) was aging and his health was declining, such that he was no longer able to manage SF effectively. Under FOL's guidance the children formed themselves into a Sinnissippi Farm Corporation, to which was transferred SF, and from which he rented the property. In 1937 deed passing SF land to this corporation, tenant farms were identified, presumably by current tenant as 1) Sinnissippi, 2) McKenney, 3,4) -, 5) Stevens, 6) Adams, 7) Bishop, 8) Edmonds, 9) Ray, 10) Farwell, 11) March, 11) - . 1938 : FOL, declining in health, knew that he needed assistance managing his forest. He invited new forestry department at University of Illinois to conduct research on his developing forest in exchange for basic forest management and advice. Resident forester (Howard Fox) was paid equally by family Sinnissippi Forest operation and University of Illinois. This arrangement persisted until 1976 and included harvesting trees and selling cut wood. Today, nearly 80 percent of all data on Illinois hardwood forest growth has been developed at Sinnissippi.

1940: Annual "Masque" festival was held at SF, organized by Friends of Our Native Land-scape (formed for conservation and enjoyment of natural scenery and fostering planting of flower gardens and conservation of bird and animal life).²⁸

1940: FOL extended a cost free long term lease of 90 acres of SF to Boy Scouts of America, Black-Hawk Council, creating Camp Lowden.

1943: FOL (born 1861) died, aged 71, in Tucson, Arizona (Lowdens' winter home). His heir donated 90 acres (above location) to Boy Scouts, which later, with grant money, purchased additional 112 acres to south (outside SF), for total 202 acres.

1941-45: First area of trees for Christmas sale was planted, consisting of Norway-spruce, white-spruce, Douglas-fir, Colorado-blue-spruce and Fraser-fir. More plantings followed, adding red-pine and jack-pine.

1947: A saw-mill was built and began operation, producing 220,000 board-feet per year. Equipment was in place for treating posts with pentachlorophenol.²⁶ Some nonsawn wood was sold for fire fuel.

1948 : Pine trees planted in early 1940s required thinning, and selling trees for Christmas began as an experiment in 1948. That year forester Howard Fox sold almost 500 Christmas trees to Ogle County residents. The family's Sinnissippi Forest Christmas Tree (SFCT) business grew steadily and soon included a wholesale operation that sold trees throughout Northern Illinois as well as to Iowa and –

one year – to western Canada. In 1955, Sinnissippi Forest was designated the first Illinois Tree Farm. Over the years SFCT sold more than a third of a million Christmas trees. Until 1984 trees were sold in sawmill parking lot. That year first choose-and-cut field was opened; two years later a new building, on Lowden Road, housed sale of wreaths, greens, roping, tree stands and a gift shop. Horse-drawn wagon rides through the tree fields were popular after 1990; visits from Santa Claus and refreshments also contributed to the festive atmosphere.³⁰

1949: Harriet Lowden Madlener (daughter of FOL) and husband had construction of house near site of old "big house". As of 2012 this house was owned by their grandson Edward Culbertson (but sold in 2019). Florence Lowden Miller and husband resided in near-by old coach-man's house. The old "big house" was "huge". not insulated, was heated with several boilers and contained many fire-places. During winter house, even if not occupied, needed to be heated to prevent pipes from freezing. Also. Its design intended attendance by



many servants. It was expensive to operate. Anecdotally, a fire burned some of it. In 1947, 41 years after it was first occupied, the Lowden's children (and heirs) contracted of have "old house" razed. In 1949, after Lowden daughters Harriet and Florence removed what they wanted, remaining items were auctioned, then house was demolished.

Warren Miller:

"Of the four Lowden children two – my uncle G.M.P. ("Pully") Lowden and my youngest aunt, Frances, no longer had much direct contact with Sinnissippi, and ,in fact, sold their inherited interest in Sinnissippi to mother and my aunt in the 1940s. My uncle lived in Southern California, and my aunt on the East Coast. We Millers lived in Chicago (dad [Phillip] was professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, so we lived in Hyde Park). My other aunt, Harriet Madlener, and her husband Albert also lived at the time in Chicago but apparently already had an interest in making Sinnissippi their home. However the "big house" was too big and no longer manageable: for example, I remember playing inside the basement furnaces (there were three) used to heat the house, and I recollect being told that in the winter when the house was in full use, it took a full cord of wood a day to heat it. Don't know whether that's entirely accurate, but it does indicate the monumental problem of staffing and maintaining the house. Staffing it was another major challenge. When built, there clearly was an assumption that domestic help would always be plentiful, which was no longer true after the war.

