MISCELLANEOUS

The paragraphs included in this section refused to fit into any of the preceding chapters, but they are about people, places or incidents in Albany and do need to be in this book for they fill in and add to the picture of the Albany of yesteryears.

Albany’s Bands

Before the Civil War Albany had two rival bands, the Saxhorn Band and the Young America Band, each with about 18 members. The Saxhorn Band had a four-horse band wagon, and the Young Americans had beautiful scarlet caps. On the day of the “Great Barbecue” (when

The Albany Cornet Band prepares to march in the Fourth of July parade in 1910. Shown are: (1) Elmer Atherton; (2) Erwin Graves; (3) Lester Peckham; (4) Maurice Barton, (5) Elmer Dixon; (6) Carl Jacobson; (7) Harleigh Peckham; (8) Roy Phelps; (9) Ed Gibbons; (10) Eddie Butcher; (11) Colonel Dixon; (12) Ivan Phelps; (13) Fred Roberts; (14) Andrew Wessel; (15) Albe Sherbundy; (16) Harry Atherton; and (17) Dr. Sax Morgan.

Sweet music there must have been when this group of musicians went into action during the big band reunion that took place in Albany on August 28, 1908.
a whole ox was roasted) there was a patriotic parade which included these bands and two martial bands with local membership. As a result of the patriotic fervor of the day, most of the band boys enlisted, many in Co. E., 13th Regiment, of the 13th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry.

In 1865 members of the Brass Band were requested to meet at their rooms for the purpose of reorganizing. Now that the war was over, "and there being no danger of being called up, let us take hold with a will. Signed, C. S. Tibbits."

Albany's Cornet Band was organized in 1881 by Scott Darling. The first members were: Charley Putnam, J. P. Atherton, Charley Wilder, John Flood, Andrew Wessel, John Pryce, Hector Carradine, Willie Bliss, Jim Keegan, Tim Keegan and O. H. Atherton.

In July of 1883 the editor says: "The music discoursed by the Albany Cornet Band and Mr. S. R. Eldred's Martial Band on Saturday night last, was excellent and greatly enjoyed by all. In fact, the whole town seemed full of music." The band usually played a part in community functions. They played at Albany's skating rink, in the Opera House, at prohibition rallies and at meetings to promote the building of the railroad.

The Cornet band lost many instruments in the fire of 1888, but had "enough of the tone left to make some first class music for the edification of our citizens." Several benefits were held for the band boys.

In 1886 need was felt for the building of a bandstand so that the band would not have to perform in the dust and mud of the street. It was reported in 1887 that "The ladies have recently raised enough money to build a bandstand," and continuing, "the ladies of our beautiful village—or rather, the beautiful ladies of our village—are more public spirited and enterprising than the gentlemen." At this time the band was being referred to as the Silver Cornet Band.

In 1896 Albany could boast three musical groups; the Albany Band, H. Atherton, Leader; Warren's Orchestra, F. Warren, Director; and the Hewitt and Atherton Orchestra, E. E. Atherton, Director.

The Albany Cornet Band played a large part in the many patriotic rallies held during World War I. In 1918 the band was giving weekly concerts from their new platform wagon. The band was active into the 1920's, playing on Memorial Day, at the opening of the new bridge and having a "tag day" to earn money for expenses.

In the 1930's there were Saturday evening band concerts downtown on Water Street, the membership of the band consisting of former village band members and alumni and current members of the high school band.

Reuben Folsom

On the banks of Sugar River just above the Village of Albany is a picturesque cavern known as Reuben's Cave. It was in this tiny unwholesome crack in the rock of the river bank that Reuben Folsom, the famous Nimrod of Green County's early history spent many days of his hunter's life.

Accounts vary as to the place of Reuben's birth, but many authors believe that he was a native of Canada and that he served in the regular United States Army before he drifted to Green County in 1841. His ancestry is presumably highly respectable although little is certain as to his early history. His brother is thought to have been a celebrity in the field of medicine. There are also differing stories about old Reuben's love affairs. One legend says that he was married three times and that the fourth time the marriage was declared illegal so the contracting parties went their separate ways and Reuben arrived eventually in the middle west.

