



# LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Home town : some chapters in reminiscence. May 1942

Thompson, Oscar T.

Beloit, Wisconsin: [s.n.], May 1942

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/3TPRXOJMIE3D38A>

This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, US Code).

For information on re-use see:

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/Copyright>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.

# HOME TOWN

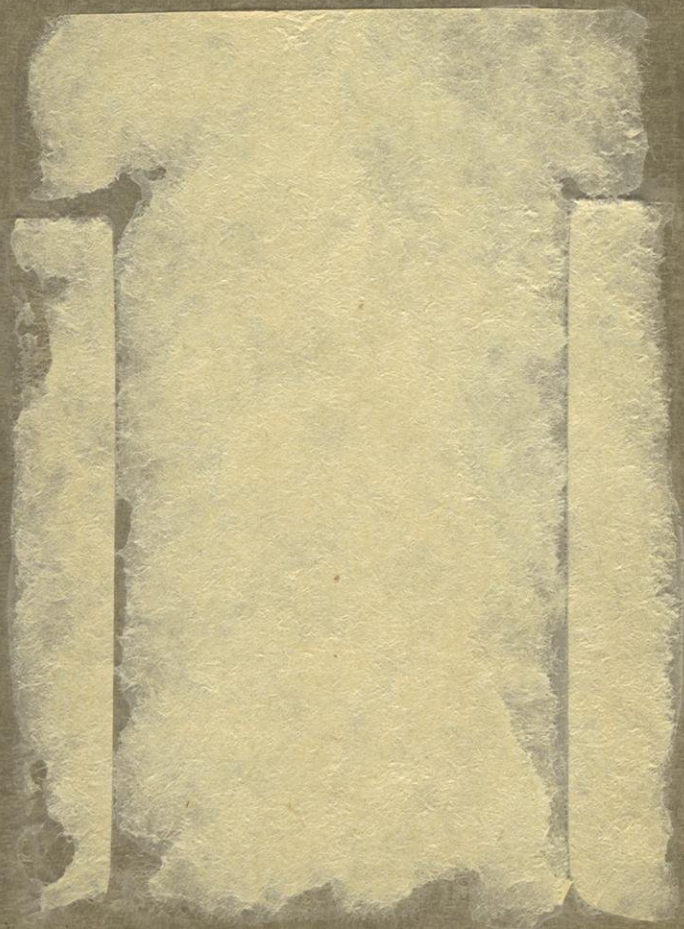
---

OSCAR T. THOMPSON

GEN.

W  
977.588  
T37

.588



Parks - p 39

GEN 977.588 T37  
Thompson, Oscar T.  
Home town

DO NOT CIRCULATE

~~Feb 25 1946~~

JUL 5 1948

GENEALOGY







# HOME TOWN

*Some Chapters In Reminiscence*

By

OSCAR T. THOMPSON

BELOIT, WISCONSIN

May 1942 £





# HOME TOWN

*Some Chapters In Reminiscence*

42130

By

OSCAR T. THOMPSON

BELOIT, WISCONSIN

May 1942

From Public Library  
Berkeley, Calif.

# HOME TOWN

By

Oscar T. Thompson

## Chapter 1

Several months ago I was requested by Mrs. Minnie McIntyre Wallace, chairman of the Memoirs committee of the Beloit Historical society, to write my recollections of Beloit.

"You are one of the older residents we have in Beloit and I am sure you have a great many memories of things that have happened here in your life time," she said. "Will you not be kind enough to write a narrative of your personal experiences for the society?"

Late in May she again reiterated her desire that I write my history. I told her I had never aspired to be a historian and furthermore have no special literary ability, but if she thought me competent and would like me to undertake the task, I would do so. This explains how I have become a literary man.

I shall endeavor to clothe what I have to say in a manner so as to make it of interest to the general reader. I will dwell of course on matters of factual history, but there will also be more or less of personal reminiscences and anecdotes — about things that other people will remember as well as I. In short it will be a combination of history and dates as well as a semi-autobiography of my life. With this explanation of purpose I will proceed and try to give the old as well as the young a story that I hope will prove entertaining as well as instructive, broad in scope but not too much in detail.

I have been to some pains to verify facts and dates but if any of them are inaccurate I hope that it will be excused.

★ ★ ★

I was born January 23, 1860 in the upper end of Third st., now the 900 block, and have lived here continuously ever since, except for a few temporary absences while away at college and abroad.

My father, John Thompson, was born July 15, 1828, in Norway. He was the youngest of a family of nine children. Education in those days was meager—reading, writing, arithmetic, and catechism were as much as any poor lad could expect to receive. My mother was born June 16, 1837, and she was also the youngest of a family of nine. Her father was a storthing man (same as our congressman) in 1830 to 1842, just one hundred years ago.

Father learned the blacksmith trade working in the shipyards of his native town. In 1850 he decided to emigrate to America. He came over on an old style sailing ship and landed in New York.

From there he came on west by way of the Erie Canal and steamboat from Buffalo to Milwaukee. It was a long and arduous trip. He jokingly used to recall that when he reached Milwaukee he had just 25 cents in his pocket. However, he obtained work immediately. Soon thereafter he decided to go out to the Norwegian settlements

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.

★ ★ ★

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.

★ ★ ★

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.

★ ★ ★

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.

★ ★ ★

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 passed 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.

★ ★ ★

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.

★ ★ ★

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,

and so badly injured he died in two or three weeks. Pat Ford was chased all over town, but finally managed to get across the line into Illinois. He was later arrested.

I will also relate another circus occurrence which happened some seven or eight years prior to the Burr Robins circus riot.

In the sixties there were no houses on the high ground south of what is now Highland ave. (at that time called Farm st.). It was all open prairie, and circus shows used to pitch their tents out on this open space. One night when the performance was going on, a violent storm blew up, thunder, lightning, and wind. The tent collapsed and blew down. The lights went out, the animals roared, and pandemonium followed. The crowd was panic stricken. I don't recall that anyone was killed, but we can imagine what a mess it was to get out of. Everybody was drenched to the skin. It was fortunate that it was no worse.

★ ★ ★

In 1885 or 86 we had the memorable Salvation Army riot.

When the Salvationists first entered Beloit to rescue the city from the devil, they took up their quarters in the old skating rink opposite the C. & N.W. depot, and commenced to march through the streets with banners and drums, and sing any pray on the street corners. They were not at all popular. People did not like it. One night at the corner of State and East Grand ave., somebody started a disturbance upon the Salvationists, who ran for their lives.

In the midst of the tumult, Mayor Charlie Parker appeared and in

the name of the law commanded the crowd to disperse. Someone threw a pebble or stone which struck the mayor, but no harm done. The big drum was smashed and other knocks inflicted. For weeks after the fracas, the current question was "Who hit the mayor?" or "Who kicked the drum?" The general verdict was that Phil Gleason kicked the drum and no one ever knew who hit the mayor. Several arrests followed. Some pleaded guilty and paid a fine for disturbing the peace.

On October 9, 1871, we received the news of the great Chicago fire. I was then in the grammar room and had the honor post of ringing the school bell in the belfry, for opening school and at recess. I remember when we heard of the big fire, I asked our teacher, Miss Amos, if I might climb the ladder up to the belfry to see the fire. She laughed and said, "No, the fire is too far away for you to see it from here." I wish to pay a passing tribute to our two splendid teachers—Miss Amos and Miss Hinman, who for many years, taught the grammar room of old No. 2. They were thorough teachers and strict disciplinarians and maintained good order at all times with a motley crowd of youngsters.

In 1869 the first high school was built on its present site. I remember one day Mr. Brittan, secretary of the school board, came up to No. 2 to show us the plans of the new building and how fine it was going to be. Professor Kerr was then the principal. He wore glasses and was an awe inspiring figure in our young eyes. It was a terrible thing to happen if an obstreperous boy was sent down to the high school with a note from his teacher.

## Chapter 5

In 1873 our family moved from Third street up to our present location at 643 Bluff street. The William Aldrich family owned the house on the corner where the Second Congregational church now stands, and the Durkee family owned the fine old stone house next to us on the south. Mr. Higley, the Congregational pastor,

owned the one story red brick house at the corner of Bluff and E street, which building still stands and is a lovely house to this day. The old Episcopal rectory was at the corner of Bridge street and Bluff street where the present rectory now stands. Dr. Royce lived there for 27 years.

All these families were fine

neighbors and we had the most amicable relations. Charley Avery, for many years bookkeeper in the Hyde & Brittan Bank was then living with his sister, Mrs. Tuttle. He was a great gardener and loved to go out hunting with his gun.

I might mention here that Mrs. Pound (Miss Eva Tuttle) and her sister, Grace Tuttle, with two Pound children, lost their lives in the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago. I was a bearer at the funeral and it was the coldest day I ever experienced in Beloit.

Hank Talmadge was also a well-known citizen. He lived at the corner of Bluff street and E street, now St. Lawrence avenue.

★ ★ ★

On July 4th, 1875, there had been some big celebration at Madison, Wis., A company of Chicago militia men had taken part in the celebration. That night the train carrying the soldiers back to Chicago was wrecked at the old stone quarry, three miles north of Beloit. There was a terrible storm and the rain weakened a culvert there and the train went down. The engine ran into the river. The engineer was drowned and many of the soldiers were injured but I believe none of them died. The morning after we saw the soldiers down town walking around or lying on the grass on High School hill. They all left for Chicago that afternoon.

On July 21, 1876, my father's factory in Third street was completely destroyed by fire entailing a loss of over \$60,000, with very little insurance. Most men would have given up and quit, but not so my father. He promptly decide to go ahead and build a larger and better factory and the business continued to grow and flourish.

I graduated from the High School in 1877 in a class of 13 members, all of whom are now dead excepting Mrs. Julius Truesdell (the former Cornelia Riggs) and myself. Mrs. Thompson and I called on the Truesdells some years ago at their home in the Blue Ridge Mountains down in Virginia. They had a lovely home overlooking the valley below. We had a fine visit talking over old times, and Mr. Truesdell had a

great fund of stories covering his newspaper experiences in Washington where he had been engaged almost his entire life.

★ ★ ★

In September, 1877, I left for Luther College, in Decorah, where I stayed only one year as I did not feel at home there. This was a Lutheran training school, and specialized in the study of languages—Latin, Greek and Hebrew in the ancient classics; all of which I have long since forgotten — and Norwegian, Swedish, and German in the modern languages. All of these languages are still with me, doing good service. I never took French at college, but in 1918 I took up the study of French by myself and acquired a very good reading knowledge of the language and have ever since greatly enjoyed French literature.

I might add that Luther College has since those days modernized its curriculum and is now a very good school.

For the reasons stated, I did not return to Luther College, but went to Europe in the fall of 1878 crossing the ocean in a small cargo sailing vessel commanded by my cousin, Captain Flack. It took us 23 days from New York to St. Nazaire, France. We had three violent hurricanes on the trip over.

I spent a month in France, and visited the Exposition Universelle in Paris in October, 1878. From there I went to Norway, by way of Hamburg, Germany, and spent a very pleasant year in that beautiful country. My cousins had a sailboat, a yacht, with one mast and two sails, the main sail and jib. We sailed up and down the coast and far out to sea. I became quite proficient in handling the sails and maneuvering the boat, and can do it to this day.

★ ★ ★

In the winter we skated on the fjord. The Norwegian young folks were surprised that I could skate backwards, cut circles, and figure eights and other stunts on skates. I had a pair of American Club Skates, which they had never seen before. Their's were the old style of Dutch Skates. I also learned to slide on skis, but did not become very proficient in this sport.

The Norwegian country boys were very inept at throwing a ball. They had never had the practice of playing ball, such as we American youngsters had had almost from the cradle. I could throw a ball twice as far as they could, and they were astonished that I could throw a stone from one side of the river to the other side. That was unheard of. But

their ten year olds could beat me all hollow on skis.

The winter I was in Norway I took an extensive and thorough course in double-entry bookkeeping and accounting. The course was given by a professor of economics and accounting from the University of Christiania, and has been of great value to me all through my business career.

## Chapter 6

I returned to Beloit in October, 1879, and secured a job as bookkeeper in the Citizens National bank, where I remained for about four months, until my father took me in as a partner in the business under the firm name of J. Thompson & Sons. In this business I have continued all my life and never worked for anyone else.

1881 was the year of the big flood when the dam went out. That winter there had been a very heavy fall of snow all through Wisconsin, and the snow remained until way into April. I remember there was considerable worry and anxiety over what might happen if the weather turned suddenly warm.

And this is just what happened. About the middle of the month, I think it was the 20th, the headgates at the head of the race gave way and the water rushed down the race and broke through the dikes and flooded Third Street and the down town area. It looked as though the whole business district was going to be wiped out. The water rushed around the north end of our factory building on its way to the river and cut a deep channel, but fortunately, our north wall did not collapse. I was in a boat and narrowly escaped being carried down in the torrent.

That day was an anxious day. The next night about 3 a.m. the dam broke with a great rush of water. Six men in a boat were just crossing the river above the dam, and were carried down in the rush of water. All were drowned except one man who clung to the boat and was carried down to Boney's Island, south of Beloit, where he manag-

ed to climb into a tree. The next day he was rescued. John Cunningham and some others went down in a boat and brought him to land. The dam was rebuilt and made stronger and better and has stood the strain ever since.

★ ★ ★

In 1883 we had the big cyclone. The storm came on in the late afternoon. We could see the black clouds coming over from the west, and all of a sudden about 5 p.m. the blast came. It seemed to be all over in a minute or two, but the damage done was great. When it struck we were in our office in Third Street. Soon the water came pouring down through the roof, as the tin roofing was gone. The storm came up from the southwest and followed the path of the river and swept through the main business district. The old covered Northwestern R. R. bridge was torn from its piers and thrown into the river. Many store fronts on the south side of West Grand Avenue were blown out and demolished. Plate glass windows along the streets were shattered. The roof of Bort Bailey Dry Goods store was ripped off and the streets were littered with glass and roof materials.

Two churches lost their spires. The steeple of the Presbyterian church in Broad st. was blown down, also the 200 foot steeple of the First Congregational church. The tall steeple of the Baptist church was badly damaged but did not fall. It was bent over to one side, but seemed firm and remained standing till the church was burned. The clock in the First Congregational steeple was not injured and continued to run.

A large number of big elm trees in Broad st. were uprooted and toppled over. Only one man lost his life, which occurred up at the paper mill, where a wall collapsed and fell upon him. The total damage and destruction ran into many thousands of dollars.

★ ★ ★

In 1884 at midnight Easter eve the Baptist church caught fire and burned to the ground. In those days whenever there was a big fire everybody turned out and hastened to the scene of the fire. I remember my mother was one of the number, and when she came home after it was all over, she said she felt so sad and depressed. Not only was the church gone, but the familiar town clock in the tower which everyone had learned to cherish, was gone forever. The saddest of all was when the flames reached up into the steeple. The clock was still running, until it struck the hour of twelve, as if to say good bye, and then the clock and steeple fell to the ground. She said she had tears in her eyes.

In 1886 we had a terrible tragedy in our family. My brother,

Albert, and my cousin, Jacob Flack, both lost their lives by drowning in Rock river.

★ ★ ★

As I recounted before, while I was in Norway, I acquired the art of handling a sailboat and liked to sail. My cousin Flack had been a deep sea sailor all his life but had lost a leg in the shipwreck of his vessel, so had to retire from the sea. We offered him a job as bookkeeper in our office, so he came over to Beloit. He, being a sailor, also liked to sail. So we built a fine keel boat, and fitted it up with mast and sails, and enjoyed the sport greatly. We had the fastest boat on the river. On October 24, '86, in the morning, Jake asked my brother to go along with him for a sail—"the last sail of the year." Albert did not want to go, but being urged, finally went along. Up near the Big Hill a sudden gust of wind capsized the boat and both were drowned. Tragedies are not uncommon and most families at one time or another experience them. But this was a terrible blow to my mother and to all of us.

## Chapter 7

In the early days of the sixties, Beloit was protected by two volunteer fire companies who served without pay. Company No. 1 had its station in a building on East Grand ave. where the Municipal Court is now located. The city still owns the building. Company No. 2 was housed in the present Fourth st. fire station.

The apparatus at each station consisted of a small hand engine and a hose cart. The engines were pulled through the streets by hand by means of long ropes which enabled many men to grab them and pull. Engine No. 1 was named the "Water Witch" and Engine No. 2 was called the "Ever Ready." It was considered an honor to belong to the fire companies. Their monthly meetings were held upstairs in the respective fire stations when officers were elected and other business transacted. Each company had a firemen's library and members were permitted to draw books.

There was considerable friendly rivalry between the two companies and frequent contests were held to see which engine could throw a stream the farthest. Usually No. 1 won for distance but No. 2 for volume, as it was of slightly larger capacity. These hand engines were operated by what was called "hand brakes," which was a walking beam device with a long bar running lengthwise on each side of the machine, which the men grabbed and worked up and down to drive the pump pistons. When a fire alarm was sounded, the firemen and other citizens rushed to the stations and started for the fire on the run. The hose cart went first to lay the hose. The water supply was drawn from the river in the business district and from cisterns in residence districts, provided they could find a cistern available.

★ ★ ★

In 1885 a paid fire department was organized, the old hand en-

gines were discarded, and were replaced by a fire wagon drawn by horses to carry the hose, ladders and fire extinguishers to the fire. The first fire wagon was built in the Thompson shop in Third st. under the supervision of Ald. Frank Race. He carefully planned all the features he wanted. It was painted bright red and ornamented in gold leaf and cost, I believe, \$400. After the water works were installed, fire pumps were not considered necessary as hydrant pressure was depended on. However, sometimes it failed. In parades the firemen wore red jackets and the old style leather helmets. They marched through the streets and pulled their apparatus by means of the long ropes.

The red horse drawn fire wagon served the city for many years, but in 1911 the first motorized service was installed and now we have a fully equipped department with two stations, five motor engines, 72 alarm boxes, and a force of twenty-two men. Since the fire department was organized as a paid department we have had the following fire chiefs: Geo. Donner, Charlie North, A. J. Macey, A. Goss, John Nygren, Paul Roth, Robert Moses, and Elmer Fairbert.

The old volunteer company I remember Simon Smith, Lance and Bob Moses were leading members.

When the city was young and

small the police force consisted of one man called the City Marshal. We old ones can recall City Marshal Janvrin, who died from the result of an injury received in the Burr Robins circus riot. We also recall that fearless man, City Marshal Charlie North, who for many years kept the tougher element in Beloit in fear of the law.

The first jail or "jug," as it was called, was a wooden building with a heavy door, located at the lower end of Broad st. near where the C. & N. W. freight house now stands. In it city drunks and other offenders were locked up and there is no record of any escapes.

The present jail and police station was built in 1900 by Al Dearhammer and has been improved and remodeled at various times. The following men have served as chief of police, Charlie North, Rhoda Scheibel, Geo. Appleby, Wm. Appleby, Charles Qualman, Lieut. L. J. Williams, Frank Lanphear, Stanley Dietz, Dan Torrisi and our present chief, Robert Blumer. There are now 29 men in the police department with a modern radio system hooked up with Rock and Winnebago counties.

The title, "city marshal" was abolished 40 years ago as being too countryfied, and we blossomed out with big town stuff. It is now chief of police, if you please.

## Chapter 8

Two years ago I made a summary of my 18 years experience on the School Board, as I was opposed to the plan of moving the central high school to a new site. When I was elected to the board in 1907, we had four grade schools on the west side, Parker, Royce, Hackett, and Gaston. On the east side we had three, Strong, Merrill, and Wright. We also had the old central high school built in 1869. During the 18 years I was on the board we built the present high school in 1908, followed at intervals by the following: on the west side, the Burdge, the Cunningham, the Gaston addition, and the Lincoln junior high and on the east side, the Waterman, Todd, and Roosevelt junior high.

