another, and $6,200 for a third piece, a total of $91,200.00. This is a lot of money invested in a block of land now used for a parking site.

Few cities in the country has as beautiful a natural park as our Big Hill Memorial Park. Situated four miles north of town on the top of Big Hill overlooking Rock River, it gives a wide view of the surrounding country. In clear weather Janesville can be seen in the distance.

**Park Kept in Natural State**

The park has been kept in its natural state of wooded beauty. Picnic spots have been installed in many places throughout the area with stoves and fuel supplied. A wide open space in the south end is furnished with playground equipment for the children. In the north end a lovely shelter house has been erected with fireplaces and tables for picnic parties. A lofty steel ski slide tops the highest hill. Ski experts come here from all over the United States to participate in the annual tournaments.

All the improvements in the park such as road building and recreational facilities have been done by W.P.A. labor.

The park now contains 86 acres. Many years ago Professor J. A. Blaisdell of Beloit college bought ten acres of land on the hill, as he was entranced by the beauty of the location. He opened it up for the free use of the public.

In October, 1925, a group of public spirited citizens, headed by the late W. J. Baker, got together and decided that more of this area ought to be acquired for the public. They formed a committee, consisting of W. J. Baker, Dr. Virgil Crone, A. S. Koto, Dr. T. W. Leeson, C. A. Still, Meinick Skogstad, E. G. Fifield and H. D. Moseley. They secured an option on 76 acres of land from the owner, Mr. Fairbert, for $15,000 and then started a campaign to secure subscriptions for the purchase price. The response was quick, some subscriptions even coming from old time citizens, now living in distant places. They succeed in raising $13,334.92 and expenses. The balance of the price, $1,665.08, was paid by the city, and on March 11, 1926, the deal was closed and the city received a deed for the property.

Shortly thereafter President James A. Blaisdell of Claremont, California, deeded to the city as a free gift, the ten acres bought by his father, Professor Blaisdell, many years ago, thus making the total acreage of the park 86 acres.

**Chapter 25**

Truly a valuable possession for the city and surrounding community, Beloit should be proud of the fact that it is the headquarters for the Brown Swiss Breeders' association for the whole United States. It is located in a handsome building in Pleasant st., on the river bank, formerly occupied by the Lipman Refrigerator company. Ira Inman has been secretary of the association for the past 30 years. All the pedigree records of the Brown Swiss breed of cattle are kept in this office.

In the early seventies Beloit had a Fair association. I think it was called the Southern Wisconsin Fair, but I am not quite sure. The fair grounds were located in an open field north of town, exactly where the Fairbanks plant is now. It had a one mile race track and a big amphitheater. Trotting races were held each day of the fair, and the purses offered were quite liberal. Jockeys in those days drove high wheel "sulkies" and sat close up, almost touching the horses, straddling their rumps.

**President Hayes Visited Fair**

Then there were stables, stalls, and pens where the farmers displayed their fine horses, pedigreed livestock, pigs, sheep and chickens, where blue ribbons and other premiums were awarded. In another building was the horticultural and floral display, sewing machines, etc., and the women displayed their quilts, fine needle work, bread, cakes, pies and canned fruits and jellies. Out doors there were displays of agricultural machinery, fanning mills and wind-
mills. Our company showed plows, cultivators and harrows. It was a pretty good fair.

In 1878 President Rutherford B. Hayes was on a tour of the west and was in Chicago when the fair was in progress. They sent him an invitation to come and visit Beloit, and he came. He was driven to the fairgrounds and served a dinner in the eating tent on the usual type of table made of pine boards on top of trestles. Then he addressed the crowd. I remember he referred to the hard times or depression which the country had been passing through since the panic of 1873. He said he saw signs of a revival of prosperity on the horizon. When he returned to the North Western depot to take the train back to Chicago, there was a great crowd there to see the President. I was there too. My father was carrying my little one year old baby sister, and when he passed the President spoke and smiled at the baby and kissed her. Immediately everybody began to exclaim, “The President kissed your baby.” All thought it was quite an event. Probably no other baby in Beloit has ever been kissed by a President either before or since.

Fair Dies Natural Death

The fair after a few years died a natural death, and in 1882 the wagon works was built on the site. One of the original stone wagon works buildings is still there, a part of the Fairbanks plant.

I might here mention that in the nineties when bicycles were all the go, George Cram built a quarter mile race course on the flats just west of the Turtle Creek bridge, where all the racers tried their speed.

Later a fair was organized and held across the line, on the Roscoe road, but this too is a thing of the past.

In 1911 a big pageant was held in Beloit. I believe it was to celebrate our seventy-fifth anniversary. It was quite an elaborate affair, and was held in the frog pond area north of the city where the Morse Hills now are. The pageant was written by Professor Wright to depict the early history of Beloit. It was considered a big success at the time, and everybody who wanted to be in it was given a part.

Where Are the ‘Hibernians’?

By the way, what has become of the “Ancient Order of Hibernians?” I have not seen a “Hibernian” for many, many years. In the early years of our city along in the sixties and seventies we fully expected on every St. Patrick’s Day to see the Hibernians appear in full gala attire, green sash hung over their left shoulder with fancy plumed chapeaux on their heads.

They looked very proud as they paraded through the streets in honor of St. Patrick. Aren’t there any more good “auld sod” Irishmen in our community? (I don’t recall if they carried their shillalahs or not). It was fine old custom and I think it should be revived. Erin Go Bragh!

Chapter 26

The Beloit Water, Gas and Electric Company was organized in 1906 by a consolidation of the old Beloit Gas Works, owned by the Hendley family, the Beloit Water Works owned by C. B. Salmon, and the Beloit Electric Company owned by Guy Luther Cole, and associates. This utility company was privately owned. For many years Ben Lyons was General Manager and President.

In 1925 the Wisconsin Power and Light Co., came into Beloit and bought the Beloit Water, Gas and Electric Company. Officials of the company following the consolidation were C. B. Salmon, president and treasurer; E. G. Cowdery, vice president and manager; Chas. H. Deppe, secretary; and B. F. Lyons, assistant general manager.

At the present time John J. Gray is district manager at Beloit.

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In looking back over the history of Beloit, I cannot help but wonder why the people of this community have at sundry times been