Other legends have it that disappointed hopes and blighted love were the misfortunes that led Reuben to live the life of a partial recluse and to become an habitue of the woods and caves.

Old Reuben had no regular habits but was at home at almost anybody's house and he never was unwelcome. He spent many nights at the Broughton farm near Albany and in order to get the family up for breakfast so that he could go hunting by daylight, the old fellow would arise at three or four o'clock and go out to the chicken coop and start crowing. This started all the roosters to imitating him and the family awoke, got breakfast and he put in a full day and sometimes several days and nights hunting deer and wolves. It is said that Reuben was a hunter from the time he was five years old. Legend has it that one day he looked out and saw a fox running across the field, gave a whoop and with no further formality he and his dog were after the fox. He captured his prey and from that time on there was no more indoor education for Reuben. The woods and fields claimed him as their own and he grew up in the great school of nature.

Folsom hunted deer at times, but he was much more interested in the ferocious wolves that had been annoying the settlers and killing their cattle and sheep. Bounties were offered for scalps and the skins were valuable so the canny, thrifty old hunter spent most of his time trapping and killing the wolves.

The tradition is that he never killed a female wolf and if he found a den of young ones he kept them secretly hidden away until they reached a size which enabled him to get the largest bounty afforded by grown wolves. This was about five times as much as that for young wolves.
Reuben Folsom, inset, legendary hermit-hunter, who, it is said, lived in the cave pictured here during the mid-part of the 1800's

Reuben seemed to live and move in a world of wolves; he became wolfish in nature and looked and talked like a wolf. He even named his dog "Wolf." He could outwalk any ordinary human being, taking great strides as though some phantom form were dogging his footsteps. Despite his seeming surliness, old Reuben was a harmless inoffensive creature whose whole sum of usefulness undoubtedly overbalanced all the harm he ever did. However, it is quite certain that he was slightly deranged mentally. The children here were all afraid of him because he bit the heads off rats in order to show the strength of his teeth.

Time whitened old Reuben's hair and, as the years went by, the one-time athletic step enfeebled led him to the home which charity had kindly provided for the unfortunate of the earth. It was in 1870 that the veteran hunter passed away. He was firmly convinced that turpentine was a great medicine and so he slipped away one night from the attendants and took a huge dose of it. He died soon after and was buried on a hillside between Monticello and Albany. Two or three years ago his body was moved to the Gap Church yard where the citizens of Albany erected a marker for him.

From an article in the Albany Vindicator in 1926 by Pauline Gravenor.

The Castle

"This is my castle, and here I will stay," declared Mrs. Samuel Nichols to her friends, who expected her to return to New York when Dr. Nichols passed on.

She stayed, spending many hours in her sitting room on the second floor receiving friends and watching activity on the busy street below.

Dr. Samuel Nichols, who with Erastus O. Pond, came to "Campbell's Ford" in the early 1840's to found the village of Albany, built the fine three-story home for his wife in an effort to make her happy in this wilderness.

Completed in 1849, the three-story home was conspicuously situated on the hill above the river, on the corner of Main and Mill Streets. There was a large parlor, tall windows to catch the sun as it came up over the woods to the east, and a beautiful dining room on the north, with an elegant fireplace of Italian marble with brass fittings. A high front porch with French windows faced down the hill toward the river. The kitchen on the back was built of thick bricks, with a fireplace and deep casement windows. A stairway led from this kitchen on the northwest corner, to a complete kitchen facility in the back basement, where Mrs. Nichols demanded the cooking be done, and the food be carried up the stairs to be served.
Servants lived in the quarters in the front basement, on the northeast corner of the house. Here the basement was half above ground level, with entrances under the high porch, giving in effect another floor.

