

Rockwood - Forgotten Glory
BY
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This compiling is entitled 'Rockwood, Forgotten Glory' because people of today cannot vision the real life that once was part of this village.

The earliest book on Randolph County, Illinois history is Montague's Historical Sketches of Randolph County, Published in 1859.

It states that a John Hickman built a house in 1805, but this land has since been taken by the Mississippi River. In 1806 or 1807, Mr. John Mansker built a cabin at the head of the island opposite the town and opened a farm there. Samuel Mansker built the first house within the limits of the present town and in 1859 this house was occupied by Mr. Silas P. Tuthill.

The first store was started by a James McCormack, Mr. John Stearns came from Tennessee in 1821, purchased the land and laid out lots in the upper part of the town. This original Part of the town we north of Jones Creek and actually had two streets named Oak and Walnut. Later additions south of Jones Creek were the Fricky Addition, Barber Addition, Worth & English Addition, Dean's Addition, J. L. Mann Addition and the Scudamore Addition. The streets of these later additions were Bark, Mill, Division, Clinton, St. Clair, St. Charles, Washington, Jackson and Jefferson streets. One street running north and south parallel with the Mississippi River was called State Street. The town was confined to a narrow strip of land between the bluffs and the river.

The town was called 'Liberty', but the post office was named 'Jones Creek' and the post office name was older than the name of Liberty. Emsley Jones settled in this part of the county and it is thought that the post office name came from this family.

Emsley Jones killed a neighbor and his hanging was the first in the county.

About four years after Mr. Stearns laid out the town, Capt. W. B. Charles, James Dean, Dr. Nathaniel Manning, Harvey Clendenin, Samuel Barber, Thomas Frazier and E. G. Hall settled in the town and gave a decided impetus to the growth of the town. The town was incorporated in 1837 and the first town Clerk was Harvey Clendenin. He was also the first postmaster of Jones Creek and he was my Great Grandfather.

Mansker, Clendenin and Barber established a store and dealt heavily in grain and produce and at this time, there was more corn shipped from Liberty to New Orleans than from any other part of the county. I am quoting from a letter dated 'Liberty, Randolph Co, Illinois May 24, 1837' from Harvey Clendenin to his brother-in-law, Samuel Barber at New Orleans- "You recollect of hearing me speak when I was at Orleans last of Gilbert & Swanwick having a demand on J. H. Graham which they wanted me to collect for them. I informed them by letter that if they would send you the order you could perhaps have their demand...you can get it settled in the way of that grocery acceptance....Money matters are somewhat hard at present there being so many banks now that their paper are not current which makes collections difficult. I had forty dollars of Mississippi paper left with me to try and get off if I could if the J.B. Prairie will take it and pass off on her way down and account to you for it. I have about the same amount of Orleans paper that belongs to us which I will also send for it is not very current here at this time...I have not tried to force any collections as yet...as those who have given their notes are taken at ten percent interest. The weather continues cool even up to this time vegetation is now backward by three weeks than I ever saw it at this season of the year." (End of Quote)

From this letter we have some idea of the problems of the times concerning money matters and interest rates.

The first town Board of Trustees of Liberty consisted of Wm. B. Charles, Nathaniel Manning, John D. Stearns, John Stearns, and Jacob Parks. In 1858, John Preston Mann bought lots one and two from Silas P. Tuthill and built his house and he and his wife lived in it until their deaths in 1908 and 1912 respectively.

When Montague's History was published in 1859, Silas P. Tuthill was listed as a chair maker in Liberty, Illinois.

The next published history of Randolph County, Illinois was Brink's Atlas of 1875, by W. R. Brink & Co. of Illinois and on page 30, we find this on Township 8 South, Range 5 west:

"The town and post office both were called Rockwood, a change was made in the name from Liberty to Rockwood by Legislature in February 1865 as there was another town named Liberty in the State."(End of Quote)

There was upper town and lower town in Rockwood vernacular. Dr. Nathaniel Manning, a doctor, who came from Missouri, lived in upper town, but his house no longer exists. My Mother, Mary Alice Mann Bilderback, was born in the Dr. Manning house in 1857. My Paternal Grandmother, Martha Jane Stafford Bilderback also lived with this Dr. Manning family before her marriage to my Grandfather, Ephraim Porter Bilderback. In the early pictures of the town, there was a foot bridge across Jones Creek. The little house which was the barn at the John P. Mann home was a three room building. A Mr. Jake Houker once lived in it and later it was a drug store and a music teacher moved there and gave organ lessons. Alice Mann took organ lessons from this woman. But Alice had to drive in a wagon by way of Welge, Illinois, stop with an uncle over night, then on to Sparta, Illinois where she purchased an

organ and than made the return trip home, but since her beau was driving the wagon, the trip was, most likely, a pleasure!