When I was in No. 2 grade school, Professor Alexander Kerr was principal at the high school. In my four years at high school I was under Professor Eastman, Professor Paine, and that grand teacher, Professor Beach. Professor Converse came to Beloit in 1897 and served the city 35 years as city superintendent. Mr. Converse was one of my best and most loyal friends. He passed away in 1939.

The Masonic Temple was built in 1913. Prior to that, for 20 years the Masonic hall was on the third floor of the Thompson block. Perhaps the ghost of the famous goat may still be roaming around up there for all that I know.

The Odd Fellows have also been

in Beloit at least 80 years. They own property down in Broad street.

★ ★ ★

In the whole period from 1860 to 1880 Beloit was a small town. It had a very slow growth. The population, I think, was not over 5000 by 1880. They always used to say this was due to the load of old railway bonds that Beloit was saddled with. These bonds were issued in 1856 or 1857 to promote the Racine and Southwestern R.R. company which was putting through a road from Racine to Savanna. The name of the road was later changed to the Western Union and they had an ugly old depot which stood south and east of the present St. Paul passenger station. This road is now a part of the C. M. & St. Paul Railroad system. The present brick passenger station was built in 1900 or 1901.

It was not till after these bonds were paid off that the town began to grow. In 1880 Beloit was certainly a "hick town." The down town stores were shabby, many of them wooden construction. But fires now and then gradually eliminated the old wooden buildings. The streets were unpaved. They were either all mud or all dust.

The sidewalks all over town were made of wooden planks laid on stringers. In many places, especially down town, they were set up on posts or stilts, two feet or more above the street level. Hitching posts were placed at close intervals as it was all horse traffic.

I must not fail to mention the street sprinkler wagon. When the streets were dry and dusty it was terrible. So the merchants clubbed together and each agreed to pay a small amount monthly to maintain a sprinkler service.

The wagon was run by George Donner for many years. In the rear of our factory property in Third Street Donner installed a water wheel with water buckets. The lower part of the wheel was submerged in the stream and the current revolved the wheel, bringing up the buckets filled with water. From the elevated tank he filled his wagon tank. As the wagon passed up and down the

streets it would throw a wide spray but it did not last long. In an hour it was all evaporated and dry as before.

★ ★ ★

The street department now and then "improved" the streets by a coating of gravel which did but little good. It was not till 1896 that we began our paving program in a very small way. The first streets paved were Grand avenue from the C. & N. W. station to State street, and State from Bort's corner to Broad. The so-called paving consisted of a strip of brick paving 10 feet or so wide on each side to form the gutters at the sidewalk and the center of the street for traffic was paved with crushed limestone. This was only the beginning. After that the paving program continued to expand year by year, until all city streets were fully paved. At first various types of paving were tried—brick, asphalt, wooden blocks and cement. Now nothing but cement is used.

The old wooden sidewalks were a snare and delusion. They rotted out and became dangerous and unsightly. The first change for the better was the so-called "tar" walks. Then some brick was laid. Now cement sidewalks are universally accepted as the only good sidewalk.

In those early days every residence lot had to have a fence around it to keep out the cows, dogs and children who were roaming the streets. A real swell place had a white picket fence and they really looked very nice. The gate posts were boxed in with a suitable cap on top. Other places had board fences, the boards running longitudinally. They were much easier for the boys and girls to climb on and the flat board placed on top was fine to sit on and practice walking on. The kids today don't have all this fun.

When C. C. Keeler built his fine new house, corner of Broad and Prospect, he removed his fences and set a new style. At first everybody thought it was terrible, but gradually, little by little, others adopted the new style when their old fences became rotten and rickety.

## Chapter 9

No house was considered complete unless it had a barn or stable for the horse, cow, and pig. There was also the very necessary adjunct—the outside toilet. People nowadays who live in commodious homes with modern bathrooms can't appreciate too highly the comforts they have compared with the hardships of the outside toilets in cold weather. Saturday nights we children were given our baths in a tub on the kitchen floor.

When I was about 10 years old it was my job to do the chores. I had to feed and water the horse, the cow and the pig, clean out the stable and milk the cow. After milking in the morning "bossie" was turned loose in the street to wander around to find grass to eat. All the west side cows usually found their way to the open prairies west of town where the grazing was good.

In the evening some cows were "good" and came home alone, but some were not so thoughtful, so we kids had to go out and hunt "bossie" up and bring her home, which at times was an exasperating job, as you could never tell just exactly where she could be found. This practice of letting the stock roam the streets was abandoned about 1870.

We boys also had to saw and split the wood for the kitchen range and pile it up in the woodshed. Nowadays, there is nothing for boys to do except to ride bicycles and go to the movies.

Along about 1869 John Bishopp, living on Fourth street close to No. 2 school, imported a herd of Shetland ponies from Scotland. I was told half of them died on the trip over the ocean, but something like 30 or 40 of them arrived in Beloit. We children found it very interesting to go down to watch the ponies. They were shaggy, little animals, 30 to 36 inches high and, I believe, quite gentle.

Mr. Bishopp developed the breeding of the ponies into a big business and sold them to circuses and zoos all over the country, and to rich people for their children to ride and play with as pets. Later on the herd was moved out into the country.

The water works did not come to Beloit until 1886. At the time of putting in water works there was a very strong sentiment for the city to put in its own pumping plant and water mains and to own the works. But a number of our influential citizens for various reasons opposed this plan. There was Cham Ingersoll, Editor of the Free Press, William H. Wheeler, Charlie Parker, C. B. Salmon, E. C. Allen, C. D. Winslow and J. B. Peet. They finally secured a franchise from the city for 20 years to operate as a privately owned Water Works Co.

The first electric light plant was started by W. A. Knapp in 1887 and was located in Cross street. On June 4, 1891 a franchise was granted to Wiley Warner & Company whose plant was on Second street. Later the Beloit Electric Company was incorporated in 1898 by A. E. Smith and E. G. Cowdery of Milwaukee and G. L. Cole of Beloit, and acquired the properties of the predecessor companies.

The Beloit Gas Light & Coke Company was incorporated in 1855, but the plant was not built till 1859. Joseph Hendley was elected secretary and treasurer in 1860 and superintendent and remained in charge of the plant until his death October 10, 1899. In those years gas was used for illuminating purposes only, in streets, stores and a few residences. Because of the small output it was expensive.

★ ★ ★

The old Brooks grist mill was built before my time. It stood at the east end of School st., now E. Grand ave. It was operated by an overshot water wheel in the rear of the mill. The water was brought from a dam farther up in the Turtle Creek valley and was carried down to the mill in a race running around at the foot of the high ground west of Hancock Field. The mill did custom grinding. It was dismantled and torn down 20 or 30 years ago.

From the Brooks mill the water was carried down through another race running along Race street, now called Colby street, to the



Coodhue and Blodgett saw mill. This was a frame mill and burned down many years ago when I was a young lad. This old Turtle mill race has been filled up and no longer exists.

I remember another old structure of the early days. This was a

big frame building, the Leonard tannery, located about where the Wright & Wagner property now is. Later Josiah Leonard went into making gloves and mittens, and the Beloit Glove & Mitten factory is still running on Cross st., opposite the N. W. depot.

## Chapter 10

The railroad first came to Beloit in 1853. It was a branch line run up from Belvidere by the Chicago and Galena R. R., which was building a line from Chicago to Galena and the Mississippi River. This line was the nucleus of the present C. & N.W. R.R. company. The depot was built in the south end of town and the depot building straddled the state line. The freight house door had two signs, one on each side. North of the door the sign read "Wisconsin;" south of the door the sign read "Illinois." This little old depot continued in service till about 1872 when the little red brick passenger station was built on the west side at Grand avenue. The old original depot is still in existence now, owned and occupied by Hobbs Fuel company.

In 1855 the railroad crossed the river and continued on up 5th street to Evansville and Madison. This Beloit line was the first railroad to touch Wisconsin soil.

In the sixties the railroad locomotive was a small "teapot" affair in comparison to the giant locomotives of the present time. They were all wood burners. Large piles of cord wood, sawed to short lengths, were kept on hand at fueling stations and the wood was thrown into the tender by hand. I believe water was pumped into the water tank by horse power. Windmills came later. Each locomotive had an enormous flaring smokestack and a big cow catcher sticking far out in front. In those days cows frequently got on the track. The rails were not bolted at the joints by fish plates, so often they worked loose and the rails came apart. Hence quite frequently the train "ran off the track."

In the early days of the sixties and seventies Broad street was generally conceded to be the best residence street in the city. And it was a fine street. It was extra wide and had fine big elm trees on each side. Many of the older and better known families lived in this street. I can name a considerable number, but not all, of course. There were the Hendleys, Roods, Gordons, Sherwoods, Carpenters, Fosters, Todds, Baileys, Houstons, Keelers, Dows, Heivleys, Messers, Blazers, Dr. Clinton Helms and Parsons Johnsons. They used to claim that if you did not live in Broad street you were not of the elite of the city. No doubt this induced Mr. Yates and Mr. Forbes to build their fine homes in this street. But how have the mighty fallen! Today it is known as automobile row, and all the old time residents are either dead or have abandoned the street.

Notwithstanding the claims of the Broad streeters, there were many notable homes in other parts of the city. On the east side there were the Frank Davis home on College avenue, Dr. Chapin's home facing the campus, the Broder house on Chapin and Wisconsin, the Shepard house on "the avenue," now Hillcrest, the Waterman house facing the park and the J. T. Johnson house on E. Grand, and others.

On the west side there was and still is the fine old home of the L. C. Hyde family which has come down through three generations. First L. C. Hyde, then his daughter, Mrs. Brittan, and now his granddaughter, Mrs. Rockwell, lived there. The first house west of Hyde's place was the T. W. Laramie home and first house east was the C. D. Winslow home. At

the corner of Bluff and West Grand was the stately Field mansion. When the city bought the property for a public park, the house was torn down, (price \$27,500). The Durkee-Lee stone house on Bluff street was a fine old home and was a real landmark in the city. There was universal regret when it was torn down to make way for the Grinnell Hall. Charles H. Parker also had a fine home, facing what is now called Parker Ave.



The Goodhue home was also a fine old stone house (now the Kemp Apartment building) located at the corner of Bluff and Highland aves. On Fourth street William Blodgett built a very fine big house, now replaced by an oil station. Washington James also had a nice home on Fourth where the Rex Theatre now is, and up at the north end was the Rockwell stone house. Up north of town on the hill was the mansion of A. B. Carpenter, a very prominent man in his day. Mr. Carpenter had four handsome daughters, known as the Carpenter girls, who were quite prominent in the society of their day. One of them married C. B. Salmon, one married A. A. Green, the shoe man, one married Mr. Searing, of

Chicago, and one married Mr. Lawrence.

Along in the eighties Arthur Brittan rebuilt his house into a very swell place located at the corner of Fourth and West Grand. The architect was Charles Vail, a very competent man, who also remodeled the L. C. Hyde house and built the tower. The Arthur Brittan house is still there, but it is now enclosed by business property on both sides. Thus homes must give way to business progress.

As a matter of purely personal interest, I might mention the little red brick house on the corner of Bluff and St. Lawrence. Many years ago this was the parsonage for the Second Congregational church and the Rev. H. P. Higley lived there for 25 years or more. Mr. Higley kept a very fine garden. In this house many, many weddings were performed. When Mr. Higley moved away the house was sold and passed through several ownerships—Dr. Rostad and Mr. Butlin. I bought the house in 1898. We found it so roomy, commodious, and charming that we lived in it 18 years, until we moved over to 643 Bluff street on the death of my father and mother. In the little house my son Albert was born and my daughter, Martha, so we have many pleasant memories of their childhood days.

## Chapter 11

As Beloit made a big growth in population during the nineties, people began to clamor for a better passenger station than the little red chicken coop then in use. So in 1900 the road decided to build a new structure and the present big depot was erected, and were we proud of the new station! I believe our station is the only one on the entire C. & N. W. system which has a tall clock tower (the clock still runs). William B. Strong, a great railroad man, was then living in Beloit and he persuaded the N. W. to give us this clock tower. Beloit was getting to be a town of some importance by that time.

During my time I remember the following N. W. agents: L. F. McLean from 1867 to 1886, Edgar A. Howell from 1886 to 1909, Louis P. VonArx, 1909 to 1913, F. M. Garlick, 1913 to 1914, and the present agent, R. R. Ginn. All were hustlers for the road. Mr. McLean also sold coal. He lived near us in Locust street and his little daughter, Jessie, was an almost daily visitor at our house.

The Racine & Mississippi railroad reached Beloit in 1856. This was the road for which Beloit issued \$100,000 of railroad bonds. The name of the road was later changed to Western Union. In 1879 the road became a part of

the C. M. & St. Paul system and was known as the Racine & Southwestern division. The depot was located south of the present station. I well remember Chauncey Lathrop and R. M. Telfer, two genial gentlemen who served the road well for many years. In 1882 or 1883 the two roads jointly put in the system of industrial switch tracks which was a great boon to all the factories served.

In 1901 the Rockford, Beloit & Janesville Electric road was put through and had a good run of business until the coming of automobiles finally put them out of business. And the same thing happened to the Beloit local street car system.

★ ★ ★

I find one of the most interesting phases of this old time "recollection" work, is trying to recall the names and locations of the business places and merchants of that period between 1860 and 1900. I light my pipe and sit down to think and am surprised how many of the old names come back to me little by little. Of course, I cannot remember all of them but I will enumerate as many as possible.

Let us begin with the hotels. One of the oldest hotels was the Mansion House. This was a three story stone building on the corner of Bridge street and Third street. This building was bought by my father in 1886 and in 1893 the present Thompson building was erected on the site.

The Bushnell House was erected in 1855 by Professor Bushnell of the college. In 1865 the name was changed to the Fenwick House. About 1870 the property was bought by S. J. Goodwin and the name was changed to the Goodwin House. It remained the leading hotel till 1903 when the Hilton Hotel was built. The Good

win House entertained some distinguished people, Abe Lincoln in 1859, and Ole Bull in the early sixties, and many other celebrities.

Another old hotel was the American House, a frame building on the corner of Broad and Pleasant streets (now an oil station). It was run by Al Wood, quite a character in his day. Then there was the Salisbury House. It was burned in 1860 and when the C. M. & St. Paul R. R. built the new passenger station, the main line was relocated to accommodate the new station. Two other old timers were the Central House on the east side of State and the Grand on the west side of State, both now a thing of the past.

Before the Bushnell House was built in 1855 there stood on this corner a big frame building known as the Rock River House. To make room for the new hotel, it was moved north to the corner of State street and Public avenue. I can remember it as an unsightly old building. They say it was used at one time as a seminary. Later it was rented for commercial purposes, but finally it was torn down and replaced by the one story building now occupied by Sears Roebuck & Company.

The old Beloit House was located at the corner of State and St. Paul ave. and here the old stage coaches stopped for passengers.

When the C. & N. W. built the little red brick depot at Grand avenue, A. B. Carpenter built a frame hotel building across the street called the Commercial House. It was run by a man by the name of Sperbeck. The hotel burned down in 1884 and was replaced by a skating rink building. When C. B. Salmon took over the property he pulled the rink down and erected the present Salmon building.

## Chapter 12

I can remember the following old time grocery stores: On the east side the leading store was Stiles & Rogers who were in business at least 40 years. Then there was John Clinchy and Chelsea

Thompson. George Sanger ran a store corner of State and East Grand, where George Bros. store now is. On the west side there was Smith & House, B. C. Rogers, T. W. Laramie, the Springen gro-

cery on the north side of the street, and later on the Ed Hodge store, the Meehan store, Charlie Jones, C. F. Hardy and others.

In those days some of these grocery stores became a kind of working men's club. The stores were open evenings and the proprietor was never very busy. So after supper the men would come in and sit around the stove, smoke their pipes, talk politics and spin their yarns. And this was repeated night after night. In a way this was a fine thing. Imagine such a way of doing grocery business in 1941.

The old grocery of the sixties, seventies, and eighties was a rather primitive establishment compared with a modern chain store. Most commodities in the grocery line were sold out of bulk stock, weighed or measured by hand. Sugar, salt, molasses, vinegar, kerosene, crackers came in barrels. Rice and coffee came in burlap sacks, coffees were designated as Mocha, Java, or Rio, and came green. All coffee was roasted at home in the oven and ground in a little hand mill. Codfish came in full length slabs, American cheese in big round discs.

Dried fruits, such as apples, peaches, prunes and raisins came in bulk boxes. Flour came in paper sacks, a few package and bottle goods on the shelves such as corn starch, silver gloss starch, vanilla, ketchups, etc. There were no fine displays of shipped in fresh fruits and vegetables. Winter apples came from New York in barrels, peaches from Michigan in the season. There were no canned fruits, juices and soups and no breakfast cereals except oat meal. Butter was sold from a crock and lard from a tub. When a dozen eggs were purchased, the grocery man rolled up a cornucopia from a sheet of wrapping paper, placed the eggs inside for you to carry home.

In this section devoted to the ancient storekeepers of Beloit, there is one store that deserves special mention. It was known as Day & Andrews ice cream parlor, in which ice cream was served at small tables in the back room, at 10 cents "per dish." In the front room they kept a small stock of oranges, apples, candies and nuts,

especially peanuts, and a big bunch of bananas was hanging from the ceiling. We youngsters gazed in awe at those bananas and wondered what they were and what they tasted like. Bananas in those days were not the everyday commodity they have since become, and we could not spare five cents to buy one banana, as that was the price.

Mr. Day also kept a stock of toys and marbles, etc—"commies" were rated six for a penny, while "allies" rated from five to 10c apiece, depending on how many stripes there were around them. Of course, an alley with four to six stripes was much more valuable than one with only two or three stripes. Glass aggies were very precious. In the summer time the front window was raised up on hinges, leaving the front counter open to the sidewalk. Mr. Day would sit by this counter ever ready to serve the public that might happen to stop. A very interesting place for kids.

★ ★ ★

I recall the following meat markets. On the east side John Burger, Blazer Bros., and John Ritcher. On the west side were Rouse & Bibbins, Janvrin's market, and Sheibel and Witte. Cattle were slaughtered out in the old slaughter house on Madison Road, two miles out. (This was torn down long ago.) The carcasses were brought in to the markets and hung on hooks in the open air—no protection from flies. Beef steak was a "shilling" a pound, (12½), no distinction as to cuts. The front and hind quarters were displayed on the blocks with only a red mosquito net spread over them. The butcher cut off the slices as purchased. The floor was covered with saw dust. We have greatly improved in sanitary arrangements since them.

Abbott Brothers is the first dry goods store I can remember. Later on Jim Carpenter and then Carpenter & Baumes and Bort, Bailey & Company. On the west side Towles Store was an old timer and E. Lipman ran a store for many years. In those days the women all bought yard goods and dressmakers made the garments. Some dressmakers, Miss Ingleby for in-

stance, had a clientele of customers who had to wait their turn.

In the shoe trade I remember the A. A. Green Store—later the George Cram place, now Murklands. In the nineties we had Lou Raubenheimers's across the street. About the oldest shoe store on the west side was Gesley Bros., where the Main Meat Market now is. Then there was Hall & Nichols up near the bridge. There were also shoe makers who made custom made shoes by hand.

In the drug trade I believe the old Fenton store was the oldest standby. It was there as far back as I can remember and was located where Smith Brothers Jewellery Store is. In the eighties and nineties J. M. Farnsworth for many years ran a store on the west side. On the east side, there was the Dr. Strong and the Charlie Smith Store, Charlie Emerson on the corner and Frank Foster's where J. C. Penney is now located. Ed Smith also ran a store for 40 years.