It was rumored that Negro servants established an "underground railroad station" in that basement room, during the pre-Civil War days, with the Nichols full knowledge and approval.

The third floor, accessible from the sleeping rooms on the second floor, was a ballroom. Many of Wisconsin's leading political and industrial figures were lavishly entertained there, and Albany's finest parties were held. The hardwood floor was excellent for dancing. Solid walnut benches around the room provided seating for the guests.

Dr. Nichols may have lent the ballroom for other purposes. Among the possessions of Mrs. A. B. Comstock, ninety years later, was found a yellowed newspaper of The Albany Weekly Times, dated March 12, 1861. It stated that it was published in the "3rd story of the Nichols' block, corner of Main and Mill Streets, west side of the river, Albany." The issue carried the complete inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln, and editorial comment on the problems of that day.

After Sever and Mary Gothompson gave up their three-year proprietorship of the Nichols House—the grand hotel across the street to the East—in the early 1890's, they moved into living quarters on the south side of the basement of The Castle. Mary started making and selling ice cream. She got the milk and cream from the creamery across the river, and the ice from the ice house for the freezing and storage. Facilities for serving dishes of ice cream were developed beneath the big porch. It became a popular treat.

Elmer Atherton, who published the Albany Vindicator, started advertising Mary's ice cream with the slogan, "Get your ice cream at the Castle" and a sign was put up to that effect, using Mrs. Nichols' own term for her home. Since that time it has been called "The Castle."

Mary Gothompson said she made the first ice cream cones to be sold anywhere in the area, by cutting thin squares of cookie dough and rolling them into cones while they were still warm.

Around 1900, a new owner made the fine old home into a two family dwelling. His remodeling program split the interior down the middle, lengthwise. The wide front porch was enclosed to make two "front" rooms with big windows; the entrance to the basement was sealed, building the front of the house flush to the ground from the porch floor. The small porch from the north door to the sidewalk was removed.

The pump near the entrance on the south side remained until about 25 years ago. It was removed and the well filled. The old "carriage house" is still there, having housed a variety of "rigs" and horses, and the entire gamut of automobiles. The loft, built for hay and straw bedding, has stored everything from industrial equipment and chicken pens to household furnishings. The apple trees and the wide lawn are unchanged.

When new wiring was installed in the house in the late 1940's, Charles Phillips, the electrician, called the present owner to see the construction of the house where he had removed a section of plaster. The huge beams bore the handewn marks of the adz, and between them dangled bare uninsulated wires—the original wiring when electricity first came to Albany. "It is a wonder this place didn't burn down years ago," the electrician remarked.

There were no built-in closets. A double outside toilet was the sanitary facility until about 50 years ago. Ivy and Concord grape vines, along with other shrubbery, and huge old trees shielded the house and the toilets from view on the west.

A subsequent owner in the 1920's covered the original white clapboard exterior with red imitation brick siding, an appearance maintained until the summer of 1970, when a degree of its elegance was restored with white siding.

The traces of that early "serving" staircase from the basement kitchen are still there, as is the corner fireplace in the servant's quarters. Both first floor fireplaces are intact, but unused. Some renter ripped up the walnut benches from the third floor, and burned them in the heating stove. The ballroom has been used as an attic, a play room, a storage place for onions and sweet corn seed, and an airy spot to dry clothes on rainy days.

Even with the extensive remodeling, the addition of electricity and plumbing and furnaces, the personality and atmosphere of the old home has not changed. The foundations are too solid, the walls too thick, the rooms too full of memories and dreams to change much.

(Note: We are deeply grateful to Frances Riemer Burt for permission to publish the above story which she wrote several years ago.)
First Cars

A Rambler, the first horseless carriage in Albany was purchased by George Santos (Santer) in 1903. He had it licensed last in 1912, but drove it the last time at the dedication of the new bridge in 1924. Built in Kenosha and costing $375, it was shipped to Albany where the wheels and fenders were assembled. Wheels were 28-inch with two and one half inch diamond-hard rubber tires. Removable kerosene lamps with red “bulls eyes” served as tail lights. It was called the Thomas 13 Jeffrey Rambler, one cylinder, 10 horsepower motor in back—air cooled with gas tank above and behind the seat. It held enough gas to go 150 miles. On sandy roads 8 to 10 miles per hour was a good speed. The lever for steering didn’t work well on the sandy roads, so it was replaced with a steering wheel.

