

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-

ing in what was known as "the patch" down by the North Western tracks across the river. These two gangs were always at war. A Third street boy would not dare to venture across the railroad bridge into the patch district alone. He would be sure to be set upon and chased out by the patch gang, and the same rule applied if any of them dared intrude on the Third street area. This all made for excitement and team work.

It sometimes makes me sad to think that I am probably the last survivor of the old Third street gang. They are all dead and gone. Of all the families mentioned above only a few of the younger ones are still alive. I can mention Julius Ledell, Conrad Hanson, and our postmaster John Riordan. They were all small children when we older ones were running around, ten to fifteen years old.

In those days there was a big ice-house located on the river bank just north of what is now the Portland ave. bridge. It was known as Dole's icehouse. Every winter, as soon as the ice got to be 10 inches or more thick, the ice harvest began. The snow would be scraped off the ice, and the men with horses and a special sharp pointed ice plow, would cut creases in the ice, to form the size of the ice blocks wanted. After the plows the men used big saws to finish cutting the creases clear through.

They would then be broken into cakes and the cakes pushed along through an open channel to the ice house where they were caught by a hoist device and pulled up an incline into the ice house. In those days there were no electric refrigerators and not even factory built ice boxes. Few families had them, and what there were, were carpenter built boxes, insulated with saw dust.

When Mr. Dole died or quit, the ice business was taken over by Alonzo Aldrich and Frank Cheney. There was by that time another ice house farther up the river known as the Janvrin ice house. They operated both houses. Dole's ice house later burned down and I do not recall what happened to the Janvrin building. I rather think it was torn down.

It isn't often that a report passes from man to man as an April fool joke proves to be the truth and not a joke at all. On April 1, 1870, one of the dryer cylinders in the paper machine at the Beloit Straw Board mill exploded at six o'clock in the morning and wrecked the mill. The east wall was blown out and fell in the river, and the roof was ripped up and shattered. When people heard the report of the accident, many of them would not believe it, and called it an April fool joke, but it was no joke when they went to see the mill. No one was injured as the men were at the far end of the mill when the explosion occurred.

I suppose many people in Beloit have read "Curiosity Shop" by Charles Dickens. I wonder if many people here know that once upon a time, 75 years ago, we had what may be called a "Curiosity Shop" right here in Beloit. It was not a commercial store with things for sale, but a unique collection of curious things. It was in a small house located on the hillside at the corner of Portland avenue and Fifth Street, across from the old No. 2 schoolhouse.

It was the home of an old couple by the name of Smith, the father and mother of Simon Smith. They were English people. The elder Smith had been a painter the same as his son Simon.

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Mr. Smith, the elder, was a genius. The house and front yard were a show place. In the yard he had built up a fine stone stair leading up to the front porch, and a lot of wonderful structures made out of cobble stones. And inside was a veritable museum. Glass cases and cupboards, filled with stuffed birds and animals, things carved out of wood, minerals and stones and peacock feathers. Perhaps there were shell fish and snake skins too. My memory as to details is rather vague, but I have a vivid recollection of old Mr. Smith, just how he looked with his whiskers and bright eyes.

It was a great treat if we children were permitted to come into the house and gaze at all these wonders.

Mrs. Smith did millinery work,

and my mother patronized her for new bonnets. In those days making over last years hats was the customary thing to do. The Smith house is still there, near the corner of Portland and Fifth.

How many people in Beloit today know that at one time we had a steamboat service on Rock river? Sometime in the early eighties Captain Berg owned and ran a steamboat on the river. He lived near where the Portland avenue bridge now is, and the city terminus for his boat was right there. He made daily trips up to the Big Hill and back. His boat line was very popular for picnic parties and moonlight rides on the water.

Another vivid recollection was the burning of the paper mill straw stacks in 1868 or 69 or there-

abouts. That summer we had had some very severe electrical storms and frequent lightning strokes. One night we were awakened by the loud blowing of the paper mill whistle to sound the alarm and summon the fire department. Lightning had struck one of the big straw stacks and set it afire. The volunteer fire department got there as quickly as possible and by hard work succeeded in putting out the fire, or so they thought. But the next afternoon it broke out again and the whistle sounded, but it was no use. This time it got away from them and all the stacks burned. There were a large number, ten or twelve. The fire kept burning and smouldering for weeks thereafter. It must have been a big loss to the Rock River Paper company.

Chapter 4

I will now relate some episodes that happened in those early days of our town.

After the war there were several hundred veterans back home, living here in the city. Every year we had a Fourth of July celebration with a parade, city band, firemen, fife and drum corps and floats, old soldiers, a big brass cannon, etc. The brass cannon was a piece of Spanish artillery cast in Spain, covered with Spanish inscriptions and date. I think it was an eight pounder.

One Fourth, in the late sixties, Hugh Riley, a war artillery man, had the cannon placed in Bridge st. (now West Grand ave.) with the muzzle pointing up Third st. They were firing salutes, using grass to ram in the charge, and Hugh was the chief gunner. I remember my father and several other men were standing in the street in front of his shop. I was also there watching the firing.

Suddenly while Riley was ramming in the charge after a number of salutes had been fired and the cannon was hot, the man with his thumb on the primer let go and the gun went off. The ram rod broke Riley's arm and he was terribly burned on his face and chest. He was quickly picked up and carried into John Kline's sa-

loon. They feared his sight was gone, but he recovered and lived many years thereafter. The ram rod was shot up Third st. and went through a board sign in front of our shop, just over the heads of where we were standing. It was a close shave.

Some years later at a Fourth of July celebration, the old cannon exploded and was blown to pieces, but luckily no one was hit.

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Two other reminiscences of the old happenings may be of interest to old timers. One incident was the circus riot which occurred in the spring of 1875. The Burr Robins circus was showing in Beloit. Their tents were pitched on the lot on Shirland ave., where the gas works are now located. In those days we had a lot of toughs around town who were always looking for trouble, and circus people were a tough lot too. In some way, I don't know how, a squabble arose which soon led into a general all-around fight. The police were called and City Marshal Janvrin appeared on the scene to restore order. But he could not singlehanded handle the mob. Reports were that he was hit on the head by a club in the hands of Pat Ford, a circus man,