In those days the sign and symbol of a drug store was the big glass globe in the front window, the globes filled with red, blue or yellow liquid. They were so pretty to look at. Inside there were shelves with rows of big glass bottles all labeled in gold letters to show the contents. There were also patent medicines in paper cartons, and perfumes and toilet articles in the show cases, but the store was not littered up with all kinds of general merchandise. A soda fountain was customary and a cigar counter.

★ ★ ★

Before the water works were put in, the plumbing trade was unknown in Beloit. But in 1885 and 86 several firms opened up. There was Holcomb Brothers, Franz & Newton, Carroll Gregory, and Zimmerman & Osborne. When inside bathrooms became an established institution there was plenty of work to do.

The oldest hardware store I remember was A. P. Waterman's, later Waterman & Gordon. John Gordon and his three sons continued to run the store for several decades and even after they died, the store continued to be called Gordon's Hardware. There was al-

so Winslow and Rosenberg across the street and old John Burr was an old timer on the west side. Burr's store was an antique shop, everything in it from the year one. Ed Watson bought him out in the 1880's.

The jewelry business has had an interesting record in Beloit. Probably the first watch and clock man was Mr. Hamlin who came over from Sweden in pioneer days and settled in Beloit. He was an excellent workman and a good friend of my father. I remember well as a child how he would come up to our house in Third street on a Sunday to clean and overhaul our big Seth Thomas clock. He would take it all apart to brush the wheels and pivots and then we children would wonder how he could ever put all those wheels back in place again. But he did. This Seth Thomas clock is still in active service, keeping good time and is a prized possession.

When the old man died his son, William Hamlin, succeeded to the business. He bought the block at the west end of the bridge, and continued the business in partnership with Frank Race and later on as Hamlin & Still.

Now the store is operated by a grandson of the original Hamlin. This is quite a record.

Another record just about as unique is that of the Sherman jewelry store. Sherman came to Beloit in 1854 and opened business in the little narrow store at what is now No. 316 State street. When he died his son, Harry Sherman, ran it for many years. Then A. L. Howard took it over and it has been a jewelry store for at least 80 years. It is remarkable how a tradition clings to a place.

I must not forget to mention my old friend, Sol Larson, by far the most expert watch and clock man we have ever had in Beloit. He learned his trade in Sweden and after graduation went to Switzerland and worked in the famous Longine Watch Works. He arrived here from Sweden in 1887. For a number of years he worked for William Hamlin, then for many years he ran a jewelry store of his own in East Grand avenue, which he discontinued after 50 years of active service. He is still working on his jeweler's bench.

## Chapter 13

There are many well known names associated with the old time clothing trade, the Rosenblatts, the Reitlers, the Weiricks, Charles Newberg, Mr. Heiney and Mr. Levy, of the old Golden Eagle store. Probably the best known of all early clothing merchants was the firm of Hill & Fuller who occupied a big store, where the Woolworth store now is. They came out from Boston about in 1873 and remained in business at least 40 years. They were a fine type of New England businessmen.

Another distinctive place of business in the middle period of Beloit was the Charlie Still store in the Second National Bank building. He handled cigars and tobacco, sporting goods, papers and periodicals and some jewelry. Still's was a great hangout for college students and men around town. Everyone dating back to that period will remember the big picture of Santa Claus, painted on canvas, which he annually displayed above his door at the approach of Christmas. It was a sign that the holidays were approaching and for everybody to get busy. Mr. Still retired after 50 years in service. He only recently passed away.

Very few people now living can remember the John Heiser (Hauser) bakery located in the lower end of State Street in the 100 block. John was, I believe, a native of Germany or Holland. He had a large family and lived on the premises. He had a reputation for making the only good rye bread in town.

★ ★ ★

And who can remember the Cheney Bakery opened up in 1866 by the father of Frank Cheney. It was located in the corner store of the Mansion House, now the Thompson Block in West Grand Avenue. Mr. Cheney invented and installed a rotary oven, which Frank Cheney claims was the first of its kind ever used. That was 75 years ago. It was a great improvement over the old style stationary ovens and distributed the heat more evenly. Mr. Cheney also had another specialty — viz liquid

yeast, for bread raising, instead of the salt rye method. Compressed and dry yeast were unknown at that time. Whenever the housewife wanted to bake bread she had to go or send to the bakery for a penny's worth of "yeast." Mother, with her large family, baked every other day, and we children had to go for the yeast.

C. L. Vale succeeded Mr. Cheney and remained at the old stand several years and then moved to the store at the west end of the bridge. He continued there for a long time until Corcoran brothers took it over, but it was always known as the Vale Bakery.

Beloit, in its day, has had only two breweries. In the sixties there was a brewery located at the north end of Third Street. The wagons used to go by our house loaded with beer kegs. I remember it well. Later in the nineties there was Schlenk's Brewery at the lower end of State. Schlenk made a specialty of fine ale.

In the lumber trade the first yard I can remember was the Peet & Sherwood yard in 1864 or 65, located where the St. Paul passenger station now stands. The Wilford Lumber Company is the present owner. The Minnesota Lumber company opened up a yard, corner of Fourth and E. Street on ground formerly occupied by Parker & Stone Reaper Company. They were succeeded by Beloit Lumber Company in 1880.

In the furniture line we had only two stores, John and Charlie Rau, located where Clara Stone's place is, and John Houston down on the corner of State and Broad. Both sold solid walnut furniture, marble top tables, bookcases, chairs, and bedroom sets. Both firms also did undertaking work. They were active competitors but the undertaking is a line that cannot be expanded at will. However, enterprise, even in the undertaking line, can be made use of to promote goodwill. The story is told about a certain undertaker who had an intuitive sense of psychology as applied to business. If he heard of a person seriously ill, he would be "casually" passing the house and if he happened to

see a member of the family, he would stop to inquire how so and so was getting along. He had heard that so and so was sick and he wanted to express the hope that he would soon be quite well again.

I can remember only four house-painters in the 1860-70 period. There was the firm of Pratt & Johnson, and Simon Smith and Jno. T. Greenwood. They were all first class painters. J. T. Johnson was a prominent Methodist and quite an original character. This story is told about him, which is quite characteristic: When business was slack in the painting line, Johnson would don his white overalls, sieze his paint pot of white lead and a brush, and start out and march at a brisk pace up one street and down another. Yes, he was awfully busy but if you had a job you wanted done, he would try to get it in for you. That was another demonstrator of psychological advertising and beats present blatent advertising all hollow.

Incidentally, here, in connection with the J. T. Johnson family, I can state that I was married at their house in 1896. My bride-to-

be was Cora C. Clark, daughter of Lucius B. Clark of the well known old time Clark family. Miss Clark had roomed at Mrs. Johnson's for several years, and when she was to be married Mrs. Johnson offered to have the ceremony performed at their house, which was very nice of her. On our honeymoon we took a lake trip to Mackinac Island and Georgian Bay up in Canada.

In closing my list of merchants I must not fail to mention my good friend, Ben Anderson's bicycle shop. Ben came to Beloit in 1901 and bought a store in Broad street. Joe Saris was also selling bicycles which were all the "go" in those days. They were competitors and both good men. When the automobile business began to start up, Mr. Saris secured an agency and started in to sell Ford cars in 1907, but Ben continued on with his old line and stuck to bicycles as long as he remained in business. He also handled sporting goods, fishing tackle, guns and sports accessories. Probably more hunters and fishermen dealt with Ben than we can count.

## Chapter 14

When I stop to think about it it seems almost unbelievable that I personally have seen every store building erected in West Grand between the bridge and the N. W. tracks, and from the N. W. tracks to Bluff street, I have seen every building erected except the Episcopal church; on Fourth street, every building up to St. Lawrence except the old residence No 344, now used for business, and on Third street every building from Grand avenue to St. Lawrence.

On the east side, I have seen all the store buildings in the business area built except the old landmarks which were there before I was born viz, the Goodwin Block, the Hanchett Block, the Union Hall Block, the Elks Club Building on the northwest corner of State and Broad, the Charlie Oliver property and the Branigan Hotel on lower State, and the Gregory Block now occupied by Ford Hopkins and J. C. Penney.

Doesn't it seem strange that such great changes can take place in the life time of a single individual? However, 82 years is a long span of life.

How many citizens of Beloit can remember the old Union Hall?

This was on the third floor of the building still standing on the southwest corner of State and Broad. Before the Opera House was built in 1870 this hall was used for concert and theatrical presentations, dances, and public meetings. Ole Bull, the great Norwegian violinist gave a concert in this hall in the early sixties. Father and Mother went and paid one dollar per ticket, which in those days was considered a big sum of money.

Hanchett Hall across the street, was also used for entertainments, political meetings, dances, etc. Abe Lincoln spoke in this hall October 1, 1859. At one time Company E occupied a part of this building, and the Y.M.C.A. had quarters

here before the present Y building was erected.

★ ★ ★

Before the advent of the automobile, the livery stable was a very important and necessary line of business. There were four leading stables, Drury's, at the lower end of Broad, where the N. W. freight house now stands, Robinson Brothers, on upper Broad about where the Majestic Theatre now is, Simon Strong's at the north end of State, now the city parking lot, and Snyder Brothers stable, where Osborn & Klingberg's store is located in West Grand.

These stables kept from 20 to 40 horses and single and double rigs for hire. Prices ranged from \$1.00 to \$5.00 or more depending on distance to be travelled and the type of rig. Regular patrons would have a favorite horse or team which they would call for. In the winter time sleighing parties were quite popular. Frank Snyder ran a hack for many years and never failed to meet a train.

★ ★ ★

I believe Fred Strong had the first auto in Beloit, a red car with the back door in the tonneau and the rear seats on the side. Walter Brittan soon bought a car, then Charlie Rouse and Erwin Gaston. Soon there were all of five or six cars in Beloit going through the streets at 15 or 20 miles an hour. When a car went by we all craned our necks to see it and exclaimed "that is Fred Strong's car." Out in the country the poor motorist was required by law to stop his car when meeting a farmer with a team and go to his assistance when the horses began to rare up.

Harry Vail opened up the first "garage" for the servicing of cars in Broad Street.

Here is a good place to relate my ride in the first horseless carriage that ran on the streets of Chicago in 1897. George W. Lewis, engineer and inventor, had developed a stationary gas engine, known as the Lewis engine, on which he had a string of 20 patents. We bought the patents for \$8000 and some years later sold one patent for \$5000. We manufactured the Lewis engine for many years. It was a good engine.

After buying his stationary engine patents, Lewis wanted to sell us his automobile patents, but my father said, "No." I think he declared wisely, as the coming automobile was only in an experimental stage.

★ ★ ★

However, now for the ride. Mr. Lewis wanted to demonstrate the merits of his new invention and insisted that I go out with him to see how nicely it ran. The car was a little buggy-like affair, high wheels, about 30 inches in front, 40 inches behind, steel tires, a small single cylinder engine under the seat, radiator in front, chain drive to rear axle, transmission lever on outside of box, steering done by a handle attached to a post on right hand side.

I got in and he started the engine by cranking on the side of the car. We started out from his shop on W. Jackson street, ran down to the loop, up Clark Street, and down Dearborn. Everywhere the crowd gazed at the new horseless carriage. I was afraid all the time that the engine would stop—but it didn't. We drove back to the shop without mishap. It was quite an exciting experience.

## Chapter 15

The Beloit Journal was the first newspaper in Beloit back in the forties. There were a number of other sheets started from time to time, but they did not last long.

When Cham Ingersoll came back from the Civil War in 1866 he started the Free Press. In 1869 Ingersoll sold out but came back

again in 1870. After various ownership combinations, Henry F. Hobart came into the business as associate editor.

Mr. Hobart also ran a book store in the Gregory Block, where the J. C. Penney company now is. All school children had to go to Hobart's store to buy their readers,



arithmetics and geographies. No free school books in those days. Mr. Hobart also bought waste paper and all the kids would bring in their bag-fulls which were weighed and dumped through a trap door into the cellar below. The money received was meager but seemed a lot to us youngsters.

In 1879 the first daily edition of the Free Press was issued. After Mr. Ingersoll died the paper was continued by Al Ayer, J. S. Hubbard, D. Humphrey Foster and M. Claude Hanna.

In 1897, D. B. Worthington, a Chicago newspaperman, came to Beloit and associated himself with a printer by the name of Roy Howell. They had an office in the Thompson block, where they printed the Beloit Daily News, a Democratic paper, but the going was hard. Many a time my brother and I advanced funds to help meet the Saturday night payroll. Mr. Worthington used to say when he landed in Beloit he had just 50 cents in his jeans.

In 1915 the Daily News took over the Free Press after 50 years of existence and now the News is one of the leading papers of the state. They operate a fine big printing establishment, equipped with the most modern printing machinery and it is a credit to the city.

I don't think anyone today remembers the old Guernsey job printing office of the 60 and 70's.

★ ★ ★

The first bank in Beloit was opened by L. C. Hyde in 1855, who came here from Kenosha. It was located near the corner of State street and St. Paul avenue, about where the Branigan Hotel is now. Later in about 1866 the bank was moved up to the corner of State street and School street (now E. Grand avenue), where the Walgreen store is now located, and remained here up to 1904 when it was moved up to the L. C. Hyde & Brittan Bank building. Soon after the National Banking Act was passed, the Hyde Bank became the First National Bank, but the National Bank charter was given up in 1887 and a partnership was formed with W. M. Brittan, a son-in-law, under the name of L. C. Hyde & Brittan. In 1931 this bank

was merged with the Beloit State Bank.

Early in the seventies the Beloit National Bank was incorporated by the Frank Davis family but continued in business only a few years. The office was in the Goodwin Block next door to the L. C. Hyde bank.

In 1881 the Beloit Savings Bank was organized by S. T. Merrill. I have before me a facsimile copy of the "certificate of organization," signed by 48 of the leading citizens of that period. For the record I will give their names herewith.

David S. Foster, J. B. Gordon, M. S. Hinman, J. H. Reigart, J. B. Peet, C. C. Keeler, R. J. Burdge, P. Johnson, C. F. G. Collins, A. L. Chapin, J. Hackett, H. R. Strong, J. B. Merritt, Samuel Bell, C. F. Rau, S. J. Todd, T. C. Chamberlin, H. N. Davis, Paul Broder, C. P. Whitford, R. J. Dowd, William Fitzgerald, H. Pentland, E. G. Smith, James M. Carpenter, Henry F. Hobart, S. H. Slaymaker, John A. Holmes, Robert Hall, Samuel J. Goodwin, J. M. Cobb, H. P. Carey, H. M. Whitney, J. Thompson, Clinton Babbitt, I. E. Goodall, E. C. Allen, E. N. Clark, J. G. Winslow, E. H. Biddle, L. L. Lansing, Charles N. Nye, A. W. Hanaford, John Foster, S. T. Merrill, O. C. Johnson, F. A. Dennett, S. S. Northrop.

These men have all passed away long ago, but we all owe them a debt of gratitude for their vision in starting such a worthy institution in Beloit. I knew them all with one exception.

This bank was organized as and still is a mutual institution, and was the first organization of its kind in Wisconsin. In 1893 the bank advertised as the only "Real Savings Bank" in Wisconsin, and that they operated on the "New England Savings Plan." The following citizens were on the Board of Trustees: R. J. Dowd, E. J. Smith, C. D. Winslow, T. L. Laramy, C. L. Vale, C. C. Keeler, E. G. Smith, H. M. Whitney, A. N. Bort, E. F. Hansen, and O. T. Thompson.

The bank started in an upstairs room over where the Penney Store now is and was conducted by its secretary, J. A. Holmes. At first it was on a very small scale. Then E. F. Hansen was elected secre-

tary and the bank bought the Citizens National Bank property, 348 E. Grand avenue where the Muir Drug Store now is. They continued in this location until 1926 when they moved into their fine new building on North State street—the former site of the Wilson Opera House. The bank eventually became a big institution with deposits in excess of \$5,000,000.

In 1878 or '79 a man by the name of H. W. Taylor came to Beloit and organized the Citizens National Bank with its office in the Zilley Block in State street. Mr. Taylor was president and E. S. Greene was cashier. For a few months in 1879 and '80 I was bookkeeper in this bank.

★ ★ ★

In 1880 C. B. Salmon organized a bank known as the Manufacturers Bank, located in his new building at the east end of the city bridge. Soon thereafter he bought out Mr. Taylor's interest in the Citizens National Bank, and moved it up to his own building and merged it with the Manufacturers Bank. Some years later the bank was liquidated and went out of business.

In 1882 the Second National Bank was founded by Charles H. Parker. The bank building was built by L. Holden Parker. F. H. Starkweather was cashier. Others connected with this bank were A. N. Bort, August Zilley, John B. Gordon, Prof. R. D. Salisbury, R. J. Burdge, S. H. Slaymaker, Lou Raubenheimer, and B. P. Eldred, (who is now the president.)

The Beloit State Bank was founded by John Paley in 1892. Mr. Paley built the small building still owned by the bank—now occupied by Henry Mills. This was used as the banking office until 1922 when the present big building was erected. George S. Whitford was the first cashier and Clara Paley acted as bookkeeper. John Paley died suddenly in 1904 and shortly thereafter Mr. H. A. von Oven became president in 1905.

The total deposits of all the three banks of Beloit are now \$12,011,433.74.

The Beloit Cooperative Building and Loan Association also had a considerable share in

building up the city. It was organized in 1887.

★ ★ ★

Now it can be told to the world the story of the famous one thousand dollar bill, which happened like this when I was bookkeeper at the Citizens National Bank in 1879: At the close of each day, we would list up our checks drawn on the L. C. Hyde & Brittan Bank, and they would do the same and the difference would be paid in currency. Sometimes the balance would be one way, and sometimes the other. If the balance due the Citizens happened to be a considerable amount, Mr. Hyde would stick in a \$1,000.00 bill, much to the annoyance and chagrin of Mr. Taylor, and the cashier, Mr. Greene. A thousand dollar bill is not of much use in a bank's current funds to pay ordinary daily checks, so Mr. Hyde liked to annoy his competitor. However, when the balance was the other way, back would go the \$1,000.00 bill to Mr. Hyde's bank. So they bandied back and forth for a while the famous thousand dollar bill.

On the morning of Aug. 18, 1932, the Second National bank was held up by bandits. Everyone in the bank, customers as well as the bank personnel, were forced to lie on the floor while the robbers scooped up the cash and bonds. They made a big haul. The bank telegraphed for funds and continued to do business the rest of the day as though nothing had happened in the morning. The bank was fully insured and lost nothing.

★ ★ ★

In the 1860 and 1870 decades we had quite an array of able doctors and dentists for a town of 4,000 people. I believe I can enumerate all of them. There was Dr. Bicknell, Asahel Clark, Taggart, H. P. Strong, Brenton, Johnson, Clinton Helm, Bell, Evans, Carey, and Hunt. Some of these had been army surgeons in the Civil War. There were only two dentists, Dr. Judd and Dr. E. N. Clark. I think any old timers still living will remember these names. Dr. Asahel Clark officiated when I was born. I must admit that I cannot remember this happy event.

In the second generation of doc-

tors can be named the following well known names. Ernest Helm, Arthur Helm, Nye, Crockett, Thayer, Spawn, Connell, Burger, and Anderson. All of these have passed away except Dr. Crockett and Dr. Burger.

The dentist branch was represented by three generations of Bradleys, Dr. Cleophas, Dr. Howell, Dr. Hutchison, and Dr. Myers, some of whom are still active.

The staff of lawyers in those days was not so extensive as most law matters were handled at the

county seat, Janesville. It was not until the Beloit Municipal Court was established that lawyers in greater numbers opened up offices in our city. The old time lawyers were Converse, (who built the big house, later the home for many years of the Broder family) and the following prominent men — Matt Carpenter, Paul Broder, S. J. Todd, John Rood, R. J. Burdge, Charlie Tattershall, Booth Malone, J. B. Dow, Con Buckley and J. W. Bates. These have all passed away.