Two other cars were owned by Dr. G. W. Roberts—an Oldsmobile—and Dr. Sax J. Morgan, a Lambert. There were no gasoline stations, so barrels of high test gas were shipped in.

Hunting

In Albany lore, stories of hunting abound, beginning with the story of Reuben, the wolf hunter, and continuing until today. A picture of seven hunters from Albany and their hunting trophies, a year’s supply of venison, was used on the 1917 calendar for the Comstock Sporting Goods Store. Without freezers or refrigerators, their venison meat was canned and dried.

Buckshot was considered the best ammunition. Transportation was the local train. They boarded at a logger’s cabin, trying to hunt in the same locality every year and become familiar with the terrain. The state game law permitted each hunter to bring home a buck and a doe.

On January 17, 1915, the Albany Vindicator reported this hunting episode.

“The third timber wolf killed in Rock County during the past few weeks was shot by a local farmer near the Burdick School house four miles west of the city. He was a member of a hunting party composed of Albany and Evansville men. The beast was evidently one of the pack which was first seen in the town of Center and which has been prowling in the woods west of town for several months past.”

The record of a comparatively recent encounter with a wolf appeared in the December 6, 1940, issue of the Albany Herald.

“Deer hunters returned with a female brush wolf bagged near Magnolia, which with Gene Crawford’s dog they had tracked for three days. The wolf was shot by

John L. Sherbondy might have been ready for a hunting expedition, but he took a moment to pose for this picture with his hunting hounds and double barrelled shotgun.
Art Jones, Albany carpenter, who went to Janesville and claimed a $20 bounty. The wolf had been molesting sheep flocks and pig pens in the area for some time."

In the year before this last wolf story, the Herald described the duck season as “well initiated.” All the favored spots on Sugar River and the mill pond were taken by hunters. “The stroke of seven was heralded by a salvo of detonations that would have done credit to the Siegfried line.” Among the hunters on that day were Don Partridge who bagged two ducks; L. H. Allen, four; John Christopher, three; Charlie Phillips, one; Harry Thurman, who got four ducks; and Elsie Mabie, who, the paper said, “got wet.”

The Albany chapter of the Isaac Walton League made an effort in the decade of the 20’s to get ring-necked pheasants started in the surrounding country, and later the Rod and Gun Club released 600 pheasants and 10 coons in the area. In the 1950’s pheasant hunting was excellent among the cornfieos and marshlands of the Albany area. Today, with modern farming methods, much of the marshland and good cover are gone, and with them the good hunting.

Dr. Morgan and Odea Burt

The following story concerning Dr. S. J. Morgan and Odea Burt and their shop on the river in Albany, appeared in Sunday’s (December, 1940) Milwaukee Journal. Dr. Morgan and Mr. Burt turned out fascinating animated lawn ornaments in their shop. “Down by
the Sugar River here against the dam over which the waters pour ceaselessly is a little shop crammed with machinery. In it are Dr. S. J. Morgan and Odea Burt. They thought they retired years ago but here they are having a whale of a lot of fun just making whatever their fancy dictates.

"Neither one, it seems, is the boss. 'Burt does all the work,' says Doc, who forsook the practice of medicine 40 years ago to turn manufacturer and inventor. 'He can make anything out of wood or metal. Best tool and die maker in the world, too.'

"'Shucks,' says Burt, 'Doc here has all the ideas. Thinks them up easy as anything. Just look....' And he brings out some of the things they have made for inspection. Right now they are specializing in weather vanes whose wind-driven propellers bring motion to small mounted figures. Little men who saw wood furiously in the wind, women who churn butter or wash clothes, boys riding bicycles and fretting horses.