The Main street, State Street of early Liberty was where the railroad was later located and what is now State Route 3 was a narrow pathway at the back of the houses. But about 1885, the river left Rockwood high and dry and the back doors became the front doors!

Today, where you leave the pavement to go thru Rockwood to the Ebenezer Community, was the Harry home, later owned by Lou and Taylor Simmons. This was the most immaculate home you could imagine, The Simmons had no family. Today, the pavement has almost destroyed the front yard of this home, now owned by Virgil Simpson.

In early Liberty, down below on the river bank, was the Dr. Clendenin house and the road went down towards the Mississippi River and turned South. Then came the Walter's home, then the John Preston Mann house, (now owned by the Postmistress Mrs. Mansker) then the James Luther Mann house, then the John Clendenin house which burned years ago. The Daans had a very nice home in lower town. The Mann home, originally had a portico at the front or river side of the house and you entered thru a wide front hall which extended from the front to the back of the house. This house had no fireplaces as the wife remembered how you could freeze on one side and burn up on the other from the heat from fireplaces and insisted on stoves. The parlor stove is now a collector's item, a little long-shaped iron stove, with two doors which opened and gave the appearance of a fireplace. Two small pipes went up into a round drum which gave off the heat for the room. I am most happy that I have this stove.

Along the Mississippi River road were the business houses. First, came Jones Store and Post Office, than Peter Wagner's Drug Store, then John Clendenin's General Store, which was smaller than the Richards

and Clendenin Store, then the flour mill, with the cooper house above on the hillside. Now, we drive over the pavement of State Route 3 where the cooper house was located. The coopers would be in the cooper house clicking away on the barrels and the barrels were sent down a chute to the mill. I have the old stencil that was used to put the brand names on the wooden barrels of flour. It is a round, metal stencil and reads:

"Clendenin's, 196 lbs, 3X Family Flour, Rockwood, Ills*"

Below the mill, there were Walter's Store, which was a general store which sold whiskey, then Richard's and Clendenin's double store, which had both dry goods, groceries and had a drug store with Mr. Taylor Simmons as druggist, then there was Dean's General Store.

In the very early days, there was a saloon in town which was a very rough saloon. A young man was killed in a brawl and the women of the town banded together, went in a group to the saloon and broke in the barrels of whiskey and, in general, ruined the saloon. The sheriff came from Chester and arrested the ladies and they had to ride horse-back Chester and each paid a fine of \$16.00. The roads were so muddy that the horses sank into the mud up to their knees. For twenty years after that, liquor was not sold in Liberty. Some of the ten women in the 'raid' were Becky Brown, Grandmother of the late Cora Brown Rollo; Emily Young Mann, Grandmother of Margaret Mann McNabney of Chester; Nancy Clendenin Mann, Grandmother of Mildred Bilderback Midjaas; and Sally Baldrige Mann, Grandmother of Louise Mann Juergens of Chester. Nancy Clendenin Mann and Emily Young Mann were not the type of women to go out on such a public affair, so they must have been much upset over the killing*

Again, in 1902, there was a petition passed by the citizens of Rockwood to close a saloon run by a Mr. Tinapel.

In 1855, a joint stock association was formed,, with James Monroe Brown President and Superintendent of the building of the mill. It took all of James Brown's time to keep the men working. Lime had to come from a kiln near Fred Hunter's farm; another kiln run by Mic O'Daniel and later from a kiln in Ebenezer Community which was closer so work speeded up. This plentiful supply of lime rock came from the surrounding bluffs with plenty of wood to keep the kilns burning both day and night. Five or six ox-teams were kept busy hauling sand from the sandbars close by to mix with the lime for mortar. The stone masons worked at their job on the hill above the mill. Sammy Cleland was boss of the cutting and shaping of the stone for the mill. The building was of stone, a four story with basement and attic. Claus Weibusch laid the brick and his brother carried the hod so this part of the work went along smoothly! Charles Thies of St. Louis installed the machinery and Wm. Lauder of Ebenezer dug the foundation,