"But I suspect that the main reason was that my parents and the Madleners could not agree on joint use of the house, especially as my aunt and uncle wanted Sinnissippi as their permanent home while mother and dad wanted only a weekend and vacation home. So the Lowden house was demolished, the Madleners built a large stone house complete with swimming pool and pool house east of the big house, and my parents remodeled the coachman's house for us. (They had plans drawn up to build a new house on Flag-pole Hill, but gave that idea up because of the cost.)

"I have to add that I have extremely fond memories of being at Sinnissippi, in and around our house, and am eternally grateful that the new house was never built. I often say that I was born and raised in Chicago, but grew up at Sinnissippi: Howard Fox was my scoutmaster; as a kid I palled around with (read bothered) the farmhands in the dairy barn and, when I was old enough, worked during summer vacations at the farm: baling hay, filling silos, etc. Had our house not been so close to the action, I'm not sure any of this would



Madlener house

have happened."

1959: Sinnissippi Farms Inc. was dissolved. Real estate owned by it was divided between Lowdens' children Mrs. Harriet Lowden Madlener and Mrs. Florence Lowden Miller; brother Pullman Lowden and sister Frances Lowden Drake sold their shares to these sisters. Mrs. Miller retained right to names *Upland Farms Inc* and *Sinnissippi Forest* and operation of saw mill and sale of its products. Mrs. Madlener's share, named *Sinnissippi Farms* and *Sinnissippi Timber*, sold timber to *Sinnissippi Forest* operation.

About 1960: Howard Fox's daughter Debra (as recalled later): "You could go in there [forest] and hear a creek babble and trees rustle and could see an occasional deer. It was very tranquil and soothing. The solitude was wonderful. It was a wonderful place to grow up."³¹

1970s : Tenants of Sinnissippi Farms were Bill Herwig, Harlan Hughes and Tim Leary, while tenants of Upland Farms were John Leary, Don Leary and Wayne Canfield.

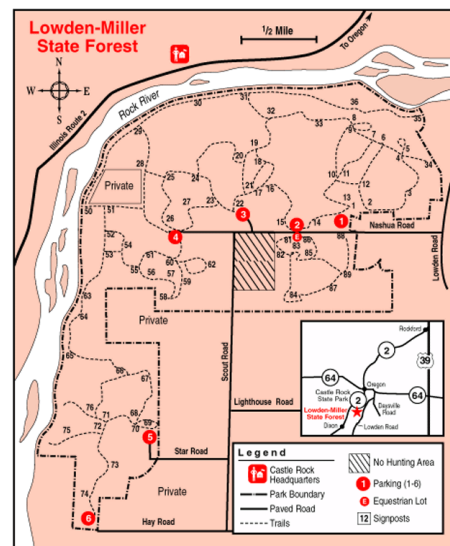
At time in here: Warren Miller sold some land bordering river, on which several houses were built. Also, Madlener daughter Nancy Madlener Culbertson sold some of her land, on which many houses were built. At times unknown to me, all agricultural land belonging to Harriet and Florence Lowden was sold, some to tenants.

1976: Howard Fox retired. Dave Stenger became forester for *Sinnissippi Forests*.

1978 : Larger saw mill was built near old saw mill, producing 250,000 board-feet per year, Some timber was from Sinnissippi Forest and some was purchased elsewhere.

1987 : As harvestable local trees had been processed, saw mill was no longer profitable, and operations ceased.

1992-3 : Phillip Lowden Miller and brother Warren (grandsons of FOL), heirs to Upland Farms and Sinnissippi Farms, and their wives, to keep area actively managed forest and preserve its beauty for future generations, sold 2291 acres (927 hectares) to State Illinois. Most of this land was, and is, not cropable. Tract purchased by State Illinois consists of land north of Nashau road, which had been owned by Warren (1992), and land south of Nashau road, which had been owned by Phillip (1993). At that time some public question arose regarding removing this land from county taxation (as land was poor for agriculture, taxes were low). Warren Miller publicly stated "I firmly believe that the anticipated increased use of the forest will be an economic boost for Oregon area businesses. Increased public use equals increased local spending"³² This land, named Lowden-



to right:

building formerly used for Christmas-tree-purchasers to warm themselves and buy accessories

Miller State Forest, contains 1490 acres of hard-woods, 461 acres of pine, 190 acres planted for Christmas trees, 20 acres planted experimentally, 136 acres of wet-lands, and roads and wild-life areas.