## Chapter 16

We will now review the changes and developments that have taken place in the water power district. I claim to know intimately every single concern that has been in business on the water power. In the early days Beloit had aspirations of becoming an industrial city and welcomed the establishment of factories.

The dam was built in 1855 and chartered as the Beloit Water Power company. The subscribers to stock were allotted a certain number of inches of water in proportion to the amount of stock subscribed for. I have always understood the Gaston Scale Works was the first shop built on the race. Then there was the old stone foundry on Third street and the wooden machine shop built on piles across the race, owned and occupied by the firm of D. S. Warner & Company. This property is now a part of the Yates-American holdings. They manufactured reapers and mowers, engine, wood and foot lathes, wood planers, steam engines and iron water wheels. They called themselves the Beloit Iron Works. They did business in the late fifties and early sixties, but in 1867 they failed and were sold out by Jackson — Bushnell, the receiver.

A man by the name of Charles Walker seemed to have had considerable to do in those days with the water power properties, also Lucius G. Fisher, Israel D. Love, and G. W. Otis. Probably no one at this time remembers any of these names.

Israel Love owned a big tene-

ment house building across the street known as the "Love Block." It was not a very high toned property, rather shabby and run-down, and occupied by small pay renters. This building was later moved up into Sixth Street and renovated and is still in existence in the 1100 block.

★ ★ ★

One of my earliest recollections was to hear the paper mill whistles blowing the hours of 7 a.m., 12 o'clock noon, 1 p.m., and 6 p.m. People set their clocks by the paper mill whistle. There were three paper mills. The big Rock River mill was located at the east end of the dam, where the electric light plant is now located. The boiler house was across the street from the mill and a great tall brick smokestack stood on top of the hill in the rear of the boiler house.

On the west side of the river were two mills. One of these was known as the Straw Board company mill and was located on the river bank. This is now the Beloit Box Board mill, owned by J. A. Fisher. The other mill was just west of the Beloit Straw Board mill and parallel to it. It was owned by the Rock River Paper Company and was called the No. 2 mill.

The Straw Board mill had many vicissitudes. I have already spoken of the accident that happened April 1, 1870, when a dryer cylinder exploded and wrecked the roof and blew the east wall into the river. Some years later, about 1887, the rotary machine exploded

and again wrecked the mill. Dan Whetstone was badly injured and was carried home on a stretcher, but finally recovered. Then again in about 1890 the mill caught fire from burning straw ignited by sparks from the switch engine and burned down, but was rebuilt. In 1899 the S. E. Barrett Paper Company of Chicago bought the mill and for many years it was operated by E. J. Adams as manager.

It must have been in this period that the No. 2 Rock River mill was sold to the Barrett company, as the No. 2 mill was dismantled and only a portion of it now remains, and in 1910 Fred Coons bought an interest and remained associated with Mr. Fisher until 1926 when he sold his stock back to Mr. Mr. Fisher. Fred Coons was an old time papermaker, having for many years previously operated the Rockton mill.

★ ★ ★

In the sixties the principal shops on the water power outside of the paper mills were the Parker & Stone Reaper Company, and the O. E. Merrill & Company foundry and machine shop.

Parker & Stone was considered a big shop in those days, and put out about 800 reapers and mowers a year. The foundry was on a lot where the north end of the Besly building is. The machine shop was a frame structure on the east side of Second Street. The paint shop was west of Third Street, where the Beloit Lumber Company is now located. The office faced on Third Street. Mr. Kettlewell was superintendent. It was in the Parker & Stone reaper shop that George Appleby invented the twine binder in 1880. He became nationally known and his knotter is still in use on all harvesting machinery. This invention brought about the removal of the Parker & Stone Company to Milwaukee in about 1881 or 82. The firm was known as Parker & Dennett. The

next year L. Holden Parker sold out his interest for \$50,000 and built the Second National Bank Building. His father, Charles H. Parker, was president of the bank.

While on this subject of reapers, I might give my readers a short history of the development of the reaper industry. The first reaping machine was invented by Cyrus H. McCormick. It consisted of a sickle and sickle bar to cut the grain. At first the grain as cut fell on the platform and a second man on the machine had to rake it off. The next improvement was the self-rake reaper, doing away with the raker. Then the hand binder came along where the grain was elevated to a table and the sheaves bound by hand by the man standing in a cage on the machine. This was called a harvester. The final step was the invention of the self-binder by George Appleby in 1880. Now combines have come into general use where the grain is harvested and threshed at one operation and the wheat or other grain delivered into the wagon or truck.

The O. E. Merrill & Company business was started in the fifties and their foundry and machine shop was located where the C. H. Besly shop now stands. They did general machine shop work and later started in to build paper mill machines. About 1869 they took a contract to build one hundred "velocipedes," a two wheel contraption, the forerunner of the bicycle, which came much later. The velocipede was heavy and clumsy and as it did not have ball bearings, it rode hard. The young men used to ride them up and down the sidewalks, but they never became popular.

In 1873 the Merrill firm incorporated under the name Merrill & Houston Iron Works and took up the manufacture of the Houston turbine water wheel. C. F. G. Collins was made general manager.

## Chapter 17

Across the street from the Parker & Stone machine shop was the small shop of Barr & Cox, who manufactured hand hammers. They remained in business only a

few years and quit. Barr lived next door to us on Third street.

Just north of Parker & Stone was the big Blodgett stone mill. This mill made a specialty of

grinding rye flour. We boys would go into the mill and watch the millers sharpen the grooves in the stone grinding discs. The mill burned in 1898 and was not rebuilt. Frank Blodgett went to Janesville and took over a mill up there and is still living.

Next to the Blodgett mill was the Bishopp frame mill which no longer exists. It was dismantled and torn down not many years ago.

Next came the Gaston Scale Works, the oldest shop on the water power. The Gaston Scale Works were in business for many years but never seemed to grow in size. It is now out of business.

Next to Gaston's was the Gray and McDonald sash door and blind factory and general planing mill shop. Mr. Gray lived at the corner of Bluff and Roosevelt and has long been dead. His daughter, Mrs. Fluekiger, and her husband still live in the old homestead.

After Mr. Gray died, W. D. Kenzie took over the factory and ran it for several years. Later still Mr. Warner, father of Arthur and Charlie Warner, occupied the building as a pattern shop.

In 1876 R. J. Dowd came to Beloit from Lee, Mass., and established the Dowd Knife Works. This company is still running at their shop located on the site of the Gray planing mill. The Young Manufacturing Company also occupied a part of the old factory.

Way back in 1868 or 69 a company was formed to start a woolen factory. They built a nice three story stone building just north of the Young Manufacturing Company shop but the venture was not successful, and later on given up.

★ ★ ★

Shortly after that C. B. Salmon, William H. Wheeler, E. P. Salmon, and George Sparks started in the manufacture of the Eclipse wind mill. This mill was an invention of Mr. Wheeler's father, who for many years was a missionary to the Ojibway tribe of Indians near Ashland, Wis. The Wheelers were born there and learned to speak the Ojibway Indian language as they were in

constant touch with the Indian children. Mr. Wheeler used to relate many amusing stories about meeting Indians here and there in later years, and seeing their look of surprise that he could speak to them in their native language.

Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Salmon opened their business in the idle woolen factory building and continued there until they built their new factory in 1875 down on St. Paul avenue. There they added building railroad water tanks and pumps to their business. In 1876 they exhibited the Eclipse wind mill at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. All the windmill exhibits were mounted on towers out on the grounds, and the story is that one night a violent wind storm came up, and every windmill was blown down except the Eclipse, which was running the next day at a merry clip, having weathered the storm. This must have been a great feather in their cap, and the best possible advertisement. They secured first prize.

In 1882 the Beloit Wagon Works was organized by five men—Nelson Chamberlin, R. K. Felt, Professor William H. Beach, J. M. Cobb and John Thompson. They built and equipped a factory up on the old fair grounds, and began the manufacture of farm wagons. However, their capital was too small. In those days the manufacture of wagons was a big business, and required big capital. The Wagon Works failed, and the stockholders lost their money.

After Wheeler and Salmon left the woolen mill it was taken over by Fred Houston and C. P. Whitford, who converted it into a roller flouring mill. Their best brand of flour was called the "None Such" and their cheaper grade the "Economy" brand. After Whitford and Houston failed, the mill was taken over and operated by the Salmon Milling Company up to 1903 when the mill burned down.

Along about 1868-69 and 70 there was a shoe factory down in the lower end of State Street. It was named the Libby Shoe company. I knew a neighbor of ours when living down on 3rd street who worked in this factory. How big it was I don't know, and it did not continue for very long in business. I believe it was later

bought by or merged with the John Foster Shoe company about 1870, and they took up quarters in the big wooden "hotel" building in Cross street alongside the Chicago Northwestern Railroad line. In 1876 the Foster Shoe company moved to the Eclipse Wind Engine plant in St. Paul avenue when Mr. Wheeler moved up on the hill. The Foster Shoe company specialized in making the finest ladies shoes in the United States, and sold their products in the big cities like Chicago, New York and even in Boston. It was said the first lady in the land always wore Foster shoes.

The Freeman Shoe Company now owns and operates a factory in the old Foster plant located in St. Paul avenue.

★ ★ ★

When the Chicago and North Western built the red brick depot on the west side at Grand avenue, a man by the name of Bill Smith conceived the idea of building a big three story frame building alongside the depot platform, which he called a "hotel." His idea was to have a railroad eating house, where passenger trains could stop for meals. But the railroad company vetoed the idea and the "hotel" was a fizzle.

The building then became used for other purposes. As stated above the John Foster Shoe factory occupied it for some years before they moved to St. Paul avenue. Then the Rosenblatt overall factory until they moved up to Fourth street. Finally Tom Purves bought the building and ran his cigar factory there. He finally sold it to the North Western when they built their new passenger station in 1900, and the building was removed.

In the same period W. D. Kenzie operated a planing mill in a building just south of Smith's Hotel. When the new North Western station was built this planing mill was torn down.

Up north of the switch track in Roosevelt was a big frame building used by Patsey Crahen for a tobacco warehouse. Later there was a small gas engine shop owned by George Cram and a partner, Mr. Beebe, but this did not con-

tinue very long. Now the land is owned by the Yates Machine Company.

In 1865 in an old stone building at the corner of Third and Grand where Kaplan's furniture store is located was a soap factory. It was a smelly place, and ran for many years. Later Oscar Omstead manufactured drive well points in this building until he moved to Chicago. Then it was occupied by Holcomb Brothers, plumbers. Mr. Holcomb put in the plumbing in our house at 643 Bluff Street when it was built in 1894. He was a good mechanic, and at one time announced that he had invented a new type rotary steam engine. He expected to make a million, but nothing ever came out of it.

Just north of the soap factory building Gesley Brothers, Saber and Torris, in 1881 built a shop to manufacture the Gesley cultivator. They ran it for two or three years and quit. After that it was used by Gesley and Millett as a farm implement establishment. Gesley and Millett have both passed away.

At the corner of Third and St. Lawrence there was in the seventies and early eighties, a small machine shop, operated for a time by George Summers, a machinist, and later on by J. C. McEvoy, a well known man in the community. The land is now a part of the Yates-American holdings.

One of the most interesting places to us children was the Cooper shop on Third street, which stood where the Jorgenson shop now stands. This shop was operated by the Perry family, Mr. Perry, the father, his sons, Ab and Fred. Ab Perry, is still living the last surviving member of the G.A.R. Fred Perry was a classmate of mine at old No. 2 school, and passed away many years ago.

It is no small art to make a flour barrel, or any other kind of barrel. The staves have to be shaved to the proper taper, the heads fitted in, the hoops driven down tight, and the whole thing made perfectly water tight. I used to wonder as I watched them at their work, how they could do it so fast and so easily. The Perry shop made all the barrels for the Blodgett flour mill, and I suppose for other customers as well.

## Chapter 18

During the Civil War the country went off the gold standard and all gold and silver money went out of circulation and was replaced by greenbacks. For smaller change we had five cent, 10 cent, 20 cent and 50 cent fractional currency, known as "shin plasters." These were printed on small pieces of paper, of different sizes. They were a nuisance to handle, but did the business.

Specie payments were not resumed till 1876. Just before the final announcement that we were going back to gold, fractional silver coins began to circulate. Father's custom was to pay off his men every Saturday night. One pay day he had secured from the bank a supply of silver half dollars, so each man received a silver coin in his pay. I was there when it happened and I remember how pleased the men were to see a silver coin. Most of them said that that coin was not going to be spent but they were going to keep it as a precious possession. But it was not long before there was plenty of silver in circulation and the shin plasters were retired.

In the 1880's the Knights of Labor was an organization feared and dreaded by all employers and all good citizens. Samuel Gompers was the head and prime mover. The Knights were going to get their rights. Mysterious chalk marks and symbols appeared on walls and side walks, and everybody was sure that something dreadful was going to happen. Charlie Newburg, a prominent west side business man had built a big wooden structure across the street from the Episcopal church, a kind of theatre and auditorium. This became the headquarters for the Knights of Labor. The Knights were the forerunners of the present day labor movement.

In the third Cleveland election campaign in 1892, General Farnsworth was in Beloit and gave a political address in the Knights of Labor Hall, which all good democrats attended, probably with a brass band and all the usual enthusiasm.

In 1880 Beloit was endeavoring to secure more factories. In Chicago there was an ornamental brass works shop, an offshoot of the big Adams-Westlake company on the north side. They wanted to dispose of the brass works and a bunch of Beloit promoters made a deal to take it over and move it to Beloit. A site was selected at the north end of Fourth street. The committee, headed by J. B. Dow, adopted a clever way to finance the enterprise. A large tract of land was acquired north of Liberty and west of Bluff and platted. It was on quite a big scale. A wide street was run east and west and named Olympian Boulevard. Lots were then sold to patriotic citizens at \$400 per lot. It was a good scheme and it worked. Later many lot purchasers sold their lots at a big discount, but those who held them came out all right.

The Beloit Brass Works only ran for two or three years and was then given up. The property was then bought by Lou and Moses Rosenblatt, who moved their overall factory up there from the old building by the North Western depot.

When the Rosenblatts died, the city bought the property and it is now used for city work and the City Engineering Department.

In 1883 Beloit passed through a financial crisis. The big Rock River Paper Company failed, John Hackett, assignee; the Merrill and Houston Iron Works, failed, R. J. Burdge, assignee; Hinman, Moody and Company failed, The Beloit Wagon Works failed, and O. E. Merrill and Company failed. The John Thompson Plow Works was on a sound basis, and did not go under.

★ ★ ★

It could not be denied that Beloit was in the dumps and the situation looked gloomy. But a better era was coming. It developed that the Berlin Machine Works of Berlin, Wisconsin desired to move to a larger city. A committee of eleven citizens was formed of which my father was a member to negotiate with Mr. Yates

and Mr. Forbes to see if Beloit could secure this factory. A certain sum of money was raised with which to buy the O. E. Merrill Machine Shop in Third street and the Berlin Machine Works was offered this property as a bonus if they would come to Beloit. The deal was closed and they moved here and grew into a large institution and helped to put new life into the community.

Another new factory was brought here about the same time by Mr. Wheeler. The Williams Engine Works. A bonus of \$10,000 or \$20,000 was given the Williams Engine Company, and the shop was built alongside the Eclipse Wind Engine Company. Wheeler also added Eclipse Friction Clutch Pulleys to his line.

In 1893 Fairbanks Morse and Company bought out Mr. Wheeler's holdings in the Eclipse and

Williams Engine Works and started expanding the plant on a large scale. This gave the city a big impetus and we began a rapid growth. This is all comparatively recent history.

The old Merrill and Houston Iron Works had been lying dormant for several years after their failure. In 1885 a number of their old men organized a new company called the Beloit Iron Works. The organizers were Fred Messer, A. Aldrich, R. J. Burdge, W. H. Grinnell, Noble Ross and Lou Merrill. They started with a small capital, but bought the assets of the old Merrill and Houston Iron Works at a bargain price and so had a favorable beginning. In 1893 they exhibited a complete paper mill machine at the World's Fair in Chicago. Now they have grown into a large and strong company.

## Chapter 19

In 1901 my brother and I organized a corporation under the State of Illinois laws, and built an engine factory in South Beloit. Ours was the first factory located across the line, and was placed in the middle of a corn field. At that time there was not a house in South Beloit except the old Dr. E. N. Clark homestead a mile south of town. Railroad switch tracks were run into the new manufacturing district and more factories were located, the Gardner Machine company, Racine Feet Knitting company, The Warner Instrument factory, the Hendley - Whittimore company, the Mork Foundry and the Lipman Refrigerator company.

Our factory prospered until disaster overtook us. In 1904 we had the big Turtle creek flood. That rampageous stream overflowed its banks, and flooded the entire South Beloit area, and the water came up to McNeany's corner on State street. Strange as it may seem the flood caused the burning of our shop. Gasoline floating on the surface of the water entered our machine shop and reached the fires under the boiler, causing an explosion and completely

destroying the building. Our watchman lost his life. This happened at 10 a.m. The fire caused us a loss of \$200,000 and almost ruined us financially. But we rebuilt the shop and continued in business till 1915 when it was sold and passed into other hands.

The machine shop is now occupied by the Warner Electric Brake company, and the foundry by the Beloit Foundry company.

They say misfortunes never come singly. In December of the same year, 1904, a fire was started in the wood shop department of our plow factory in Third street by the gross carelessness of a workman. The fire department bungled the job and two-thirds of the plant was destroyed, with another heavy loss. We rebuilt the shop but after some years discontinued manufacturing operations.

From that time on for many years we had no big fires in the city. But on December 4, 1930, Beloit had a very serious fire caused by the explosion of gas from a leaky main in the E. L. Chester building. After considerable litigation with the insurance companies and the Wisconsin



Power and Light company, they obtained a settlement, and in 1934 they rebuilt their store, which is now a fine merchantile establishment. It was considered remark-

ably fortunate that no lives were lost in the explosion. If it had not occurred about six in the morning many persons might have been killed or injured.

## Chapter 20

When I was born in 1860 there were only seven church organizations who had places of worship in their own structures. These were St. Paul's Episcopal, St. Thomas Catholic, First Congregational, Second Congregational, Presbyterain, Baptist and Methodist. Of all these original church buildings only one remains today—St. Paul's Episcopal.

This church was built in the early fifties and dedicated in 1856 under the pastorate of Rev. Stephen Millett. This church is of pure gothic type of architecture and still ranks as one of the finest and most beautiful buildings in the city. They say Mr. Millett was criticised by some of the conservative members of his congregation for being so lavish as to spent \$75.00 for plans furnished by a Philadelphia architect. But nobody now regrets the expenditure.

### St. Thomas Built in 1851

St. Thomas' Catholic church was built in 1851. I well remember the old church with the long flight of stairs leading up to the front door. The building was destroyed by fire in 1884, and the present church was built soon after by L. E. Cunningham, Sr., the contractor.

The original First Congregational church was built in 1844 at the corner of Broad and Prospect, but was small and inadequate. The people wanted a new building. The present building was erected in 1862 while the Civil war was going on. It is a large and imposing structure of the familiar New England type of architecture, and has always been considered the church of the college people. The folks used to say that to be somebody of consequence in the community you must belong to the First Congregational church.

At the time of the cyclone in 1883 the church spire was thrown

down, but it did not damage the clock in the tower. This clock was a gift to the college but at the time the college had no place to put it. Later when the chapel was built the clock was placed in the chapel tower.

The Second Congregational church was an offshoot of the First Congregational. Some of the people thought it would be wise and necessary to have a west side organization as the city was growing westward. A frame church building was erected in 1859 at the corner of what is now St. Lawrence and Parker avenue at a cost of \$1,500. This church remained there till the present church was built on Bluff street in 1905.