The most difficult part of the work of building the mill was the cordelling the brick from Chester to Liberty. The cordelle gang had to be made up of the strongest men in order to pull the flatboat back up the river to Chester. It was difficult to walk along the river bank and a sure-footed man was in demand as he must not slip with his rigging which was tied to a short round stick and he had to be wirty and muscular to walk the ten miles steadily and vigorously. It took five men to pull the flatboat to Chester in one day. The men were paid fifty cents per day and this was big wages. The men who guided the boat with their paddles and stayed on board received the same wages for they changed places with the men on shore to take their turn pulling the boat. The mill was set in operation in 1857, and produced 250 barrels of flour per day. It was sold in the Fall

of 1859 to Holmes and Miltenberger of Chester. The mill burned in November 8, 1865 and was rebuilt in 1866 by J. B. Holmes, Clendenin and Mann, at a cost of \$21,000. It was equipped with a system of elevators and had three run of four feet burrs. The engine room, like the mill proper, was built of dressed sandstone. The cooper shop employed ten hands. At this time, the population of Liberty was two hundred and thirty-one persons. Clendenin sold out to Holmes in January, 1870, than leased the mill and ran it until his death on January 10, 1881. The miller was Mr. Charles from Boston, Mass., who was miller in 1857 to about 30 years later.

Men would be at work as clerks in the upstairs and the mill was run by a high fly-wheel, which had a pit in the ground. One day, when Sam Mann was a very young boy, he sat down to watch the wheel go round and became dizzy and fell into the wheel pit. The miller called for the men to stop the wheel and then called to Sam 'Lay still, Sam' and as Sam was a very slow mover, he laid still until he was taken from the pit, the only harm done was a grazing of his shins where the wheel hit his legs.

The farmers drove in with wagon loads of wheat and unloaded behind the mill. Boats took on the barrels of flour for shipment and these boats were stern-wheelers and freight boats. Side-wheelers were passenger boats and double deckers. Flour was not packed in sacks, but in barrels and the barrels had to be 'wet' barrels, so called because they had to be able to keep whiskey in without leaking and flour dry without moisture getting into the barrel.

Big boats would tie up at upper town and stay while they loaded wood from the wood yards in upper town. Liberty was one of the largest wood markets on the Mississippi River. About ten thousand dollars worth of wood was sold from her numerous yards annually.

The government boats would tie up for the winter near Liberty.

In 1887, after the Mississippi River left the mill too far inland, the machinery was taken out of the mill, the whistle ceased to blow and Alex Barber bought the building. Later it was bought by a Mr. Noser from Monroe County, Illinois, who brought machinery, formed a partnership with Edmund H. Gilster of Chester, with \$10,000 capital, produced 125 barrels of flour per day. It was owned by Mr. Noser at the time of the last fire in 1920. Today, all that remains of the mill is the old smoke stack and a few crumbling walls to be seen on the West side of State Route 3 when driving thru Rockwood. I have several picture of the mill when the Mississippi River flowed beside it and it was a very well constructed building.

The river at this point was probably narrower than at any other piece between New Orleans and St. Anthony Falls (St. Paul of today) and possibly measured in an ordinary stage of water something less than four hundred yards. This narrow width of the river influenced the 'underground' railroad for fleeing negros, who were brought from the Missouri shore by boat and then to a cave in the bluffs above Rockwood (Liberty) and then taken to Eden, now Sparta Illinois. The farmers in the area raised large quantities of wheat, which was one reason for building a flour mill.

At the time of the mill operation, there were five dry goods store, two grocery stores, one chair factory, one boot and shoe shop, 1 cooper shop, 1 hotel, three physicians, and 1 school house.

In upper town, there was the Barber house, the George Hooker house, the Holland House, the Lakenan House and store (Winifield and Lucy Lakenan were well to do people). The school house was back of the Harry home in upper town. It had one big room with benches which had wide back rails.

At a later date Mr. Henry Tudor, whose father, John Tudor, was born in Paris, France, and Mr. Taylor Simmons, the druggist, had a store at the junction of the road out to Ebenezer Community and the main road. Miss Sara Clendenin Mann was post mistress in this store.

The river bend below Liberty, where the boats first came into view as they came up the river, was called Wagner's Landing and later Hamilton

Landing. The Wagners, came from Perryville, Missouri. William Wagner married Phem Walters, Peter Wagner married Ella E. Tuthill, and Lydia Wagner married Dr. Moses Walter Clendenin. Dr. Clendenin *and* his wife, Lydia, are buried in the Reid Cemetery,

During the Civil War, Nancy Clendenin Mann would use her 'spy' glass to watch the boats coming from the South, loaded with prisoners of war and they were a motley lot, dressed in make-shift clothes and covered with blankets. On one occasion, a boat passing Liberty which was a Union town, raised the Confederate flag and the town was much incensed over the incident. Later, some of the soldiers coming home from the war, came on the same boat and they were most happy to make the captain run up the Stars and Stripes.

