

G a z e t t e

Ogle County Historical Society

Persistence Pays Off

What it Took to Acquire White Pines

Located along the east bank of Pine Creek near the old Chicago-Iowa Trail stands virgin white pine trees, the southernmost of its kind in North America. Just four miles from Mt. Morris, 6 miles from Polo, and 8 miles from Oregon, the picturesque beauty of the red cedar and white pines along with other fine groups of natural vegetation would slowly disappear. Early settlers in 1840 first purchased 5-60 acre tracts of the woods for pasture and firewood in conjunction with acquiring fertile farmland nearby.

Rebeca Kaufman, founder and president of the Oregon Women's Council took up the cause of saving White Pines Woods for the posterity of Ogle County and the State of Illinois beginning in 1903.

Her husband and attorney, Horace G. Kaufman and Charles Walkup of Pine Creek Township secured 6-month purchase options to secure not less than 300 acres and not more than 500 acres from the owners as a forest preserve. A bill was introduced by James P. Wilson of Polo and Henry Andrus of Rockford in the Illinois Senate to spend \$30,000 for the proposed White Pines tract. The bill passed both chambers, but was readily vetoed by Governor Richard Yates, Jr., citing the need for economy. Subsequent tries year after year in the General Assembly were dashed.

Not one to easily give up, Rebecca Kaufman became a member of the Forestry Committee of the Illinois State Federation of Women. Through the Committee's work she secured the support of all the Clubs in Illinois for the preservation of the White Pines Woods. In 1906, Mrs. Kaufman arranged for a special train to carry committee members of the Federation to stop in Oregon and at White Pines. After repeated lobbying of the State legislature, the bill sponsored by Harlan Kaufman, the Kaufmans' son, finally passed in 1927. On September 16th, 282.96 acres were purchased for \$63,949. According to Mr. William Dew of Polo there were 17 owners at this time.

Shortly thereafter, the White Pines Forest Association was formed to disseminate information and promote interest in the park, Both Mr. A.W. Brayton of Mt. Morris and Mrs. J.C. Seyster of Oregon headed the association.

Women in Uniform During World War II

During World War II, a gaping hole in the industrial labor force occurred when men enlisted. Between 1940 and 1945, women entering the workforce increased from 27% to 37%, including one out of every four women worked outside the home. In addition to factory work and other home front jobs, nearly 350,000 women served in the U.S. Armed Services.

At the urging of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and women's groups, and impressed by the British use of women in service, Congress instituted the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, later upgraded to the Women's Army Corps (WACs), which meant full military status. WACs worked in more than 200 non-combatant jobs stateside and in every theater in the War. By the end of the war there were 100,000 WACs and 6,000 female officers. In the Navy, members of Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES) held the same status as naval reservists and provided stateside support. The Coast Guard and Marine Corps soon followed suit, though in smaller numbers.

One of the lesser-known roles women played in the war effort was provided by the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Women who already had obtained their pilot's license prior to service, became the first women to fly American military aircraft. They ferried airplanes from factories to bases, transported cargo, and participated in simulation strafing and target missions, accumulating more than 60 million miles in flight distances thus freeing thousands of male pilots for active duty in World War II.

More than 1000 WASPs served, including 38 who lost their lives during the war. Considered civil service employees and without official military status, these fallen WASPs were not accorded military honors or benefits. Finally in

1977, the WASPs received full military status. On March 10, 2010, at a ceremony in the Capitol, the WASPs received the Congressional Gold Medal, one of the highest civilian honors. More than 200 former pilots attended the event, many wearing their World War II-era uniforms.

Women from Ogle County who served (that we are aware of):

Hazel Dale WAC, Oregon	Verna Settles Marine Corp, Oregon
Sally Berk Navy, Oregon	Sally Fraser
Cecelia Laskos WAVE, Oregon	Evelyn Reed
Francis Stull Cadet Nurse, Oregon	Elizabeth Tankersley
Ethel Lorraine Stull WAC, Oregon	Edith “Nelle” Fraklin WAC, Oregon
Goldie Powell	Nina Trump American Red Cross, Polo
Anna Marie Carpenter Army Nurse	Mary Ellen McCracken Army Nurse, Marion Township

ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL TRIVIA

1. How many counties does Illinois have today?
2. But for this U.S. congressman from Illinois, both Chicago and Rockford would be part of Wisconsin. Who was he?
3. Which of the 13 U.S. colonies once laid claim to Illinois country?
4. What was the settler population when Illinois became a state on December 3, 1818?