2009 : SFCT discontinued operation. After years of good sales, starting 2002 they declined. Owner Warren Miller cited declining sales and retirement of site's manager as the key factors in his decision.³⁰

However. Christmas tree sales were reinitiated by Conroy family in conjunction of Oregon FFA (sinnissippitrees.com/index.html)

2012 : Buildings near site of now gone "big house" which originally contained stables, coaches, grooms and livery attendants had been largely reconstructed (into condominiums?); it is owned by Conroys. Remaining



land in area of Lowden-Miller Forest owned by Warren Miller was bought by State Illinois and annexed to Lowden-Miller Forest (above).

SOME REFOLEC- TIONS ABOUT CHANGES WHICH OCCURRED OVER MANY YEARS



Dairy farming in area has diminished.³³

Former tenant farms are no longer owned by Lowdens' descendants and not operated centrally.

Blanch Schroeder, wife of "timber boss" and saw-mill operator Ted Schroeder, lived and worked at Sinnissippi Forest from about 1948-1968 (spring and autumn). At age 94,





Addendum: Frank O. Lowden's Accomplishments

FOL's accomplishments include: Doctor of Jurisprudence (Union College of Law, Chicago), professor of law (Northwestern University, Evanston, Il), , success-full attorney and business owner and investor, member of Republican National Committee (1904-12), member of RN Executive Committee (1904, 1908), US Representative from Illinois, 13th Illinois district (northwest Illinois) (1906-1911), Governor of Illinois (1917-1921), candidate for US Presidential nomination (1920,1928), president of Holstein-Friesian Association of America (1921-30). Named in his honor: Lowden Boy Scout Camp, Lowden Illinois State Park, Lowden-Miller Illinois State Forest, 2 halls: at Northwestern University Chicago campus and Northern Illinois University DeKalb, Illinois.

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7: p.211-21 8: p.224 9: p.227 10: p.228 11: p.230 12: p.232
13: p.233 14: p.234-5 15: p.237 16: p.238-39 17: p.497 34: p.227-8
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22: *Story of Oregon*, community project, 1986, p.51, taken from manuscript *Sinnissippi Farm, History to 1899*, U.G. Willis. Available only at *Chicago History Museum* and *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum*.

Oregon Republican Reporter, 24: 12/23/48, 26: 11/28/1946

25: *Ogle County Life*, 6/1/1987

28: unidentified news-paper clipping

30: *Ogle County News*, 7/22/2009

31: *Chicago Tribune*, 5/12/1992

32: *Rock River Register Star*, 4/15/1992

33: Don Leary

Pictures

Pre-Lowden house "The Oaks": ORR, 10/1/1986

After modifications: LoI, p.50-51

Entrance gate: *Images of America: Oregon, Illinois*, Keith Call, Arcadia, 2005

Rock River from Lowdens' front porch: LoI, p.454-455

Guest house: *Country Life*, 1913

Sinnissippi manor house, 1911: s, e & w views from files of Otto Dick; entrance: SoL

Rooms of manor house, *Country Homes*, about 1920

Lowdens on couch: cover, *Time* magazine, Nov. 28, 1927

Panorama, 1904: LoI, p.454-455

Cottages: IoAO

F. Lowden on horse: from photo on file at Ogle County Historical Society

Goats: from files of Otto Dick

Herding domestic bovines: *Country Life in America*, 4/1913

Bovine, face to face: *Scientific American*, 7/2009, p.59

Lowden-Miller Forest: upper right: State Illinois Department Natural Resources visitor guide on internet:
www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/Lowdenmi.htm

3 others: Henry Tideman

Saw-mill and tree farm: from files of Otto Dick

Notes

27: IoAO. "O.C. Simonds also surveyed and arranged Graceland Cemetery in Chicago, a grave-yard for that city's prominent dead." Both Frank O. Lowden and Florence Pullman Lowden were buried there.

25: OCLife, 6/1/1987