

in Dane county, where he was well received. I don't know how he happened to come to Beloit but here he arrived in the summer of 1850, making the trip from White-water to Beloit on foot.

He soon got work at his trade. For a time he worked in a small shop located where the May Booth property now is, between the Bill Tucker home and the Grinnell building. The old Lee stone house was at that time a school house and the children used to come and watch the sparks fly from the anvil. Later he worked in a shop which stood in the rear of the L. C. Hyde house in West Grand avenue, which I believe was later incorporated into the main building.

For several years he worked for C. W. Munger, who ran a blacksmith and wagon shop at the corner of Pleasant street and St. Paul ave. He roomed and boarded with the Munger family and it was there he acquired his ability to speak the English language as perfectly as a native American. He never spoke English with the peculiar brogue or accent of the Scandinavian. Later he went to Rockford and got a job at the Briggs & Enoch Plow Works, where he acquired the art of making American style steel plows.

In 1856 times were getting "hard." The panic and depression of 1857 was coming on and work and money were scarce. He decided to take a trip back to the old country to see his mother and other relatives. That winter he met and courted my mother. They were married May 13, 1857, and a week later started for America on their honeymoon. They went by way of Hamburg, Germany, and came over on a German boat, the "Brusia." On reaching Beloit they were met at the station by Charlie Hansen and were invited to stay at their house for a few days till they

could look around and get settled.

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He and my mother started housekeeping in rooms upstairs in the Benjamin Brown homestead which stood back in a yard at the corner of State and Grand aves., where the McNeany store now is. That had not yet become business property. All this property is still owned by the Brown family.

Later he bought some property on Third st., where he established his own business in 1860. This was the nucleus of the business, which later became the Thompson Plow Works and which continued up to 1918. He bought a house three blocks up on Third st., where most of his family of children were born.

The American way of life in the sixties was somewhat more primitive than it is now in our present era of luxury, but we were comfortable and had plenty to eat. Perhaps our home on Third st., may be taken as fairly typical of the average homes of that period, not of course including the homes of the well-to-do people of that time.

Our house consisted of eight rooms, parlor, living room, five bedrooms and kitchen, and in addition pantry and wood shed. The rooms were not spacious but we got along very nicely. The parlor was opened only for company and was nicely furnished. In the kitchen was a wood range, and wood stoves heated the rest of the house in cold weather.

Just outside the kitchen doors was the well and pump, and at the kitchen sink was the cistern pump. No house in those days was without a cistern. In the yard was usually piled up three or four cords of wood. Oak wood rated \$4.00 to \$5.00 per cord, poplar at \$2.50 to \$3.50.

Chapter 2

Father kept a nice vegetable garden and mother had a bed of "sparagus" which she prized very highly. We also had currant and raspberry bushes, two cherry trees and a plum tree. We raised

some sweet corn, but bought our potatoes, winter vegetables and apples. We did not know anything about vitamins in those days, but had a varied and wholesome diet.

Mother kept a "hired girl" (\$3 per week). Maids were unknown in those days. Mother was kind and treated her help with consideration. The family wash was done in the kitchen or the woodshed, and there was always some rivalry among the neighborhood women as to whose wash should appear on the line the earliest. When the washboard and the patent wringer came on the market they were hailed as a great benefaction. Wringing by hand was hard work.

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Spring was the time for soap-making. In pioneer days homemade soft soap was highly prized by housewives as in those days we did not have the great array of factory-made "cleaners." It was quite a trick to make good soft soap, and required the observance of a very exact ritual.

First a barrel was procured and an opening made in the bottom of the barrel. This was covered with twigs to make a porous vent or drain. The barrel, placed on supports about two feet high, was filled with wood ashes. Water was then poured in the top of the barrel several times a day, until the resultant liquid or lye started to flow from the bottom into a bucket. The lye, as fast as accumulated, was dumped into a big iron kettle. When the kettle was sufficiently full it was ready for the "soap grease" that had been accumulated for several months, perhaps. The lye was tested for density by dropping in an egg. If the egg floated it was good strong lye.

Then a fire was built under the kettle and the mixture brought to a boil and cooked for some time till it began to thicken and coagulate. The result was a fine amber-colored "soft soap." This would keep for months. The women all agreed that for scrubbing floors and woodwork and for use in the laundry there was nothing so good and thorough as good soft soap. Of course, nobody in the cities and perhaps no one in the country nowadays makes soft soap. To prepare the lye, wood ashes were necessary and this we do not have any more.