### Church Loses Steeple

The original Presbyterian church was built in 1850 at the corner of Broad and Pleasant. In 1883 the steeple blew down in the cyclone. It was remodeled in 1888 and finally sold to Dr. A. C. Helm, who made it over into a hospital. It is now the Lorlen Hotel. In 1907 the new church was built on the corner of Public and Prospect street.

The original Baptist church was built in 1848 on School street, now East Grand avenue just east of the present Post Office building. This building had a lot of vicissitudes. In 1883 the cyclone struck it and damaged the spire so it stood at a slant but did not fall. Shortly before midnight in 1884 on Easter Eve the church caught fire starting in a stable in the rear and was completely demolished. I have elsewhere mentioned this fire and how the town clock located in the burning steeple continued to run and just at the hour of midnight it struck twelve—a last farewell, and shortly after crashed to earth.

After considerable sacrifice the church was rebuilt the following

year. In 1928 the church property was sold and the present church was built in 1930 at the corner of Public avenue and College street.

The First Methodist church was built in 1846 at its present location, corner of Public avenue and Pleasant st. The present structure was built in 1905.

The Trinity Lutheran church was built in 1877. This church was sold to the Christian church body about 1919 or '20.

Our Savior's Lutheran church was built in 1920 and is now one of the largest church bodies in the city.

### Few Long Pastorates

In the long history of Beloit there have been only five pastorates of 25 years or more. At the Episcopal church, Dr. Fayette Royce came here November 1, 1868 and he continued as rector of the church till he died, October 19, 1897—29 years. He was an amiable and lovable man, well liked in the community and beloved in the church. He served on the school board three years and also four years as City Superintendent of Schools. Royce school was named after him.

Father Ward came here in 1883 and remained in charge of St. Thomas till he died March 31, 1915. Father Ward was a big man, six foot six tall and of massive frame. He wore a full beard, something unusual for a Catholic priest. He was a genial, warm-hearted man and everybody loved and respected him. He was a great worker for total abstinence. He liked to play chess. I frequently played with him. He used to say he played for the fun of it, and not for the glory of winning the game. I don't know why, but for some reason he always seemed very friendly to me and interested in our business affairs. I recall that after the new church was built they ordered a new bell from Troy, New York. When the bell was hung, the big rope wheel which swung the bell proved weak and defective. He came to our shop and ordered us to make a new and stronger wheel, which we did, and I am sure this wheel is still ringing the bell in St. Thomas' church today. When our factory in South Beloit burned he met me on the street and

expressed his regrets, and said, "Don't be discouraged, my boy, go ahead and rebuild and you will come out all right. I have always admired your pluck." I shall always remember and appreciate his friendship.

The Rev. H. P. Higley came to the Second Congregational church in 1867 and remained till he resigned in 1892. He was a very fine type of New England clergyman. He held frequent revival services in his church. Some noted evangelist was called in to bring sinners to repentance. He and Mrs. Higley were well beloved in the community.

The Rev. John Evans was installed as rector in St. Paul's church in 1910 and served the church for 24 years. He resigned in 1934. Mr. Evans was active in civic affairs and was and still is a popular speaker.

Father Hanz came to Beloit in 1903 as curate of St. Thomas church. In 1908 St. Jude's parish was organized. The church was built in 1910 and Father Hanz has been the pastor ever since, over 40 years of service.

### Record of Churches

In order to make a clear picture of the beginning and development of our Beloit churches I will present a tabulation showing when the churches were built, and give the names of the pastors in charge of the congregations at the time. Where any congregation has had two church structures I will denote the first one by symbol A, and the second one by symbol B.

St. Paul's Episcopal— 1844  
Rev. Aaron Humphrey; B. 1856  
Rev. Stephen Millett.

First Congregational—A. 1844  
Rev. Dexter Clary; B. 1862  
Rev. S. J. Humphrey.

Methodist—A. 1846  
Rev. Joseph Lewis; B. 1905  
Rev. R. W. Bosworth.

Baptist—A. 1848  
Rev. Niles Kinnie; B. 1930  
Rev. R. N. McDonald.

First Presbyterian — A. 1850  
Rev. Alfred Eddy; B. 1907  
Rev. Hugh L. Moore.

St. Thomas Catholic—A. 1859  
Father John W. Norris; B. 1886  
Father M. J. Ward.

Second Congregational—A. 1859  
Rev. J. O. Knapp; B. 1905  
Rev. B. Royal Cheney.

Trinity Lutheran—1877 Rev. C. F. Magelssen.  
 Bethlehem Lutheran—1893 Rev. J. A. Bergh.  
 Our Saviours—1920 Rev. T. A. Mason.  
 St. Paul's German Lutheran—A. 1882 Rev. W. Buehring; B. 1939 Rev. G. W. Durkop.  
 St. John's German Lutheran—A. 1896 Rev. H. Studtman; B. 1922 Rev. Theodore Bretscher.  
 Atonement Lutheran—1906 Rev. Paul H. Roth.  
 St. Judes Catholic—1910 Father J. E. Hanz.  
 St. Peters Catholic—1926 Father Martin J. McEvoy.  
 St. Paul's Catholic—1914 Father A. Giovanoni.  
 Gridley Congregational — 1899 James W. Strong.  
 Swedish Mission — 1918 Rev. Solomon Nordwall.  
 Christian Science—1910.  
 West Side Presbyterian—1900.  
 Seventh Day Adventist — 1918 Elder A. F. French.  
 Second Methodist — 1940 Rev. Hermes Zimmerman.  
 Central Christian—Bought 1920.  
 Latter Day Saints—1920.

### Y.M.C.A. Started in 1882

The original Y.M.C.A. was started in Beloit in 1882. R. J. Dowd was president, J. B. Peet was vice president and Mr. Willis Lougee was secretary. Their first permanent quarters was upstairs in the Carpenter block, now known as the L. C. Hyde and Brittan building. It was nicely fitted up and had two bathrooms. They remained there several years and then moved to rooms in the Hanchett block, corner of State and Broad. Mr. Lougee was succeeded by J. W. Van Beynum, and later Mr. Young acted as secretary for several years. I was treasurer at the time, and the only trouble was there was never any money in the treasury. Finally there was a lapse for want of financial support.

In 1903, the Y was revived. Under J. A. Steiner's administration the present Y.M.C.A. building was built in 1915. Mr. Steiner went to Janesville, and Charles A. Daley was secretary for many years. The present secretary is L. R. Mjaanes.

The Y.W.C.A. was organized in 1920. They had rooms down on Broad street for a while; then moved up to their present building in Pleasant street in 1929.

## Chapter 21

Everybody is quite familiar with the annals of Beloit college. It was founded in 1846. The original campus comprises about 30 acres of ground and is now very nearly in the center of the city. When I was born there were only three buildings on the campus, Middle College, North College and the chapel building. I can remember the building of Memorial Hall in 1869. This was built as a memorial to the men of Beloit college who lost their lives in the war. There is a tablet on the wall inside the building.

It is a remarkable fact that in the 95 years of its existence there have been only four college presidents, Dr. Chapin, Dr. Eaton, Dr. Brannon and Dr. Maurer. I have known them all personally.

On Saturday, Feb. 28, the people of Beloit were greatly shocked to hear of the sudden death of

President Maurer at a hospital in Rochester, Minn., where he had gone for treatment of a minor ailment. The passing of President Maurer will be a great loss to the college and the community as well.

### Knew Original Faculty

I also knew three of the original members of the faculty, Professor Emerson, Professor Porter and Professor Blaisdell. I did not know Professor Bushnell or Professor Fiske.

Later came Professor Peter Hendrickson, a good friend of our family, Professor T. C. Chamberlin, who lived on the hill back of the Masonic Temple, Professor Salisbury, E. G. Smith, T. A. Smith, Professor Collie, Professor Wright, Prof. Whitney, Prof. Robert Chapin, Prof. A. W. Burr and Prof. Pearson. All these men I knew.

Then in the next generation came Densmore, Calland, Richardson, Way, Crawford, Schallenberger, Deane, Boutwell, and Ballard. I knew them all. Three have passed away.

Of the present faculty I only know Foster, Suydam, Severson, deWeerd, Rassweiler, and Conwell. The new members who have come in recent years I have not had the opportunity to meet.

Beloit College is well known throughout the United States and ranks as one of the best of our liberal arts colleges.

It was natural that the idea of a public library should originate at the college. In 1866 a group of our leading citizens at that time met together to talk over the feasibility of starting a public library. These men were T. L. Wright, Professor Joseph Emerson, A. P. Waterman, Joseph Brittan, Professor Blaisdell, C. H. Parker, Dr. H. P. Strong, S. T. Merrill, J. C. Converse. A subscription library was incorporated in January, 1872.

#### **Approve Public Library**

The proposition of a city owned free public library was brought to a vote of the people on November 9, 1894 and carried. The first library board was appointed January 7, 1895 and organized January 15, 1895. The members were E. P. Salmon, L. H. Parker, G. B. Ingersoll, R. J. Burdge, E. G. Smith, O. T. Thompson, J. B. Dow, A. F. Ayer, and Simon Smith.

The library was opened on the second floor of the Unity Building on the bridge. The first librarian was Mrs. Nina Northrop. Later librarians were Miss Martha Ball, Miss Nellie Myers and Miss Nellie McAlpin. Only four librarians in 46 years.

In 1902 J. B. Dow opened up correspondence with Andrew Carnegie and obtained a grant of \$25,000 to build a library building. A site was selected on West Grand ave. for which the city paid \$8,500. A beautiful building was erected. The library has always

been well patronized. At the present time there are approximately 35,000 volumes on the shelves.

#### **Praises Lawrence Ousley**

In reporting the history of the library, I must not omit to say a word of appreciation for the long and faithful service of our janitor and general custodian, Lawrence Ousley, who has held his present job for 36 years. Always genial and courteous, he has kept the lawns mowed and watered, the shrubbery trimmed, fires burning and everything about the building inside and out in clean, shipshape order. He is a credit to his race, and has innumerable friends who appreciate his services.

I remained on the board from 1895 to 1925, a part of the time as president.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a distinguished woman, for many years connected with the college as the Art Hall curator, Mrs. Emerson. Mrs. Emerson's former home was in Evanston, Illinois, and while there, she was a special friend of Mrs. L. B. Clark, my wife's mother, and my wife knew her intimately. Mrs. Emerson called at times at our house, and for quite a number of years we had her as our Thanksgiving day guest. We always enjoyed her company.

#### **Plans 'Hall of Fame'**

The Beloit Commercial club is an organization of business and professional men, the purpose of which is to promote the best interests of Beloit.

Some years ago, Oscar N. Nelson, the executive secretary of the club, conceived the idea of having oil paintings made of some of the former leading citizens who have passed away. He proposed to call this group—"Builders of Beloit."

There are now 27 portraits in this gallery. It is planned at some future time to have these portraits hung in a civic "Hall of Fame" for the benefit of coming generations.

## **Chapter 22**

In every city or community there are always some men who by their force of character or their

superior abilities attain a more or less commanding position of leadership. Beloit in its history has

had a goodly number of such prominent men. I will here as far as I am able to enumerate some of these men in the earlier and later periods. Judging from old records I would in the earliest period name Caleb Blodgett, the founder of Beloit, George Goodhue, Dr. Horace White, Robert P. Crane, Otis P. Bicknell, Thomas Crosby, Jackson Bushnell, Lucius G. Fisher, and Charles Walker. These men all lived in the generation before I was born.

In the period from 1860 to 1900 the following are well known names: John Hackett, S. T. Merrill, O. E. and J. B. Merrill, T. L. Wright, Charles Parker, David Foster, Colonel O. C. Johnson, J. B. Dow, C. B. Salmon, William H. Wheeler, J. M. Cobb, C. F. G. Collins, Dr. H. B. Strong, William B. Strong, Joe Peet, Fred Houston, L. E. Cunningham, Cham Ingersoll, R. J. Burdge, John Thompson, Simon Smith, Samuel J. Goodwin, A. B. Carpenter, A. P. Waterman, C. D. Winslow, Frank Davis, William Blodgett, S. J. Todd, B. C. Rogers, Joseph Janvrin, R. J. Dowd, Benjamin Brown, Clinton Babbitt, F. F. Livermore.

### Owed Debt of Gratitude

All these are now passed and gone, but left their memories indelibly stamped upon the community. Each in his way, they have all helped to make Beloit what it is today, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

It was J. B. Dow who coined the phrase "Beautiful Beloit."

The Goodwin Opera House was built in 1870 by S. J. Goodwin. At that time it was considered a marvel of a theater. The one man who had most to do with the running and operation of the opera house was our former genial friend, Bob Wilson. As a young man Bob was a bill poster by profession, and could post bills at 20 below zero. He became connected with the opera house at an early date, and later became manager under a lease. In 1891 he bought the opera house from Mr. Goodwin.

In 1900 he completely remodeled the house making it into a modern theater with two rows of balconies and theater boxes on the sides and called it the Wilson. He retired from active management in 1913, and sold the property in 1926

to the Beloit Savings bank. He died suddenly in 1927.

### Famous Played in Theater

In the course of its long history of 57 years, the boards of this theater have been trod by many of the theatrical and concert celebrities of the country. Such great names as the following were only a few of those who have visited Beloit in years gone past: Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Julia Marlowe, Frederick Ward, Margaret Illington, Clara Louise Kellogg, Mdm. Januscheck, George Arliss, Harry Lauder, Sousa's Band, Tom Thumb, Robert Mantell, Thomas Keene, Marie Dressler, Fannie Davenport and Fay Templeton.

When the original Opera House was built, it had a big dance hall on the third floor. This dance hall was not open to the general public. It was sort of tacitly held in reserve for the more exclusive set of that period. In this hall dancing parties were given from time to time, and invitations were issued by a management committee. Unless you received an invitation you could not attend. Tickets were one dollar per couple. The parties started at 9 o'clock and lasted till 2 a.m. An oyster supper was served in the Goodwin House dining room. The dances mostly in vogue were the plain quadrille and the Lancers, the waltz, polka and schottische. Later the two step became popular. Square dances alternated with round dances. Large sets of square dances cannot be arranged on a big floor without floor managers, and it became a tradition and fixed practice that four certain young men were always announced on the program as "floor managers." These were L. Holden Parker, Harry Sherman, Edward Greene and Ned Scott. Each guest was furnished a neat program up to usually 24 dances. We boys had to go around among the girls of our acquaintance and ask for dances and write down the names until all the numbers were filled. It was lots of fun.

In the early eighties an old white haired dancing master by name of Professor Severance came down from Milwaukee weekly to give dancing lessons. Later in the nineties dancing was taught by

Professor Kehl. Both of these dancing masters were exceedingly courteous and polished after the French manner. When the theater was remodeled, the third floor was removed to make room for the balconies.

### Recalls Coming of Telephone

The Bell Telephone company reached Beloit in 1883. The first switch board was installed in the American Express office, then located in the Goodwin Block. George Anderson was the express agent, and Ben Oliver was his assistant. Ben had charge of the switch board. American Express had number "one." Our office had number 73.

The poles were placed along the streets and hundreds of wires strung. I recall we all felt quite metropolitan and cityfied to see

these poles and wires the same as in Chicago and Milwaukee, but some years later they were pronounced a fire hazard and unsightly so were removed and cables laid underground.

The first telephones were of the wall type. To converse you had to stand in front of the phone. You had to turn a crank to call "central." Later portable desk sets came into use, and now the cradle phones are in use.

In 1891 Oliver became general manager, and moved the office upstairs into the building at the northwest corner of State and Broad, later occupied by the Elks.

In 1901 the office was moved to a location upstairs above the Charlie Smith Drug Store, now Goldberg's store.

The Bell Telephone building in East Grand avenue was erected in 1910.

## Chapter 23

Since 1839, Beloit has had 18 postmasters. Postmasterships are traditionally looked upon as a reward for political work and to a great extent are considered a sinecure. In years gone by the postmaster would have his private business and practically turn over all his duties at the post office to the first assistant. However, our present postmaster, John Riordan, a native son of Beloit, is always to be found in his office.

The present post office first section was built in 1912, and enlarged in 1931. City delivery of mail was inaugurated July 1, 1890.

### Beloit Had 30 Mayors

From 1856 to 1929 Beloit has been served by 30 mayors. Some of them held office for more than one term. They were all good and able men. Perhaps as the most outstanding man in the mayors' chain, John Hackett, might be rated. He was the son-in-law of Caleb Blodgett, and was Beloit's first postmaster. He built the first house on the west side of the river in 1842. He died in 1886.

Since 1929, we have had five city managers, H. G. Otis, Palmer Hamilton, Blaine Hansen, George Ingersoll and A. D. Telfer.

How many citizens of Beloit can we select who have achieved more than local fame, men who have gone out in the world and have done big things?

I believe everybody will agree that the following names should be placed on the honor roll, and there may be others, too, but I cannot place them.

T. C. Chamberlain, Rollin Salisbury, Horace White, Roy Chapman Andrews, Matt Carpenter, Bob Becker, William B. Strong, Edward D. Eaton, Julius A. Truedell, L. E. Holden, James Blaisdell, Clinton Babbit, John D. Wickhem, Orson Nielsen, Walter Strong, Thomas Amlie and J. Raymond Walsh.

### Invented Twine Binder

Beloit is also noted for several famous inventions. In 1880 George Appleby invented the twine binder. In the nineties, a young Beloit man, a son of R. K. Felt, went to Chicago and invented the comptometer, which is in use in all offices requiring quick and accurate mathematical computations. It was the forerunner of the modern adding machines. About the same time, A. P. and Charlie Warner invented the Warner speedometer,

a modified type of which is now used on all cars. J. M. Cobb back in the seventies or eighties invented a process of saturating strawboard building paper with tar or resin. Louis Phelan is also a Beloit man, who invented electric regulating devices.

The Beloit Municipal hospital was opened in 1928. This hospital has been one of the most successful institutions established in our midst. It was preceded by three private hospitals which had done good work in former years. These were the H. P. Strong Emergency hospital on the 3rd floor of the old building, corner State and Grand where the Strong Block now stands. Dr. Helm's hospital in the old remodeled Presbyterian church building, corner Broad and Pleasant and the Beloit General hospital on the corner of Broad and Park ave. These were all discontinued when the new hospital was opened. The Municipal hospital is open to all established doctors and surgeons in the city on equal terms.

One thing that interests me more than anything else about the hospital is the great number of baby cases. Babies galore are born there. Every night I read the hospital report in the Daily News and by far the greatest number of cases are maternity cases. Expectant mothers now more and more go to the hospital where they can get the best possible care with all the facilities of the best obstetrical practice. The record of successful births is very fine.

#### **Medical Science Makes Strides**

Medical science has made great strides during the last 50 years in safeguarding the health of the public by eliminating the hazards of infections due to impure water and milk.

The State Board of Health has established and continues to maintain a cooperative health laboratory in seven key cities of the state. One of these laboratories is located in Beloit with a resident technician in charge. The office is in the Municipal hospital. In these laboratories samples of water and milk are sent in from all the communities in each district for analysis to check the bacteria content and so insure the public from infection.

The laboratories also provide the doctors with free tests of blood counts, urine analysis and other tests. This work is of immense importance to all of us.

Now compare this service with conditions as they were 50 years ago, the noisome toilets, the dirty, unsanitary stables, the unsafe wells and the risky raw milk supply.

#### **The Old Milk Man**

The old milk man! Do you remember him? His wagon would drive up to your front door. He would ring a bell and if you wanted milk you would go out with a container and get a quart or more. He would pour the milk from a five gallon can. If you were lucky and got the top, you would get the richer milk, but if his can were nearly empty you would get pretty thin milk.

Every housewife used a strainer to take out dirt and refuse. There was no pasteurizing in those days. It is a wonder we are still alive. The modern, sanitary dairies cannot be too highly appreciated from the standpoint of cleanliness and good health.