In the beginning of this article, I mentioned that a Mr. Silas P. Tuthill lived in Liberty in the year 1859.

Mr. Silas P. Tuthill gave to Liberty(Rockwood) a certain prestige as he was a chair maker, and today a Tuthill chair is a collector's item and much prized as an antique. Silas P. Tuthill was a Quaker from the East and he was in Liberty by 1850, as he is listed in the 1850 Census record from Liberty, as follows:

Silas P. Tuthill	38 years	born in Vermont
Desdemona. Wife	40 years	born in Vermont
Wallace, son	8 years	born in Illinois
Cordelia, dau.	3 years	born in Illinois
Alice, dau.	1 years	born in Illinois

This census record verifies than Mr. Tuthill and wife were in Illinois by 1842, the date of the birth of their son, Wallace.

Mr. Tuthill set up a four-room, two-story chair factory in Liberty and began to turn out chairs. A Picture of this building is among my pictures, but the building no longer exists. The Tuthill residence was on a small plateau just above the spring and the factory was down in the flat next to the road. The spring came out of the bluff into a triangular rock basin. It never froze in winter or dried up in summer. Today, Tuthill Spring is almost lost in the underbrush that surrounds it. Mr. Tuthill made a large man's rocker with arms and head rest; a small rocker with arms and head rest for a woman; a small, low rocker without arms for sewing and children high chairs. My own Grandparents had one of these high chairs. It was a small seat and had no bib or tray. Miss Lulu Kelly and Alice Mann Bilderback, both deceased, thought that Mr. Tuthill also made a child's rocker, but had not seen one for years. They said that they had never seen a bench or table made by Mr. Tuthill. Mr. Tuthill also made the most popular straight parlor chair, usually sold in sets of six. Some were finished in black with gold trim, others in a fancier dark green with gold stenciled designs. A set of black chairs sold for ten dollars. Alice and Nancy Mann walked from their home to upper town and carried home a set of chairs for Alice. They were the dark green type and they are still in our family. The framework of the chairs was of hickory wood. The head rest, arms and seat of poplar and rockers were of sturdy oak. The chairs were known for their sturdiness and ability to withstand bad weather on front porches.

Any chair marked by a stencil on the bottom of the chair which read;

“S. P. Tuthill, Rockwood” was sold after the year 1865.

Mr. Tuthill and his wife, Desdamona are buried in the Reid Cemetery Rockwood, Illinois. In January of one year, I hopped across the

Creek, now called Reid's Creek, climbed the steep hillside back of the Harry Reid barn and came to the Reid Cemetery where found many grave markers for early Liberty families scattered on the hillside. This is now a cow pasture and in very poor condition and even the Reids no longer bury their dead there. The Randolph County Historical Society should take this as a project to confine the area of the graves and protect it from the animals. This is an historical burial ground and I have inventoried it.

The families I found represented in this cemetery were the Reids, the Walters, the Wagners, the Youngs, Moses Clendenin, Hamiltons, Beauvais, Wm. Crittenden, Caroline Scudamore, first wife of my great Uncle Godwin Scudamore, who married as his second wife, my great Aunt Mary Clendenin, daughter of Harvey Clendenin.

Mr. Tuthill's grave Marker had the following inscription:

Silas P. Tuthill, died Feb. 15, 1881, aged 69 years

Desdamona, wife of S.P. Tuthill, died Jan. 30, 1881

You will note that this couple died fifteen days apart.

Miss Lulu Kelly related that on one Fourth of July, she attended a picnic at the Tuthill Spring and it began to rain and the picnickers took shelter in the closed factory. She remembered that there were two rooms full of new chairs which had not been sold since the elder Tuthill's death.

Silas P. Tuthill's children were Wallace, Cordelia, Alice, all mentioned in the 1850 Census report and later children were Ella E., who married Peter Wagner, the druggist and their family were Ruby, Pearl (who married Bernard Cohen of Chester), Eustice and George Wagner. Charles Eldridge Tuthill, who was a teacher in Rockwood in 1878 was born January 5, 1854. Alice Tuthill married William Young October 25, 1866, moved to California and their children were Orrie E., Willard and Charles.

At one time in Mr. Tuthill's life, he was bitten by a 'mad' dog and because people did not know about rabies. Mr. Tuthill would, each summer, shut himself up in his chair shop for fear he would develop the symptoms and harm his family.

In 1880, Rockwood had three physicians- Dr. William Vance, Dr Joel C. Barber and Dr. Moses Walter Clendenin. On page 25 in this article, is the marriage return for Dr. William Vance, age 76 years to a young widow, Hanah Haskins Porter, age 26 years, in 1881.