Answers on page 7

Parking Lot Covers History

Lorado Taft crossed paths with Dr. R. E. Hieronymus, Community Advisor for the State of Illinois, on the lecture circuit. Dr. Hie, as he was affectionately called, saw community houses as the hope for the smallest towns in Illinois. Lorado Taft also adopted this concept after an incident with Tony, a young summer camp worker from Chicago, at the Eagle's Nest Colony.

Tony asked permission to stay in Oregon after errands in town to see a movie. Taft learned young Tony had to wait for a second showing to get in. When asked what he did then, Tony replied, "What can a feller do in a town like this? There ain't nothin'."

This incident convinced Taft to start a community house. He shared his idea around town in 1918. Enlisting help from Florence Lowden, wife of Governor Frank Lowden, Taft purchased a run down brick house at 129 S. Third Street located north of the library. Pond & Pond of Chicago drew up plans to remodel the house with shower baths for men and women, dressing rooms, a kitchenette, and a community room with a piano.

Refurbishing was a joint effort in the community. Girls in the town including Mary Taft and Florence Lowden boiled kettles of water and scraped layers of wallpaper and paste from walls. They hunted for spare furniture in their homes to furnish the rooms. Finally the Oregon Community House was opened to the public on Memorial Day, 1919. Talks of great optimism were delivered by Mrs. Ada Taft, Wallace Heckman, Mayor F. W. Burchell, and Attorney J. C. Seyster. The house was open afternoons and evenings for billiards, cards, dancing, and reading. Lorado Taft and Hamlin Garland often gave lectures at the community house. Tennis and croquet could be played in the yard. It was open to anyone over the age of seventeen for an annual membership of \$2.00.

The community house was the cause of civic reawakening in Oregon. The defunct Men's Club was revived with the prospect of a good place to meet as was the community chorus which had been practicing at the Courthouse with poor acoustics. Soon plans were drawn up for a community swimming pool and a gymnasium.

The question still remained: Would the community house attract Polish workers from the foundry, the young adults from the River's east side, the harvesters from the fields, or the tonys nearby during summer work? Unfortunately, the community house never was totally accepted by the town. According to Ada Taft, the well-to-do residents of Oregon came to the house out of civic responsibility. The tonys visiting town and those from the east side never embraced ownership of the house.

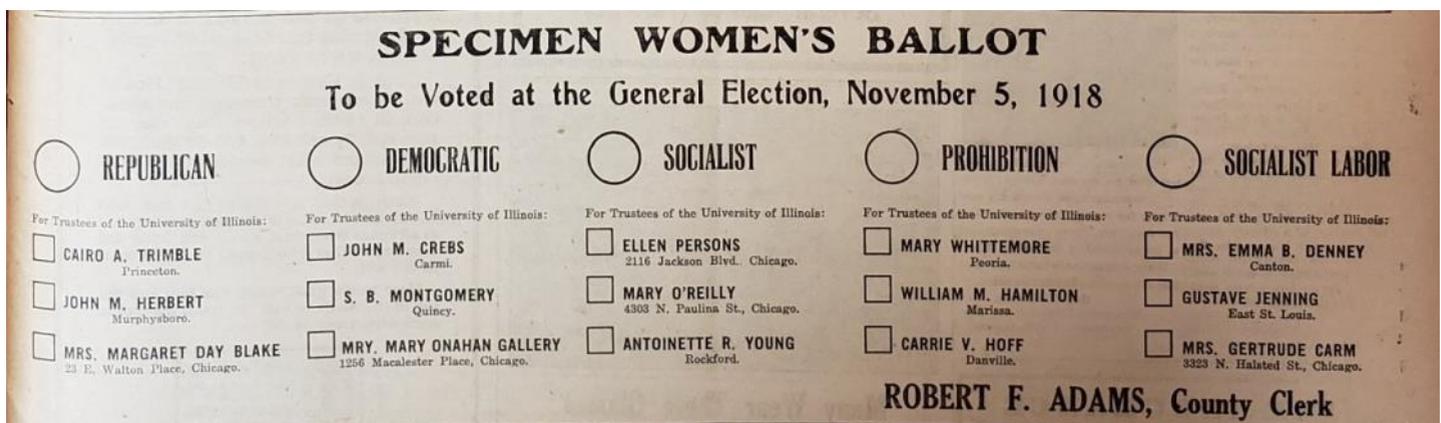
Interest in the community house waned. The property was sold 10 years later in 1930. John Bechtold who ran a creamery next door bought the house. The house changed owners again in 1969 to Robert and Eleanor Moehle. But in 1978 the city razed the house and the neighboring businesses in order to build a parking lot.