#### **Cemetery Platted in Early Day**

The original section of Oakwood cemetery was platted in an early day and owned by the city. In so many cities throughout the country today, the cemetery is owned by a cemetery corporation and run for profit. Such a system has always seemed to me to be almost sacriligious, to want to make money out of burying the dead.

When I was a child living down on Third street, the cemetery seemed far away out in the country, and so in truth it was, but now 70 years later, it is inside property. The city has spread out so far and grown all around it that it no longer seems outside of our ken.

Gradually in the course of time the cemetery filled up. No more burial lots were available, and the need arose for more room, either an addition to the old cemetery or a new site. Quite an argument arose about this. Some advocated a new site and move all the graves away from the old, but this touched the hearts of all who had near and dear ones resting there. The proposal to move the cemetery was abandoned.

So in 1885 the Strong family who had many ties holding them to the old cemetery gave the city a large tract of land adjoining the old cemetery to the east, and dedicated it as a place of burial. It became known as the Strong addition and has become a very lovely cemetery. But the city continued to grow and in the course of 25 to 30 years more, the Strong addition

was all preempted. So in 1919 the city bought land east of town for a new cemetery, which was named Eastlawn. This has also been developed and beautified in the past 20 years.

The Catholic people of the community also have a cemetery of their own named the Calvary. It is situated just east of the city cemetery.

## Chapter 24

When the original plot of the city was made in 1840 the land now known as Horace White Park, was left open, and dedicated to the public for a city park. Today it is a beautiful spot and very central.

Mechanics' Green has an interesting tale. Ever since an early day, this piece of ground has been lying there, apparently unowned and unclaimed by anybody. The taxes had not been paid for years, and the city claimed it had reverted to the public and was now owned by the city. At any rate the title to the land was clouded, and nobody seemed to know who really were the legal owners. Several law suits were started by claimants at various times, but never sustained by the courts. Finally in 1915, the city obtained undisputed title and it is now one of our city parks. The name "Mechanic's Green" has been applied to it as far back as I can remember.

### Other Property Bought

The Field property on West Grand avenue was bought by the city in 1927 for \$27,500 to be used for a park. The big Field house was removed, and now it is a very beautiful spot.

Vernon Avenue playground was bought in 1920 for \$10,000.

Hinckley Field was bought in 1919 for \$3,200.

Summit Avenue playground was bought in 1927 for \$7,500.

Municipal Golf Course was acquired from various owners in the years 1920 to 1927. Adjoining the golf course is the new Municipal Swimming pool, built by W. P. A. workers. It is a fine piece of work. All the surround-

ings of the pool have been landscaped and beautified and there are some clever stunts in stone work, notably the map of Wisconsin, the fountain, and other nice ideas. I have recently been up to see the new developments on the high ground north of the pool. The bowling green, tennis courts, and parking spaces are fine. Trees and shrubbery have been set out, and the whole layout is remarkably good. I doubt if any city in the whole country has anything to equal it for beauty and uniqueness. The entire combination of the golf course, the swimming pool and amphitheatre with the new improvements and landscaping north of the pool, makes a very fine ensemble, and we owe it all to the good work done by the W.P.A. We would never have had all these fine things if it had not been for the W.P.A. workers and due credit should be given to them.

Riverside park also was developed by W.P.A. labor in the years of the depression and is now a great credit to the city. The field house, lagoon and landscaping of trees and shrubbery is very fine. It is a beautiful approach to the city from the north. The view of the river is also very fine.

### Donates Land to City

A few years ago in 1921, Dr. Leeson donated to the city a tract of land east of the city to be used for park purposes. Some work has already been done on this land.

The city hall parking site was bought by the city fathers from Nellie King Smith in the years from 1916 to 1936 at a price of \$25,000 for one piece, \$60,000 for



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 succeeded 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 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, pedigree 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 him 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 shillalaha 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.

★ ★ ★

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

so inept or misguided by bad advisors or specious arguments, that they have voted down good propositions, which would have been decidedly to the advantage of the community if adopted, and would have saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I have previously referred to the so-called railroad bonds voted by the city in 1855 to help bring the Racine and Mississippi Railroad to Beloit. The history of these bonds was a mess from the start, due to bad advice from lawyers, who told the people the bonds were issued illegally and could not be collected. In other words the sentiment of the community was to repudiate the bonds. There were years of litigation and in the end, the city lost its case. In 1866, a proposition by the bondholders was made to settle all claims for \$100,000, but this offer was voted down. We continued to pay interest and principal on their claims for years and years, and it was not till 1900 when the final payment was made. All told the city had paid \$345,000.00 in taxes for what they could have settled for \$100,000 in 1866. This dead horse tax burden is what retarded the growth of the city for many decades.

Another case in point is when C. B. Salmon in 1901 offered to sell the waterworks to the city for \$140,000.00, but the offer was voted down. One of the arguments was that the water mains were 15 years old, and all rusted out, or injured by electrolysis, and that they were now too small and inadequate. This was all a silly and futile argument as the mains are still in the ground, and doing business today. The result was we lost the chance to buy the waterworks at a reasonable figure and have all these years been paying hydrant rentals to a private company. Last

year the hydrant rentals were \$37,701.83.

★ ★ ★

The records of the Common Council show the proceedings as follows: Mr. Salmon at a meeting held April 24, 1901, offered to sell the waterworks for \$140,000 plus \$82,000 in bonds outstanding on the property, a total of \$222,000.00. But at a meeting held June 17, 1901, the Council voted "not to buy." The original waterworks franchise was granted for 20 years, but the city had the privilege of buying the plant at the end of 15 years. I think it was a great mistake that we did not buy the plant at that time, as the price was very reasonable, and we would have saved hundreds of thousands in the period since then. So that was lost.

On March 6, 1905 Alderman Cox introduced a resolution demanding that the Council take some action on the waterworks. The original 20 year franchise was about to expire on May 8, 1905. One of three things would have to be done. Either buy the old waterworks, or build a completely new system, or consent to the extension of the original franchise for another 20 years as provided in the contract. A committee was appointed and an expert from Chicago hired, but in the end nothing was done.

The third case was when in 1933, we were offered a grant of \$338,000 from the Federal Government to assist in building a much needed extension to the high school. We had plans drawn by a competent Chicago architect, approved and urged by the School Board, but we voted it down and lost the grant of \$338,000 cash money.

Perhaps our collective psychology is somewhere at fault.

## Chapter 27

Beloit has only three bridges across Rock river. Other cities the size of Beloit have five or six. Janesville has five. The original central bridge across the river was built in 1856 as a toll bridge. It was supported by a number of

stone piers, which carried wood truss arches from pier to pier. This bridge did service up to 1881 when the big flood so damaged it that it had to be removed, and a new bridge built. This second bridge was of cheap construction

built on piles. The present bridge was built in 1920, and is a good substantial bridge.

The first Shirland ave. bridge was known as a "mud-sill" bridge. It was replaced in 1922 by a concrete bridge built by John Schneiberger at a cost slightly less than \$24,000. The Portland ave. bridge was built in 1927 to supercede a wooden pile bridge which had done service for many years.

Beloit needs another bridge. As far back as 1918 Mayor J. A. Janvrin in his inaugural address, cited all the betterments and improvements he thought the city needed and stressed the great need for another bridge in the down town area, to cross from Public ave. to Third st., the only feasible and possible location. The Beloit Commercial club and many leading citizens approved the project and urged us to sell the city the necessary right of way through our property and offered us a good sum. But as we were at that time running our factory, we could not see our way clear to make the sale, and so nothing came of it.

Since that time the traffic problem has become very acute in the downtown district. All city auto-

mobile traffic has to pass through the bottle neck between State and Third, and at times during the day, the traffic congestion is very great.

If the proposed Public ave. bridge was built it would solve the traffic problem. It would permit the inauguration of a one way traffic system around a loop formed by the two bridges. This is the system of one way traffic around the Capitol Square in Madison.

About two years ago we made a very liberal proposition to the City Council, but so far no action has been taken. It is needless to say time is of the essence, and delays are dangerous, as I personally have found out to my sorrow several times in my life. You can never tell. Someone may come along, and make us an adequate offer for this land. Then we might sell and it might pass into other hands, and there might never be an opportunity again to acquire it for a bridge.

A new bridge could be built for half the cost of a swimming pool. The pool is used only four months of the year, while the bridge would be used twelve months a year, and would be of inestimable value.

## Chapter 28

There has never been a time within my memory since the Civil War, that we have not had a "City Band" in Beloit, to take part in Fourth of July celebrations, political rallies, and other civic gatherings. The personnel and the leadership of the band has of course changed from time to time as the years went by. As far back as I have been able to go, I can name the following band masters or leaders: Zach Hulett, Professor Swann, William Monteigle, Richard Walsch, Charles Munson, O. J. Johnson, Martin Baukind, John Carroll, Harley Scheets. I remember many of the old time musicians, Frank Fenton, William Fitzgerald, Tom Northrop, Stephen Slaymaker, Al Dearhammer, F. N. Gardner, John Gardner, Fred Gardner, Ralph Schellenger, G. E. Thorson, Al Jenkins and William Pyne. Lal Cunningham played the

snare drums and Fred Wootton the big bass drum. Bob Ayer was the high-stepping drum major.

In 1901 a dance orchestra man, Charles Leaver, came to Beloit. In 1903 he organized a brass band, first known as Leavers' band and later as the W. O. W. band. This band was composed of union men, while the City Band was non-union. Hence there was considerable rivalry between them. The W. O. W. band quit playing in 1912.

In conversation with Mr. Leaver he told me in his 38 years of conducting his orchestra he had played for 11,000 dances, and this surely is quite a record.

★ ★ ★

The Fairbanks Morse band was organized in 1917. Ferd Lhotak arrived May 1, 1917, and took charge of the band and under his

leadership it became one of the best professional bands in the country. Mr. Lhotak was a very able musician and played only high grade and classical productions. The Fairbanks-Morse band was discontinued in 1930.

Since the passing of the Fairbanks-Morse band, the Beloit City band became the only brass band left. Later this band was taken over and sponsored by the Elks' Club and is now known as the "Elks Band." It is under the leadership of Eugene Engert.

Along in the twenties there was a Yates Saxophone band, but this organization remained in existence only a few years.

Before the advent of the school bands, Policeman McNeill, a former British army band man, gathered a group of boys into a band and gave them instructions so they learned to play very well. It was called the Beloit Boys' band.

Now we have the various school bands and it is a very inspiring sight to see these young folks marching in parades, girls and boys together, and they play remarkably well.

★ ★ ★

Along in the years of the 1870 and 1880 period we had a musical organization here known as Hulett's Dance Orchestra, consisting of Zach Hulett, leader, Charlie Gault, Tom Northrop, Ross Murray and Jim Murray. They traveled extensively and had a regular circuit of towns in Iowa which they visited during the winter season for social dancing parties. They had a great reputation and were known as the famous Beloit Orchestra.

About the same time there was another concert organization

known as Clement Brothers and Forrester. They were professional singers and entertainers, and traveled continuously all over the country. Once a year they gave a "Home Concert" in the Opera House, and everybody turned out to give them a rousing welcome.

In 1901 the Beloit Treble Clef was organized with ten charter members. On November 27, 1941 they celebrated their fortieth anniversary. Three of the original charter members are still living in Beloit,—Mrs. Oscar Foster, Miss Minnie Pierce, and Mrs. Rolf Rosman. The purpose of this organization was to encourage and promote good music in our community and has been eminently successful during the forty years of its existence. Through its efforts many notable artists have been brought to our city.

★ ★ ★

I will name some of these artists who have visited Beloit during this period of 40 years.

Pianists—I. Paderewski, Frank LaForge, Emil Liebling and Rudolph Ganz.

Voice—Ellen Beuch Yaw, Schumann Heink, Gadski, David Bisham, Charles Marshall, Ricards Martin, Rinald Werrenrath, Carrie Jacobs Bond, Tito Schipa and Louise Homer.

Violin—Albert Spalding, Fritz Kreisler and Maud Powell.

Organists—B. D. Allen and Clarence Eddy.

Bands—United States Marine Band, Santleman, director, Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Oberndorfer, director at first performance and later Eugene Ormandy, director.

All of the very best, but this is a very small list of the many more who could be named.

## Chapter 29

The military history of Beloit has been long an interesting. When President Lincoln in 1861 called for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion, Beloit citizens responded with alacrity. Beloit raised the first company in Rock County, under Captain William F. Clark and Thomas P. Northrop,

first lieutenant. This company, designated "Company F", was assigned to the First Wisconsin Infantry Regiment, and was later called the "Beloit City Guards."

Soon thereafter another company was raised under command of Captain M. A. Northrop, and mustered in to the Sixth Wisconsin

sin Regiment as Company G. This company was named the Beloit Star Rifles.

Next Beloit company K, attached to the Seventh Wisconsin Infantry. Captains Alexander Gordon of Beloit, George S. Hoyt, and John M. Hoyt; Lieutenants Frank W. Oakley, David Shirrell and others. The company was called the Badger Rifles.

Company B, Twenty - second Regiment, was also a Beloit company, Captain Thomas P. Northrup, First Lieutenant George H. Brown, Second Lieutenant William H. Calvert.

The roster of Company I Twenty-second Regiment was Captain Warren Hodgdon, First Lieutenant Perry W. Tracy, Second Lieutenant Marshall W. Patton.

The roster of Company B Fortieth Regiment was Captain S. Merritt Allen, Beloit, (of Allen Grove), First Lieutenant Harson A. Northrup, Beloit, Second Lieutenant Barrett H. Smith, Beloit.

★ ★ ★

For the Wisconsin Light Artillery Rock County contributed five batteries. The Fourth Wisconsin battery was raised in Beloit, and was popularly known as "Vallee's." This battery was organized in Beloit in September, 1861 by Capt. John V. Vallee. His senior first lieutenant was George B. Easterly, junior first lieutenant Martin McDevitt, senior second lieutenants Andrew H. Hunt, and Charles A. Rathbun, junior second lieutenant Alexander Lee.

Two of our Beloit companies became a part of the famous "Iron Brigade." This brigade was made up of the following regiments, viz the Second, Sixth and Seventh Wisconsin Infantry, the Nineteenth Indiana, the Twenty-fourth Michigan, and the Fourth U. S. Light Artillery. Company G 6th Wisconsin Infantry and Company K 7th Wisconsin Infantry were made up of Beloit men.

The famous war eagle, Old Abe, was not a Beloit bird, but we are all interested in his history. He was carried through the war by the Eighth Wisconsin Infantry and did valiant service for the state. At every engagement he soared and screeched above the din of battle and always returned to his perch with the Eighth regiment.

He returned home with his regiment and died in the old capitol building in Madison. He was then mounted and placed in G.A.R. Memorial Hall and was destroyed with other relics of the Civil War, in the Capitol fire in 1904.

The only members of Fourth Battery that I can remember are Hugh Riley, Charlie Rathburn and William K. Hanson. "William K" worked for my father after his return from the war. From him we heard much of the campaigns in the south.

★ ★ ★

While I am on the subject of the Civil War, I wish to refer to the famous 15th Wisconsin. It was under the command of Colonel Hans C. Heg of Racine. No Beloit company was in this regiment, but it was made up almost exclusively of Scandinavian soldiers and fought in many battles. At the battle of Chickamauga Colonel Heg was shot, died the next day, and a monument to his memory now stands on the Capitol Square in Madison.

The widow, Mrs. Heg, and family came to Beloit and lived at the corner of Park and Clary. Her son, Ed Hag, ran a newspaper for many years at Lake Geneva.

When Colonel Heg fell, the command of the regiment was taken over by Lt. Col. O. C. Johnson. After the war Col. Johnson became a partner of my father in the plow business and lived in Beloit for many years. He served two terms as mayor of the city.

I remember how he used to tell us how he escaped from the rebels, after he and other members of his regiment were taken prisoners at the battle of Chickamauga. While he and other prisoners were being taken from one prison camp to another, being herded under guard in box cars, he and two or three others pried up a plank in the floor of the car, and let themselves down on the road bed, while the train was in motion, and let the train pass over them. As soon as it was by, they up and ran for the woods, being fired upon by the guards, but luckily not hit. They succeeded in making their way north at night and finally reached the union lines.

After the Civil War was ended, the Union soldiers were mustered out in 1865. For the next 10 years or so, we had no military company in Beloit, but on August 11, 1877 a Wisconsin militia company was organized here, with J. M. Hoyt as captain, J. I. Comstock as first lieutenant and C. H. Parmely as second lieutenant. It was designated the "Beloit Guards." The purpose of the organization was to maintain "law and order" in the state. They were called out for duty only a few times. They went to Eau Claire on the famous "Saw Dust Campaign." Later they went to Milwaukee and then to "Dunham Hill." In these three "campaigns" I do not recollect that the boys fired a shot, and therefore, never shed the blood of an American citizen.

In 1878 H. H. McLenegan was made captain with C. H. Parmely as first lieutenant and F. J. Bending as second lieutenant. Since then the following have served as commanders of Company E — Cham Ingersoll, Albert F. Ayer,

E. J. Bending, Gilbert Hammer and Thomas Rogers.

★ ★ ★

When war was declared against Spain Company E was ordered to go to the front. They left May 20, 1898 for Jacksonville, Florida. They got no further than "Camp Cuba Libre" and never saw fighting in Cuba. The climate and sanitary conditions at "Cuba Libre" were very bad, and many of the boys took typhoid fever. Ten boys died from the fever and nine are buried in Oakwood Cemetery. Musician Mace Mollestead was the first to die at the camp. His body was brought to Beloit for burial by Lieutenant F. Y. Hart.

The company returned to Beloit September 10, 1898, and was mustered out on October 22, 1898.

Soon thereafter a new company was formed with H. R. Yeakle as captain, Fred Hart as first lieutenant, and Robert Maltpress as second lieutenant, but it was soon disbanded for lack of interest on part of the members.

## Chapter 30

Company L Wisconsin National Guard was organized May 10, 1900. The first commanding officer was Captain M. H. Taylor. Succeeding commanders have been Captains Rolf Rosman, C. S. Buck, E. Howe Allen, Floyd C. Henderson, Waldo G. Hansen, Carl A. Sparks, Ralph Baumgarde and Chester F. Allen.

In July, 1916, the company was sent to the Mexican border. Returned to Beloit in February, 1917.

The records of the adjutant general's office gives the following details, viz, mustered into U. S. Service, June 30, 1916; mustered out of the U. S. Service January 19, 1917; responded to call of the President, July 15, 1917 drafted into U. S. Service August 5, 1917; assigned to 127th Regiment Infantry N.G. as part of Company L. September 24, 1917, per General Order No. 3, 64th Infantry Brigade; served all through the World war in the 32nd Division, later known as the "Red Arrow" Division.

Company L was mobilized Sunday, July 13, 1917. They left for Camp Douglas Thursday, August 2. On September 22 the First Wisconsin Regiment passed through Janesville on their way to Camp McArthur, Waco, Texas. Hundreds of Beloiters went to the county seat to bid them farewell.

When January came the 32nd Division was placed on the "ready" list, and the first units sailed from Hoboken that month. February saw the entire division in transit. Cards announcing the safe arrival of Company L in France were received in Beloit early in March.

After further training in France the units were moved eastward gradually, to the Alsace-Lorraine sector, and soon heard the boom of cannon and the whistling of shells as they approached the front lines. The first units entered the front lines near Belfort in the Vosges Mountains, May 18, 1918.

Bob Edwards, in his article written for the Beloit Centennial

Book, gave a very vivid account of the campaign in Eastern France. I will quote from his article as follows:

★ ★ ★

"It was there the men learned to make raids on enemy lines and the method of repulsing enemy raids with hand grenades and other weapons. There they learned the discomfiture occasioned by vivid flares while prowling in 'No Man's Land' at night. No Man's Land was that space between the opponents' front line trenches—an area in which it was suicidal to venture in daylight and nearly as dangerous at night.