One of the pleasantest memories of my childhood is the recollection of my mother's old fashioned "quilting parties." In those days the women had no afternoon "bridge parties" such as are now the vogue. As a social function the quilting party was a great success, as well as a fine thing in a utilitarian way. In those days quilts and comforters were not bought in the stores; they had to be made in the homes.

When a housewife with great patience had accumulated by weeks of ardent work a sufficient number of pieced blocks, she completed the assembly of the quilt top by sewing together the pattern squares with an equal number of plain goods squares and usually the effect was very pleasing.

The day was then set and the friends to the number of six or eight were invited to the party.

In the morning the quilt frames were put together by "pa". The bottom or reverse side was first attached to the frames, cotton batting filler spread evenly over it, then the top side fastened on all four sides ready for the job.

The guests having arrived seated themselves around the frame and began to stitch. As the work progressed the frames were rolled together until the center was reached.

Lively conversation was carried on through the afternoon as the fingers sped on with the work. After the quilt was finished, coffee and cakes were served and everybody had had a real jolly time.

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In my early childhood days, all we had for illumination of our homes was tallow candles. Some of the better homes were lighted by gas, but it was expensive. I remember we had a candle mould containing 12 tubes for making the candles. The wicks were dropped down through the tubes and tied at the lower end and then pulled up tight and tied to a stick across the top of the mould. The tallow was melted and poured into the mould and allowed to set over night. Then the lower knots were cut off and the candles pulled out of the moulds. A snuffer shears was always needed

to trim the wick as the candle burned down.

In the sixties kerosine lamps were introduced. They were a great improvement over the candles, but were rather dangerous as they were liable to explode and set the house on fire. They were made of glass.

The next step was the so-called student lamp with round wicks and tall chimneys. They gave a fine soft light and were especial-

ly nice for reading and studying at night.

Then the incandescent electric light was invented by Thomas Edison and the era of electric lighting came in.

Incidentally, I might mention that when I was in Paris in 1878 I saw the first street in the world lighted by electricity — the famous Boulevard de L'Opera. The lamps were arc lights mounted on lamp posts on each side of the street.

Chapter 3

About the first of my definite childhood recollections was when President Lincoln was shot. I was five years old and remember how my mother fastened two small flags to the gate posts in front of the house, the flags draped in black. Later I remember seeing the trains go north on the C. & N. W. headed for Madison, with the coaches filled with returning soldiers. All this made an indelible impression on my memory. Mother told us the war was over, "no more war."

My next special experience was my first day at school. When I was six it was time to start going to school, and as I was the first in the family to go, my father took me up to the old No. 2 stone schoolhouse on the top of the hill where the present Parker School is located. We went to the Primary room where the teacher, Miss Murray, asked father if the little boy knew his letters. My father said, "Yes, and he can read too. Just try him and see." The folks always used to say I read my primer like a little preacher. My mother, like a good mother, had taught us the letters at an early age, and to read in both the English and Norwegian languages.

In 1860 the city of Beloit was not a very big community, perhaps around 4,000 people. There were only two schoolhouses. Old No. 1, a three story red brick building was located on the hill where the Horace White Park now is. It was popularly known as the "brick pile." No. 2 school was a three story stone structure located where Parker School now

stands. Each building housed the grades from the primary room to the grammar room, now the eighth grade. The children were rough and ready pioneer children, most of the boys going to school barefoot. Facilities of all kinds were very crude and meager. Corporal punishment was frequently resorted to.

In those early days the upper end of Third street was peopled mostly by Irish and Norwegian families—there were the Cunninghams, the Garrigans, the Finnigans, the Riordans, the Smiths, the Donneleys and the Welches in the Irish homes, and the Hansons, Leddells, Thompsons, Tanbergs, Gundersons, and Bredesens in the Norwegian homes. All these families had plenty of children.

By some freak of the biological cycle the children from these homes were at that time almost without exception boys. In our family there were six boys in a row.

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We had a Third Street gang consisting of Irish and Norwegian boys, and we all got along fine together. Once in a while there might be a fight, but it was of small consequence and soon forgotten. We played ball on a vacant lot, slid down hill on our sleds in winter and skated on the river ice and had a good time. Sometimes the boys ventured too far and broke through the ice but I do not recall any of the kids being drowned.

I have mentioned the Third street gang. There was also another gang of wild Irish boys liv-