"That the pair are here at all is due to Doc's love of invention and the uncontrollability of golf balls. As a youngster in his early teens, Doc noted the piles of shells tossed aside by persons seeking fresh water pearls in the river here and decided they would make nice ornaments. His father had a horse and a neighbor had a treadmill. So, he fixed up a deal and soon he was hard at work at the grinding wheel while the horse, walking briskly on the inclined treadmill, supplied the power.

"'We made a lot of ornaments, too,' remembers Doc with a grin, 'until the horse decided to liquidate the business. Because by and by the horse learned that he was getting no place fast by going ahead, and tried backing up.' That habit, once learned and continually used, brought an end to the pearl button business.

"Another invention of his early days was a novel sled, and the reputation he gained through that venture lives with him still. 'They say that it was a fine sled except that neither runner touched the snow,' says Doc, 'and I don't know but what they were right.'"

Doc and Odea made a lot of rolling pins, too. Any time a girl got married she could count on getting a rolling pin from the team of Morgan and Burt. "We've headed a lot of marriages in the right direction with our rolling pins," they said, "and they've been successful, too."

**Moonshiner Nabbed**

From the January 21, 1926, Albany Herald

"Tom Carver, deputy sheriff of Albany, was on the job Wednesday when a moonshine peddler drove into town and stopped on a downtown street.

"Mr. Carver spotted the car and the people who seemed interested in it, and just as one of the men was closing the car door the deputy stepped up and placed the driver under arrest and ordered him to get out and open up the rear end of the car. He complied with the order and the deputy found seven gallons and a quart of what appeared to be alcohol.

"The prisoner was taken to Monroe where he waived a preliminary examination and was bound over to circuit court under $1,000 bond."

**The Greenback Party**

The Greenbackers believed that issuing large amounts of paper money would bring prosperity, especially to the farmer, by raising prices and making debts easier to pay. Many meetings were held in Albany and the surrounding area to promote the cause.

At a meeting in the Village of Brodhead on January 24, 1879, the following resolutions were adopted.

"Resolved that the Green Back Dollar must be a legal tender for the payment of debts and by the government issued, protected, and received as absolute money at par with any other money authorized by law.

"Resolved that we demand the suppression of all bank currency, the government alone to issue money and this for benefit of all; and not to, through or for, enrichment of national banks.

"Resolved that the most essential feature of currency is the proper control of its volume in such a manner that justice may be done between debtors and creditors.

"Resolved that we demand the earliest possible legal payment of the public debt of the United States, principal and interest, in legal tender money of the United States."

The item also stated that a mass meeting would be held in the Village of Albany on Thursday, February 6, 1879, to take necessary steps to secure the cooperation of all in putting these principles into effect.

A political meeting under the auspices of the Green-Back Party was held in the Grange Hall in October, 1882. Short speeches were made by D. W. Leonard, Attica; and R. D. Crocker of Belleview. E. W. Dwight of Brooklyn addressed the meeting in the evening for one hour.

The national Greenback Party was not successful in promoting its aims, and the movement died.
Albany's history is that of a typical Wisconsin village. Historians are compelled to state facts as accurately as the truth can be ascertained. Footprints in the sands of time can be observed, their direction followed, and their destination noted. The cold facts of history do not convey the thrill of the early pioneers who stood on the banks of the river at Campbell's Ford and viewed the unmatched splendor of the swift, rippling river whose banks were shaded by giant virgin maples, birches and black oaks. They envisioned a water supply, water power, wood for lumber and fuel. They were confident other people would stop off there, catch their vision and develop a thriving community.

You have read of the physical growth of the community—its triumphs and its disasters, and through it all the desire of its people to live life to its fullest. It is uniquely true that from its beginning to the present day Albany citizens, no matter how far they get from the good earth where they grew up, have an instinctive yearning to return often to this quiet, friendly little community that still cradles Sugar River.