"Here first acquaintance was made with the soldier's little pals—his flock of 'cooties' which stayed with him through thick and thin and which paid their greatest respects as their carrier got hotter and hotter while he trudged kilometer after kilometer on weary night marches.

"Came the day when the 'grapevine telegraph' brought the news the 'boys would soon be out of the trenches.' A statement true enough, but with a shaded meaning—out of the trenches into shell holes. By foot, by train and by truck, the 32nd moved in July from Alsace-Lorraine to the Aisne-Marne sector where the Germans had attempted a big "push" and where American troops had already put a stop to their advance and were pushing the enemy north of the Marne.

"On July 30 the division went into line. Here a new and different type of warfare was experienced. The fighting was savage; it was to the death; no quarter was offered and none was expected. Men advanced into withering machine gun and artillery fire. Ears were tuned to the whine of bullets and the blast of exploding shells. Men were bowled over like ten pins. Some 'went west'; others were wounded. But there was no faltering; the objective must be reached.

"Here the division made history at such places as Grimpettes, Bois de Cierges, Bellevue farm, along the heights overlooking the Ourcq. The enemy was pushed back, but not without bitter battle. The fight continued towards the Vesle river which was reached Aug. 4. Then

the village of Fismes fell. Patrols crossed the river and penetrated Fismette on the north bank before relief was made on the night of Aug. 6.

"When the infantry was relieved, the worn and tired men went to corps reserve around Dravegny and Cierges. The 107th Engineers, meanwhile, were at Fismes and along the Vesle river with elements of another division. The artillery was in support of other divisions in the same region. On Aug. 24 the artillery, the ammunition train and engineers reverted to the division, which moved to the vicinity of Tartiers as part of the reserve of a French corps.

★ ★ ★

"The ferocity with which men of the 32nd attacked, and the tenacity with which they clung to the territory gained by repulsing counter-attacks of the enemy in the battle around Fismes, impressed General Mangin of the French army to such an extent that when he planned his drive on Juvigny and its surrounding heights, he called for the 32nd Division to be under his command. The division entered the lines near Juvigny on the nights of Aug. 29 and 30. The fighting was savagely vicious—so vicious that it was there the French termed the 127th and 128th regiments "Les Terribles," (vicious fighters), a name which the division retained and brought back with it unimpeached.

"Going Through the Line!"

"That was the slogan of the 32nd division.

"And the red arrow, which was this fighting outfit's shoulder patch insignia, typified its line-piercing abilities. The tiny cross-bar in the red arrow signified "the line."

"After all but the artillery had been relieved on September 2 after the fall of Juvigny, the division went into rest and for more training at Joinville where it remained until late in the month when it was sent to the Meuse-Argonne sector. After being in reserve a few days the division reentered the lines on September 30 in the Montfaucon region.

"Little let-up occurred in the fighting on the Meuse-Argonne front. Day after day the shells rode the air lanes and the machine gun bullets whined. The Ger-



mans were fighting for every inch of territory. The attack was frontal for the most part and patches of woods and many hills made the region perfect for the Germans' defensive battle.

"The autumn rains had begun and shell holes were partially filled with water. Roads and soil were slippery. The perpetual curtain of artillery shells continued from early morning until late at night—and sometimes all night. Frequently men sat hunched for hours in shell holes or behind some small bank which offered a bit of protection. Staff officers were confronted with problems of gaining territory without sacrificing too many men.

"'Through the Line' went the men of the Red Arrow division—through the line at Mamelle Trench—Romagne—Cote Dame Marie—La Musarde Farm—Bois de Gesnes—Bois de Cheppy.

"After 21 days on the front the division was relieved on October 20. Replacements were obtained and the division again went into action on the east bank of the Meuse river a few days before the Armistice. The fighting was still severe, as the Germans, to cover their retreat, gave way slowly.

"Summer had turned to early fall and now it was late fall, with water freezing in the shell holes, the nights cold and frost on the ground. Thousands of the men who had gone into the first battle south of Fismes in July were no longer with the division—war had taken its grim toll. Replacements had come in. Those who had participated were wearying—but they were still "going through the line" when the word came on the morning of November 11, 1918, to "cease firing" at 11 o'clock.

"When the hush settled over the vast front and the rat-tat-tat of machine guns and the resounding boom of artillery were stilled, there were no wild demonstrations by the men on the front. They took it in stride. But relief from the months of strain was obvious. Gone was the wondering whether one's name was written on the next shell.

"A new day had dawned.

"Chosen as one of the divisions of the Army of Occupation, the 32nd hiked from France on November 17 through Luxemburg

and into Germany, taking station in mid-December in the vicinity of Dierdorf and Rengsdorf at the Coblenz bridgehead."

The company remained in Germany until April 18, 1919, when it started for home. It arrived back in Beloit May 18, 1919.

★ ★ ★

One thousand, eight hundred went from Beloit and vicinity to the war. Sixty-two did not come back. Here is the Honor Roll:

Miles D. Allen, Oliver C. Bartlett, Harold Beebe, Albert E., Brown, Lester Butler, Frank Carroll, Clarence Cassaday, C. E. Christensen, Harry Conant, John Coughlin, Arthur Culver, George W. Dann, Charles Devins, Ray C. Dickop, Jesse Dixon, Clarence T. Eggen, Edward Erickson, Walter F. Evans, Raleigh Fowler, Charles Gerald, George Gerald, Ray Glover, Charles Goldstein, Walter Graham, Ray Harris, Albert L. Hibbard, Claude W. Hirst, Frank Holts, Emil Hornke, Ray Howard, James A. Jensen, Jens Johnson, John Kapralos, P. C. Klingbeil, George P. Kull, Manderson Lehr, Glen Mead, Joseph McKearn, Cassius Morse, C. N. Newhouse, Elvin Olson, Arnold Peterson, Ralph Ramsey, Lucius Rann, Ralph Reynolds, L. T. Riley, Harry Rimstidt, Edward L. Robb, Glen Ross, John Allen Sehrt, Robert Spencer, Harry Sponholtz, Richard Sprightly, Thomas H. Stanley, G. S. Stuvengen, Orville Thomas, Pearl B. Waldsmith, Lynn M. West, Myron C. West, Roy Westby, T. C. Wintermute.

They died for their country. May their memory always abide with us.

Since 1919 Beloit High School has maintained an R. O. T. C. battalion as a part of its curriculum. It is the only High School in the state which gives military instruction. The instructors have been U. S. Army officers furnished by the War Department. These have been Major John Stotz, Major L. J. Williams, Capt. Felix R. Holmes, Col. William H. Kennedy, Capt. J. H. Comstock, Major Cyril Bassich, Major Dooley, and Major Cole.

A number of former Company L. men have gone far as soldiers. Among these are Lieut. Col. Wesley F. Ayer, Lieut. Col. Charles S.

Buck of the regular army, Major Waldo G. Hansen, quartermaster of the soldiers' home at Waupaca, Wis., and Col. Rolf Rosman. Beloit is also the home of Brig. Gen. William S. Wood, a graduate of West Point, who formerly commanded the 57th Field Artillery brigade. There is also my nephew, Lt. Col. John W. Thompson of the regular army, now stationed in the Philippines.

★ ★ ★

In closing my survey of the military annals of Beloit, I think it would be fitting to pay tribute to one of the highest ranking officers in the American Army. He was born in Rock county only five miles west of Beloit. He was never a resident of Beloit, as his family moved to Clinton, Iowa, so that really became his home town. I refer to Major General William D. Connor. General Connor was born February 22, 1874, on a farm in the town of Newark near the Baptist church. In 1893 he went to West Point and graduated in 1897 and entered the army. Appointed

a 2nd lieutenant of engineers, General Connor served in the Philippine insurrection and was an instructor at West Point in 1904.

In 1917 he was ordered to France and served through the war with distinction, being decorated six times. After the armistice, when General Pershing returned to America, General Connor was commander in chief of the forces of occupation in Germany. After the war he served in Hawaii and China. In 1932 he was ordered to West Point as superintendent of the academy, where he stayed until 1938 when he reached the retirement age. All his distinguished services are too numerous to give a full account of them here. While he was in France he was for a time chief of staff of the 32nd Division in the trench operations in the Belfort sector.

While he never was a citizen of Beloit, we feel a great interest in his distinguished career, from the fact that his birthplace is so near our city limits. Mrs. Frank Millen, 2004 Riverside Drive, is his first cousin.

## Chapter 31

The Thompson family has in the years gone by a number of times entertained some distinguished foreigners. Along about 1881 or '82 the great Norwegian dramatist, poet and statesman, Bjornstjerne Bjornson, was on a tour of the United States and came to Beloit and gave a lecture in the Goodwin opera house. He had a great audience and spoke in Norwegian. But even though they could not understand a word that he spoke there were quite a few native-born people who attended. They wanted to see the noted man. I remember Miss Hazard, a teacher at the high school, was among the number.

Bjornson was entertained by my father and mother in our home at 643 Bluff st.

A year or two later another Norwegian poet and novelist, Kristoffer Janssen, visited America and came to Beloit and was likewise entertained at our house. I asked them to write something

for me in my autograph album, which they both did.

Bjornson was a large man, with a strong, massive face, and a great shock of hair. He had the appearance of a lion. He devoted his life and writings to the cause of liberty and emancipation from old time conventions and class distinctions. Janssen was a milder man and yet a fine and distinguished writer.

★ ★ ★

When the great Arctic explorer, Roald Amundson, was here some years ago, and lectured at the First Congregational church, Mrs. Thompson and I entertained him at our house. We found him most interesting. He spoke English well but preferred talking Norwegian when we were by ourselves. He is the only man who reached both the North and South Poles. He lost his life, as everyone knows, in his attempt to go to the rescue of the Italian Colonel Nobile.

Quite recently a Norwegian professor from the University of Oslo, Norway, was in America lecturing at colleges and universities on his pet racial theories, the long heads, the round heads and the Mediterraneans. He lectured at the college chapel. We entertained him at dinner that evening. I recall how surprised he was that many years ago we had also entertained Bjornson and Janssen.

While discussing distinguished people I want to tell a little about an event that occurred about 1915. In those days we had an organization in Beloit called the Six O'clock club. It was a group of citizens who met once a month to discuss city affairs and other questions of the day. We met in church basements or some hall for supper and after that came the speeches. There was a program committee for each season who were to arrange for speakers. One year I was on the committee along with the Rev. Mr. Stevens and Judge Clark. I admit now I proposed some rather radical men, among whom was the noted Scott Nearing. The rest of the committee concurred. Nearing came and gave a talk which did not at all fit in with our ultra-conservative type of listeners, and the next day Mr. Stevens came out in the press and denounced the speech as unpatriotic, etc., and said he would not be held as approving such sentiments and repudiated any responsibility for the program. Judge Clark also called me down. I wrote a reply in the News, and said I would assume full responsibility, etc., as the speech coincided very much with my own views at the time. That ended it.

★ ★ ★

I have never had or experienced any particularly thrilling events in

my life. On the contrary my life has been rather uneventful and as ordinary as that of most men. Of course I have pleasant memories of my two trips to Europe, but I think the nearest thing to a thrill came to me some eight or 10 years ago when I received a personally written letter from Queen Marie of Rumania and an autographed photograph. It arrived by registered mail with the royal crest on the envelope.

It came about like this. You all remember some time ago when the Saturday Evening Post published "The Story of My Life" by Queen Marie. I read it with great interest. When it was finished I wrote a letter telling her of my having read the articles, and how interested all we plain Americans had been in reading the intimate details of royal life, not only of the pomp and glamour, but of the inner homelife of the household, of the trials with cooks, servants, tutors and such like. I dwelt on her English prose and of her marriage and journey to a far-off land, and thanked her for the pleasure she had given me. Don't you think a queen is just as human as other folks and finds it a pleasure to receive a token of appreciation even from a citizen of a democratic country like America?

I addressed the letter "Queen Marie, Bucharest, Rumania" and wondered if it would reach her royal hand. In the short period of three weeks, I received a reply in very gracious and cordial terms. That, I say, was a real adventure.

Queen Marie was a granddaughter on her father's side of Queen Victoria and on her mother's side of Czar Alexander III of Russia. I have always been sorry that her son, King Carol, turned out to be such a bad actor.

## Chapter 32

In 1893 we had the stock market crash in Wall Street and business came to a standstill. Factories shut down or ran very light for several years because of lack of orders. The farm implement business was hard hit as dealers were afraid and would not buy, so

our factory was running light. For this reason I thought it would be a good time to take a vacation. So my brother Ed, and I went on a bicycle tour through England and Scotland and southern Norway.

We landed in Liverpool. We first

went down to see the ancient town of Chester, founded by the Romans, then started on a round tour of Scotland, by way of Glasgow, Oran, Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. The last named is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Then on to Stirling Castle, the battlefield of Bannockburn and Sir Walter Scott's home.

In England we visited the Cathedrals of Durham and York. Went to the races at Doncaster and visited English friends. Then we crossed the North Sea from Newcastle to Bergen, Norway, and had a fine time visiting relatives there. Came back to England and visited Oxford and Cambridge. We spent two weeks in London, the most interesting city in the world. Took in all the sights, too numerous to mention, and arrived back in Philadelphia. We stopped at Washington on our way home, and when Ed saw the United States capitol building, he said to me, "You should never have admitted to the English over there that their houses of parliament are as fine as our capitol. The two buildings are totally different in type."

★ ★ ★

My father used to pride himself on being a self-made man. He certainly started from scratch. He had only an elementary education but a great deal of common sense. He was a man of strong will power and whatever he started to carry out he invariably put through. As in the case of all self-made men, he did not place "book learning" very high. He was eminently practical, and gauged everything by its utility value. He was rough and ready and did not pay much attention to "looks."

With all these qualities he was looked up to by his fellow citizens as a strong and reliable man, and his opinions on city matters always had considerable weight. He was a member of the city council for several years and he served one term on the county board.

At home he was a good provider and wanted his children to have a better education and more advantages than he had had in his youth. I might add that sometimes he was rather irascible and blunt

in his language and often, due to his strong will, he was stubborn.

He, like all business men, measured success in terms of dollars and cents. If a man made money, he was a success, if not, he was a failure. He used to say, in recounting his early experiences that the first \$1,000 was the hardest, but I liked to counter him by saying, the first half million was the hardest. The men in the shop used to wonder how everything he undertook seemed to pan out so well. They said whatever the "old man" touched turned to gold. He used his men fairly and always had their loyal support.

He died July 23, 1914, just one week before the World war started.

★ ★ ★

I shall never forget the hour of his passing away. He had been steadily failing during the week so we knew the end was near. I was at his bedside that night, holding his hand. At the hour of midnight he stopped breathing and I knew the end had come. I cannot describe the sudden feeling of great loss and utter loneliness that came over me, unlike anything I had ever experienced before or since. It suddenly seemed to me that the bottom of the universe had gone from under me.

For 54 years I had been in close touch with my father. Since my earliest recollections he had always been the center of my being. He had been looked up to as the mainstay and head of the family and his views carried great weight. And now he was gone. The realization of this was such a shock that it was some considerable time before I could recover my equilibrium. He had been my protector in childhood, my counsellor in youth and my associate and my mentor in after years. We did not always agree on everything in our mature years, but there had always been that spirit of respect, goodwill, and love which should be maintained in the ideal relationship of father and son.

How full of meaning, the simple words—"my father." Blessed be his memory.

My mother was a kindly woman, tall and distinguished looking. She came from a good family in the old country. She was always bright and genial and looked on the bright side of life. She was friendly with her neighbors, and always ready to do a good turn if she could. She was a natural born cook. She never went by rules or recipes, and if asked how some certain dish was prepared, she would say, "Oh, I use some of this and some of that," and was never very definite, but it always tasted good.

She always took good care of us children, enforced strict discipline and brought us up in the way we should go. Occasionally she would resort to a spanking, but not very often. My father never gave me a licking in all my life.

She kept a nice house, and frequently entertained guests. Unexpected guests were always made welcome. She intuitively knew the amenities of life.

She used to tell the story of how, when she first came to Beloit as a bride, she did not want to learn to speak English. She said they were only going to remain here a short time, a year or two at most, and then they were going back to the old country. But how little we know. Poor mother! The anticipated period of two years in America stretched out to 60 long years. She never went back to see her old home in Norway.

When father built the big 12-room house in 1895 she was naturally very much pleased, but it was too big for her advancing years to take care of. We have since that time learned to build

smaller houses. However, my two sisters were still at home, and they got along very nicely. In those days it was not so difficult to keep a maid. Our home was always the center of a good deal of company.

★ ★ ★

My mother was always a devoted Lutheran church member, the way she had been brought up in the old country. She taught us the catechism and also to read the English and Norwegian languages. In spite of her early determination not to learn English, she became in the course of the years very proficient in the language.

It was, therefore, with a feeling of much regret that, after some of my early years in the Lutheran church, I should take a step that I knew would hurt my mother's feelings. I decided I could no longer remain in the old church, and went to a church more in harmony with my predilections and views. Since that time I have for 50 years been a member of St. Paul's Episcopal church. Of course, mother became reconciled to the change as my first wife could not feel at home in the Lutheran church.

I really feel that I had more in common with my mother than with my father. I think I had more of her mildness of temperament and disposition, more given to reading and study, and trying to find out the why and wherefore of things.

My mother bore nine children, only three of whom are now living. No family ever had a finer home than we enjoyed.

She died April 17, 1915, the year after my father died.

## Chapter 33

In 1937 the Episcopal church choir celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its organization as a "boys vested choir." Many of the "old boys" were there and a large number of church people. The banquet was held at the Hilton Hotel. My brother, A. S., was toastmaster, and many were called upon for reminiscences of the old days. When Dr. Royce organized

a boys' surplice choir and introduced processional and recessional singing it was looked upon in Beloit as quite an innovation, as I suppose most people here had never heard of such an institution, but it was an old and customary practice in all Episcopal churches large enough to support it.

In the big cathedrals of England they maintain special schools,

where boys with promising voices are taken in, boarded, educated and trained in the work of becoming choristers in the cathedral services and remain in this profession all their lives.

In the early days our St. Paul's church had no chancel, but this was added probably in the early eighties and choir stalls were put in preparatory to the installation of the boys' choir. My brother was the first choirmaster and trained the boys for many years, and very often some man whom I meet will refer to the time when he was a choir boy under my brother's leadership.

★ ★ ★

My philosophy of life may be summed up in the term "liberty" or independence of outside control. In politics I was in my younger days a Republican, probably because my father was a Republican, and the prevailing sentiment of the community was along that line. But I never liked to be dictated to by a party boss or to follow the crowd. At that time Cham Ingersoll was the Republican boss of Beloit and his great cry was "party regularity." Even if the party nominated James G. Blaine for president, we were all duty bound to vote for him, whether we approved him or not. Political campaigns in those days consisted chiefly in slogans, torchlight processions, shouting and villification. The "bloody shirt" was waved with great effect. Beloit, of course, was Republican.

I did not break with the Republican party till after 1900. In 1912 I was a Bullmooser and voted for Teddy Roosevelt. In 1916 I voted for President Wilson; in 1920 for Eugene Debs, in 1924 for Bob La Follette, in 1928 for Al Smith, and since then for F. D. Roosevelt. I have been a strong supporter of the policies of the New Deal. I believe I must rate as a rational progressive.

I never was much influenced by the clergy. However, I have had three very good and splendid ministerial friends, Rev. Thos. E. Barr, Rev. Paul Roth and Rev. Joseph Carden. They were all exceptionally good pupil speakers and loyal to their respective churches. I look back upon my

companionship with these men with a great deal of pleasure.