General Election Tuesday, November 6, 2018

Don't forget to exercise your right to vote! The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote, a right known as women's suffrage, and was ratified on August 18, 1920, ending almost a century of protest.

Beginning in 1913, women in Illinois could vote for Presidential electors and for all local offices not specifically named in the Illinois Constitution. However, they still could not vote for state representative, congressman or governor; and they still had to use separate ballots and ballot boxes. But by virtue of this law, Illinois had become the first state east of the Mississippi River to grant women the right to vote for President of the United States.

Here is a sample women's ballot from the Ogle County Republican in 1918:



If you have any questions about the 2018 elections, contact Laura Cook, Ogle County Clerk at 815-732-1110 or visit her website at countyclerk.oglecounty.org.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- A beautiful bud vase that was made in Vienna, Austria for J.E. Powell's store. It has a depiction of the original Oregon High School. Donated by Jerry and Carol Blumeyer.
- A "piggy bank" from the Ogle County National bank with key! Donated by Jerry and Carol Blumeyer.
- Items of memorabilia, too numerous to mention them all, donated by the Patricks: Sandsucker Hole Nature Trail booklet, Sinnissippi Hotel key, abstracts, Margaret Fuller Island pamphlet, and several books.
- "Mobility and the Small Town" and a Church of God history donated by Michal Burnett.
- "Biographical Encyclopedia: Chronicling the History of the Church of God Abrahamic Faith 19th and 20th Centuries" donated by the author, Jan Turner Stilson.
- Barbara Krug donated several items of local interest including drawings of the Grand Detour bridge, Grand Detour stone house, Blackhawk, and the Franklin Grove grist mill. She also donated several books, flyers, and maps.
- A note holder from Kasper's Garage in Rochelle, ink blotters from CM Wiley in Stillman Valley, and old photographs of the Culligan Truck from Oregon were among the items that came to us from the Sycamore Coin Gallery via the Joiner History Room in Sycamore.

Thank You!

UPCOMING AREA EVENTS

48th Annual Autumn on Parade

October 6-7 Downtown Oregon, Park East, Stronghold, and Park West.

Ogle County Historical Society Porch Sale

October 6th, noon-4:00pm

Here are a few of the items available: Framed, illustrated Oregon print by Shirley McPherson, OHS Annuals, Framed, Unidentified Portraits, Vintage Metal Hoosier Flour Bin Sifter, Cast Iron Shoe Last Stand, Wooden Handle Cleaver Hatchet, Applegate's Linen Marker, Chicago, IL, Benjamin Harrison Framed Campaign Poster, Print of Napoleon on the Eve of the Coronation, and much more!

Bald Hill / Swingley Family

Tuesday, October 16th, at the Byron Library at 1:30.

Mary Rose Phillip will be sharing her knowledge on the Bald Hill property and the Swingley family, who previously owned it.

Ogle County Historical Society Meeting

October 22, 6:30 pm, Ruby Nash Museum Carriage House

Candlelight Walk

November 24, 3:00-8:00 pm, Downtown Oregon.

Ogle County Historical Society Meeting

November 26, 6:30 pm, Ruby Nash Museum Carriage House

ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. 102
2. Nathaniel Pope
3. Virginia
4. 34,620

Error Correction from May 2018 Gazette: We were unable to find any proof that Orson Welles' father ever purchased or owned the Sheffield Hotel in Grand Detour.

The Ogle County Historical Society
PO Box 183
Oregon, Il. 61061

Application for Membership

_____ \$35 per household per year

___ \$5 per year for hard copy of Gazette

Renewals due in November for following year

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

The Gazette is published quarterly, by **The Ogle County Historical Society**, PO Box 183, Oregon, Il. 61061.

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