The general merchant was G. W. Walters and the general merchants with drug stores were Ben Richard, P.J. Wagner and W. G. Harry & Son.

The postmaster was W. C. Harry and he was also the Justice of the Peace.

The Lawyer was John Preston Mann.

The Blacksmith was Robert Emery and Son.

The wagon maker was John Reid

The carpenter was G. W. Hooker.

A machinery agent was Ben Richards, the store owner.

The dressmakers were Mrs J. Reid and Miss Francis Jefferies

A restaurant was run by John Frazier.

A tailor was a Mr. Zivney, a refugee from the South during the Civil War. The Reids of Rockwood descend from a Mr. Reid who came from England. This grandfather was drowned in the Mississippi River as he took a boat load of furs from Liberty to Chester. The current swamped the boat and Jim Reid who was with him was thrown out and the older Reid tried to rescue him, but his coat was too heavy and caused him to drown. Mr. Harry DaRosa was the son of John DaRosa Reid and Tirzah Ellen Hill, A church was organized in Liberty in the year 1843 by the Rev. C. C. Riggs. The congregation usually occupied the school house. Later, a brick church building was erected but burned March 27, 1940. Later the present church was built. Today, an active Presbyterian congregation.

The famous race between the boats Natchez and the Robert E. Lee passed up the Mississippi River, passing Rockwood at night and the inhabitants of the town watched as the sparks flew from the smoke stacks, one boat slightly ahead of the other.

Along State Route 3, about a mile from the Randolph-Jackson County Line, three ledges of rock crop out, each a different formation--sandstone, limestone, and soapstone. The soapstone was supposed to be best for chimneys. Sammy Cleland and his brother built most of the chimneys and fireplaces in the area. They were stonemasons from Ireland. At the building of Eads Bridge at St. Louis, Missouri, limestone from these bluffs had the necessary qualities and special stone cutters were sent to get stone from these ledges and shipped by barges up the Mississippi to St. Louis and used in the piers of the Eads Bridge. The bluffs above Liberty had many interesting formation and one high point was called "The Pinnacle" and young couples climbed the steep Bluffs on many afternoons to enjoy the view over the Mississippi River into Missouri and up and down the river. (I managed to make the climb myself and the view was beautiful.) Another promontory north of the town was called the "Upper Pinnacle" but was not as high or as popular as the South Pinnacle.

At one time, there were twenty-one young persons who left Rockwood on Monday morning to teach in the area rural schools. They hired professors to come into the town each summer and teach normal school courses so that they could obtain teaching certificates teaching certificates. There was no Normal or Southern Illinois University at that date. At the University's seventy-fifth celebration, I saw the registration of my Aunt Emily Mann, in the first summer school course. My Mother, Mary Alice Mann and her sisters, Emily, Nancy and Sara Mann all taught in the schools of Randolph and Jackson counties. Sara Clendenin Mann went on to teach all over the United

States as a foreign english teacher and could converse with them and their families in their language. She spent the last ten and one-half years of her life in Three Springs Lodge, Chester dying in 1961. Another of these teachers was Wellington Wilcox and I will close with a poem about 'The Pinnacle' and written by Mr. Wilcox.

A SUNSET AT ROCKWOOD

Lo, the evening sun was sinking

In the far off golden west,

And the dancing sunbeams glancing

O'er the Mississippi's breast

When I climbed the rocks and standing

On the Pinnacle's high crown

Saw the ruddy sunlight shining

O'er the vale and hill and town.

Gleaming for among the ridges

Meads and fields with growing store

Shown with golden hues, while forest

Deepened on Missouri's shore

O'er the sandy bar were rambling

In the evening's crimson blaze

Rockwood's happy sons and daughters

Shrouded in that rosy haze.

On the balmy air of evening

From the dwelling just below

Gently rose the notes of music

Softly, Sweetly did they flow

Past the Isle far down the river

Sounded back a whistle clear
And away up v the winding
Came Another steamer near.
Year by year has come and fleeted
Since I stood upon that crest

Times have changed and friends departed
Still, fond Mem'ries throb the brest
With the lovely scenes of childhood
Woven through me ever more
Echoes chiming back from dreamland
Bearing treasures from its shore.

s/ Wellington Wilcox.

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Tales of the Valley. by Cora Brown Rolla
Inventory of the Reid Cemetery, Rockwood, Illinois
Nancy Clendenin Mann's letters to her husband during Civil War.
Wellington Wilcox poem, with permission of daughter, Miss Anna Wilcox