My views on public affairs, and the economic life of the nation have been very largely influenced by such men as Carl Thompson, the socialist, Tom Johnson and his secretary, Mr. Wirt, of Cleveland, Norman Thomas, Thorstein Veblen, Eugene Debs, Robert La Follette and F. D. Roosevelt. I am a Socialist by conviction, a Progressive in politics and shall no doubt vote the Democratic ticket until something better is offered.

In economics I believe the capitalistic system is doomed to fall eventually, the same as the feudal system finally fell in the middle ages. I don't know what the new order will be put I am sure we will never revert to the status quo.

In short, from boyhood up I have always been inclined to side with the underdog. My sympathies have always been with the common people of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln, as against the lords of the industrial and financial world and their minions and satellites in public office.

In the industrial field I was naturally in my early life influenced by my father's interpretation of "success" as measured by the accumulation of wealth. But as I look back upon it I confess sometimes to a feeling of remorse and regret. The boss could always dictate as to the wages of the help. It was "take it or leave it," and we paid no higher wages than the current scale of the day.

I am pleased to say that in later years in our South Beloit plant we adopted a different attitude. We became a union shop and paid union wages, and had the pick of the best moulders and machinists in the city. We made very little scrap in our foundry because of skillful workmanship. I now fully believe in the labor movement, and the laws that have been passed to support it. I think the labor leaders are committing a great folly in not getting together and uniting the A. F. of L. with the C. I. O. into a solid front.

★ ★ ★

In the intellectual sphere I have been fortunate, indeed, in the many fine contacts I have had at various times in my life with educated and learned men. One man

who influenced me greatly in my high school period was my well-beloved Professor William H. Beach. He urged me to go on and attend college. He said, "I will prepare you so you can enter Harvard." I think I missed it by not following his advice. But my folks sent me to Luther college, instead, where I did not find it congenial and never went back. When father asked me to go into the business with him and make the manufacturing business my life work, I thought well of it at the time, but have many times in later life regretted that I did not go on to college and get into academic work. My son, Albert, used so often to say, "Oh, Dad, you ought to have been a professor." Perhaps he rated my abilities too highly.

Professor Peter Hendrikson of Beloit college was a very intimate friend of our family, and was often over at our house, and always had valuable information to impart and all through my life was a valued friend.

Professor R. B. Anderson was also a good friend. He was professor of Norse at the University of Wisconsin, was minister to Denmark in Cleveland's administration and the author of many books. What could be better for a young man than to associate with such a brilliant man? I have also enjoyed

in my later years my contacts with Beloit college men, such as Crawford, Schallenberger, Severson, and Richardson. While a college professor never gets rich, there must be a great deal of satisfaction in being a member of the teaching profession. Some professors even derive large incomes from royalties from their books. That would be an even greater satisfaction, to see their special knowledge and research spread to the world. I must say that I like the intellectual atmosphere much better than the business atmosphere.

I might now give a short resume of my business career. When I joined up with my father in 1880 we had a capital in the business of \$100,000. We continued to expand, adding new buildings from time to time, and new implements to our line. In 1886 we incorporated with a capital of \$250,000. By 1900 we approached the half million mark. We weathered the panics of 1883 and 1893 and the dull period of the depression. The peak of our business was about in 1903.

But in 1904 misfortune overtook us. We had two disastrous fires in that year and in 1907 some big failures of jobbing houses in the west, handling our goods. We lost a lot of money and finally discontinued manufacturing in 1918.

## Chapter 34

To show how much Beloit has expanded in the course of the past 50 years, it is interesting to note that there are now well within the city limits two old time farm houses. On Prairie avenue there still stands the old Spaulding home. Mr. Spaulding ran a nursery on his farm and the place was considered way out in the country. Now it is inside property.

On Hackett street on the west side stands the original Graves house. It has been moved a block north from the original site, but it is still the same house. Mr. Graves raised broom corn and was known as "broom corn Graves." When the time came to harvest his crop, he hired young men and women, boys and girls to cut the "broom."

The corn was planted in rows, and the workers all lined up at one end of the field and followed the rows to the other end. A strong, quick worker could take two rows, the less able took only one row, but all had to keep the regular pace across the field. They were paid so much "a row." I don't imagine the pay was very much, but in those days every little helped. It was hard work.

Two other interesting houses outside of Beloit might be mentioned—the old stone Gravedale house, seven miles out on the Madison road, which replaced in 1849 the first house built in the Norwegian settlement, and the Stephen Mack house still standing down in Macktown Park.

The cabin of the French trader, Theibault, is said to have stood down near the state line about where Wilford's office is now. It has long ago disappeared.

At the last census Beloit showed a population of 25,265, but this was only the sum total of people within the city limits. When Beloit was chartered as a city the limits were laid out to be two miles north and south, and two and one-half miles east and west, which is five square miles. Now the city has spread out far beyond the corporate boundaries in all directions.

Riverside Drive is built up like

a city street almost up to Town-line bridge, and on the north and east it is spreading out. Likewise on the west side of the river. Why shouldn't a movement be started to take in more of this outlying populous territory, which would greatly benefit everybody. Some 10 years or so ago, we did add a little to our area, but it did not amount to much. Janesville has about twice the area of Beloit and Eau Claire three or four times as much.

It is too bad that, owing to geographical conditions, we cannot annex our sister city of South Beloit.

## Chapter 35

The period from 1860 to 1900 is generally known as the Victorian Age or, as we call it in America, "the gay nineties." Many have been the changes in styles and manner that have taken place since those decades.

In the matter of residences many new houses were going up and usually there was an attempt at the artistic. There was considerable gingerbread work, scroll saw ornamentation and spindle porches. A fine house must also have a tower. We look back on it now as being in very bad taste.

Professional men dressed in Prince Albert coats and light striped trousers, and stove pipe hats were quite the vogue. I even wore a silk hat myself at times. The derby stiff hat was all the go; seldom was a soft hat seen. The men wore watch fobs in their vest pockets. Sometimes trouser legs were extremely tight, and then again they became very wide and loose. Paper collars and cuffs were widely used.

On New Year's Day men went calling on their lady friends. The ladies announced beforehand that they would receive callers. The sleigh bells jingled and all had a good time. Wine and other refreshments were served and sometimes the gay young men became too gay after a long round of calls.

★ ★ ★

The women had some wonderful attire in those days. Back in the

Civil War times the fashion of wearing enormous hoop skirts came in, with several layers of petticoats underneath the dress. Dresses were long and trailed the sidewalks, a very unsanitary practice.

In the house the ladies were up against it when they were to sit down. The hoop skirts flared and bulged and it was a job to appear nice and proper. We children in playing hide and go seek used to find a nice hiding place under mother's hoop skirt.

Waists were small in those days, and complexions pale. A lady always carried a parasol on the street to protect her face from freckles and tan. In social affairs a fan was very essential.

In manners, women, young and old, must maintain themselves very demurely. Ankles must not show. Conversation must be very prim, proper and chaste. There was a good deal of conventional prudery and false modesty. Certain plain words were taboo. For instance it was not considered good form to ever say "leg." The correct thing was to say "limb." Even the old square piano had four "limbs" not "legs." The word "women" was not good form, it was always "lady."

It was considered shocking if the men folks went to see a "leg show" at the opera house, even though the dancers wore tights. Bathing suits for women were designed to prevent swimming.



In the seventies and eighties came that abnormality, the bustle, and the Grecian bend, and still later mutton leg sleeves.

★ ★ ★

What would those prim ladies of the gay nineties have thought if they had seen young women parading the streets in modern slacks—they would have been shocked beyond measure, and if they had seen the girls in shorts, they would have been horrified, to say the least. In those days only men smoked cigarets in America. In Europe the custom of cigaret smoking by women prevailed, but not in America. For a woman or girl to smoke cigarets would put her beyond the pale. As the English say about their conventions, "it simply isn't done," and that ends it.

But we have seen how the women have been gradually emancipating themselves from all these old trammels. They have discarded the cumbersome petticoats and the long trailing dresses. The fashions have changed in the direction of simplicity — displaying rather than concealing the human figure. We see so many pictures

of bathing beauties in the near nude that we think nothing about it, much less get excited about it.

We have become in these latter days very realistic, both in wearing apparel and in matters of speech. We call a spade a spade, and legs, legs. Babies are born in the hospital, and are no more brought by the stork.

One improvement I seem to notice; I don't think we hear so much profanity on the streets as we did fifty years ago, nor do I hear children swear and use bad language. This is all to the good.

The horse and buggy age has passed. Now we are moving at a more rapid pace. The automobile, radio and movies have come in. Moving pictures were unknown in the gay nineties, but soon thereafter made their appearance. While picture shows are undoubtedly popular, I feel that the Hollywood influence is not for the best. Many productions are beautiful and clever, yet, on the whole they seem to me artificial and produced primarily as a money-making proposition and not as a true artistic presentation. As Professor Wright used to say "I just love the movies. I go once a year."

## Chapter 36

It might be interesting to recall some of the entertaining anecdotes which concern colorful Beloiters of the eighties or nineties. Among these interesting Beloiters was B. C. Rogers, who wore a straw hat in winter and never cared much about "looks." He was an educated man, quoted Shakespeare and Pope and had been a schoolmaster in his early years. He was keen and caustic and an adversary to be feared. He ran a grocery store and took a great interest in school affairs.

There were "Old Wilkes," an original, who made old-fashioned snare drums and had a business sign which said: "Kash Pade for Little Kalves;" Hugh Reilly, the rough and ready artilleryman; John Kline, athlete and prize fight trainer; and Barney Cunningham, former sea captain and later house mover. Sometimes his roller equipment would break down and

then he would get much excited and his voice would rise to a high pitch. Bill Fountain, an Odd Fellow, was a wheelwright and worked for my father all his life until he was finally admitted to the Odd Fellows home. He was a nice old fellow, well liked, and he lived for nothing but his lodge.

Everybody knew Hank Talmadge, who loved and kept fine horses and always wore a red carnation in his coat lapel. Graham Field was a man about town. He was an expert billiard player and he, too, loved a fast horse. Talmadge and Field and others used to race their animals up and down Broad st. to decide who owned the fastest horse. Big crowds would gather to see the sport. It appears there were no speed regulations in those days.

★ ★ ★

Bob Pritchard was an interesting Beloiters known to hundreds.

He ran a one-horse dray, one of the old-fashioned two-wheeled affairs with high wheels. The front end of the platform rested on the horse's shoulders. He was a boisterous good natured fellow who loved a joke.

Recently Dave Roberts told me how the Pritchard family used to come visiting the Roberts family. Both families were Welsh and naturally liked to get together and talk in the old mother tongue.

The only hindrance was that the Roberts family lived up on Fifth st. while Bob Pritchard lived 'way over on the east side and the distance was far to walk. But Bob was equal to the emergency. In those days there were no street cars or taxidivers. So Bob placed a rocking chair upon his dray and tied it fast. Then Mrs. Pritchard mounted the conveyance, and seated herself in the chair and Bob proudly conveyed her through town to the great amusement of the onlookers. He left his wife at Mrs. Roberts in the morning and came after her in the evening and the two Welsh ladies had an all day visit.

Another story went that B. C. Rogers had sold a woman customer a half pound of tea and she had him deliver it to her house across the street. In those days it was not considered genteel to carry packages on the street. So B. C. goes out and hails Bob to come and do a job for him. He had some tea to deliver across the street. Bob entered into the joke. He loaded the tea on his dray, crossed the street, opened the gate and backed his dray up to the back door, and called loudly if there were any men folks at home, as he had something to deliver and needed help. The lady never forgave B. C. for the joke.

The story is told about the Rev. Higley meeting B. C. Rogers on the street. In those early days many of the churches held revivals and one was going on at the Second Congregational. In the course of the conversation Mr. Higley invited Mr. Rogers to attend. Mr. Rogers asked Mr. Higley a question. He said, "Do you believe, Mr. Higley, that all the members of your church are going to heaven when they leave here?" Mr. Higley was on the spot and of course, he had to say, "Yes," he

did. "Well then," said Mr. Rogers, "if that is the case, I don't want to go to heaven if I have to meet some of your present church members."

In the same vein as the Roger's anecdote is the story told about a green scandinavian, who was present at some revival meeting, and when asked by the exhorters if he didn't want to come in and work for Jesus, his answer was "Naa, I vurk for Yan Thompson."

For many years John Kline ran a popular saloon on the west side. He was a great athlete and circus performer and was looked up to as a leader in the sporting side of life. He also excelled as an outdoor cook for clam bakes, barbecues and chowder.

Along in the nineties he established a training school up on Sixth Street where aspiring pugilists and noted prize fighters came to go through training regime in the way of proper diet and physical exercise to put them in proper trim and condition for their coming arena appearances. They said John was a strict taskmaster and put them through real strenuous paces.

I remember that Bob Fitzsimmons, the world heavy weight champion in 1889, was here. He was an Australian and had been a blacksmith by trade. John Kline brought him around and introduced him to my father as a fellow blacksmith and they shook hands. It was, of course, a great honor.

★ ★ ★

I find that I have inadvertently omitted mention of our vocational school in Fourth street. A G. McCreary, the director, has given me the following facts and figures:

The vocational school started in the south end of the old high school building in January, 1912, with a small enrollment of day and night students. Louis Wood was the first director. The new building on Fourth street was built in 1928. Since then two additions have been made. At the present time the total enrollment for the day and night school work is approximately 4,000. Mr. McCreary, the present director, started in the school in the fall of 1915. Truly this is a great and valuable institution in our city.

I will also mention the Country

Club of Beloit, which was organized in 1909 as a center of social and outdoor life in our community. It

has a fine golf course and clubhouse located three miles north of the city on Riverside Drive.

## Chapter 37

In closing my story I might add a few remarks as to how I have conserved my good health during my long life.

As a child I was not of robust physique. I was pale and spindley and rather weak. Hence I was not an aggressive and pugnacious boy. I rarely got into a fight. My bent seemed to be towards study and acquiring knowledge of things. I did quite well in my studies, and always kept up with my class, both in the grades and in high school.

I have nothing but pleasing recollections of my childhood days. I liked to read, and was interested in stories of adventure, wild west tales about Indians, scouts and trappers. Then later the novels of Fennimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott. I had a mechanical bent too. I wanted to know the why and wherefore of everything. I made all kinds of things, such as bows and arrows, tomahawks, wooden guns, carts, windmills, sailboats and kites.

At father's shop I could pick up all kinds of materials. They said I had a natural bent for mechanics, probably inherited from my father. As a pastime at home, we children played indoor games, such as dominoes, checkers and cards. The folks did not prohibit cards as sinful. We enjoyed them very much. At twelve I learned to play chess, which I have practiced all my life. Did not care very much for girls, there were none of them around.

As I grew up I was active in outdoor sports and I had to do the chores and saw wood. In college I played baseball, although my hitting was not very good on account of my nearsightedness. As a young man I rode the big high bicycle of the early date, and later the safety wheel. I was also fond

of horse back riding and sailing, and kept a pony for several years. To live in the open air I joined a railroad surveying party and spent a summer in South Dakota on the division engineer's staff of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul.

I was never sick in bed a day in my life that I can remember. My ailments were minor and I never had a serious accident and no broken bones.

I have travelled a lot and seen much of interest in the world. In my personal relationships I have always tried to be fair and honorable. I would ten times rather suffer an injustice than inflict one on someone else. I have had my share of ups and downs but many loyal friends.

I don't regret my life. Have had much to be thankful for—exceedingly fine family relations and two splendid children. With proper food, correct vitamins and careful living I may yet continue to live many happy days.

I have enjoyed writing this sketch of the Old Home Town. I truly hope it will have proved interesting, not only to the old folks in bringing back forgotten memories but also to the present generation in giving them at least a partial view of how we lived in the good old days.

Naturally what I have written down has been based on my own recollections supplemented by old data and records. I have been to some pains to verify facts and dates, but if any of them are inaccurate I hope that it will be excused.

So I say farewell to all my readers with best wishes for a bigger and better and more beautiful Beloit.

Your obedient servant,

O. T. THOMPSON.







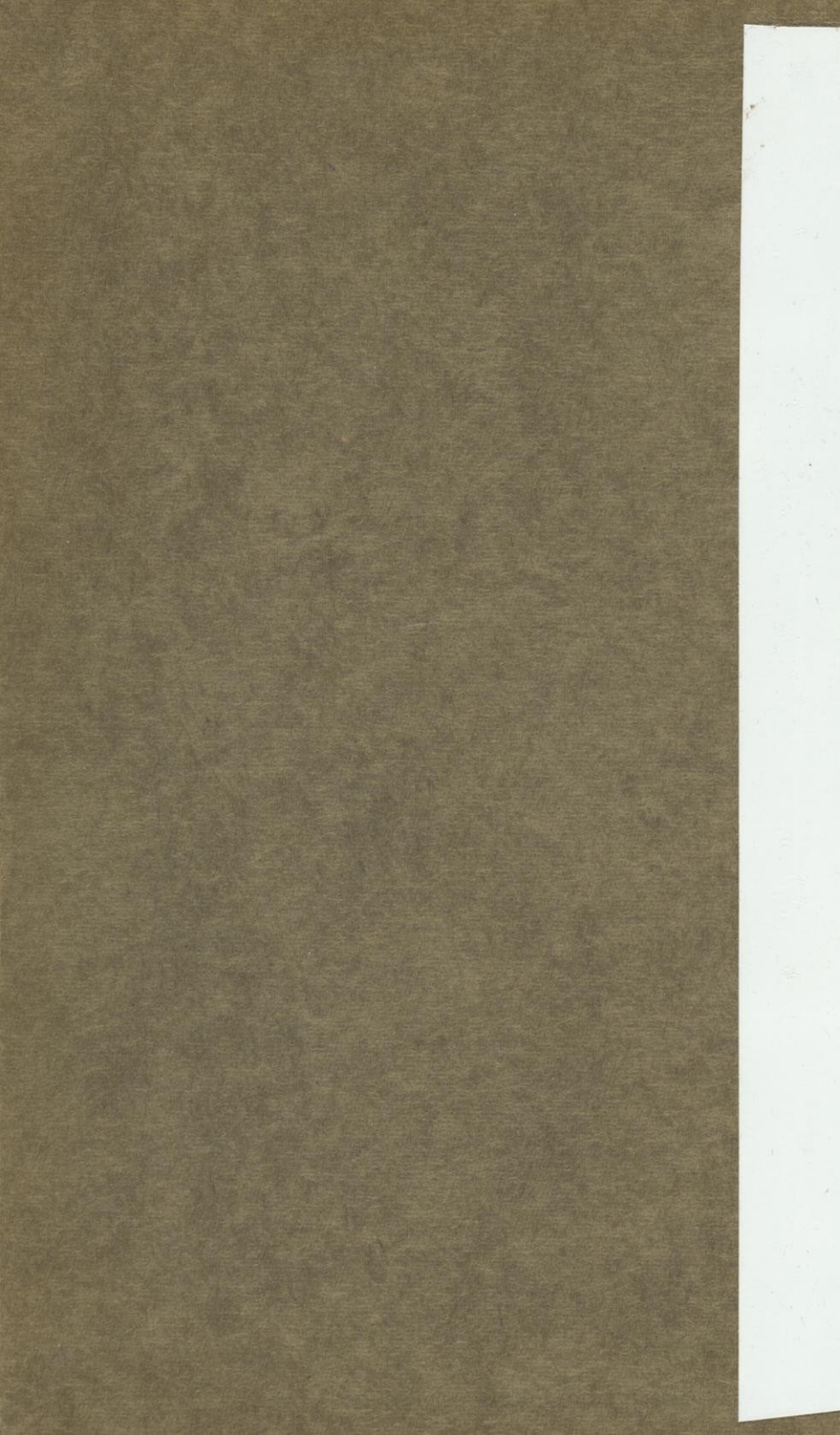














BELOIT PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1537 00085 4996