

CHERRY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER June, 2012

We had several cub scouts, den leader Kathy Rohlwing, and parents come for a visit on May 12th. The scouts especially enjoyed the jail. Many pictures were taken. Our bake sale on May 18th and 19th was very successful. Many thanks to all who baked and worked on those days.

I received several notes from members regarding their memories of Charlie Robinson: Wayne (Red) Kint -- "I was his first 'soda jerk', and in turn he was my first customer when I barbered at Mac's in Cherry Valley. Lots of great memories." Bruce Erickson -- "The article on Charlie Robinson was great. I remember all the cherry cokes he made." Jim McFaul -- "I found the newsletter especially interesting because Charlie Robinson is forever burned in my memory with great fondness. What an interesting person." Leslie Oswald -- "Charlie Robinson introduced us to green rivers. I doubt today's people even know how to make that drink." Lyle Wilt -- "Charlie complained about the noise the cub scouts were making in the Legion Hall. The first time he went up and warned them. The second time he complained in person and hollered. The third time he went up with a bucket and threw the ingredients at them. It was full of confetti!! Everyone got a laugh out of that."

Our thanks to the businesses who donated money to our society. In turn we have their business cards listed on the last page of this newsletter.

The following have passed away since our last newsletter:

Onabeth Tice	71	March 3
James A. Coppnoll	79	March 7
Michael E. Burke	72	March 11
Gerald Hollembeak	79	April 29

FIRES IN CHERRY VALLEY IN 1800's & EARLY 1900's

Cherry Valley has had more than it's share of disastrous fires. Robert Wooster recalled what was probably the fire one in our village. It completely destroyed the old cheese factory which was located down by the depot.

One night residents were horrified to discover that the interior was a raging furnace. It was feared that the entire village would be destroyed. Belvidere and Rockford fire trucks were summoned but they could do little.

Efforts to save the building were quickly abandoned, and attention was centered upon the surrounding structures. Neighbors came running with rag carpets which they had ripped from their floors. These were dipped in tubs of water and spread over the roof of the adjacent depot. They were successful in confining the flames to the cheese factory.

The widely known Commercial Hotel burned in 1898. Among the other outstanding conflagrations were Pike's Broom Shop, the two elevators, John Carlson's Shoe Shop, and the saloon which was located where the bank building now stands.

Our neighbors were visited by a terrible fire on Sunday, April 22, 1869. Almost the entire business district was destroyed by fire. It seems that the fire was first discovered about half past 2 o'clock in the morning in the unoccupied frame building which was being filled up as a grocery store by John McKee. There were versions and rumors as to the origin of the fire which tends to prove it must have been the work of an incendiary. There being no adequate means at hand, the entire row was destroyed. The citizens were out in full force and did the utmost to remove goods from the buildings, but so rapidly were the flames cumulated, that the entire contents of two buildings were totally destroyed. The losses were:

John McKee: frame building, loss \$1,200, insurance \$800.

C.A. Dunwell: frame building, loss \$2,100, no insurance. This store was occupied by J. B. Lee as a grocery. Total loss of stock.

William Slater: Billards & Liquor Saloon, loss on building \$2,000, no insurance.

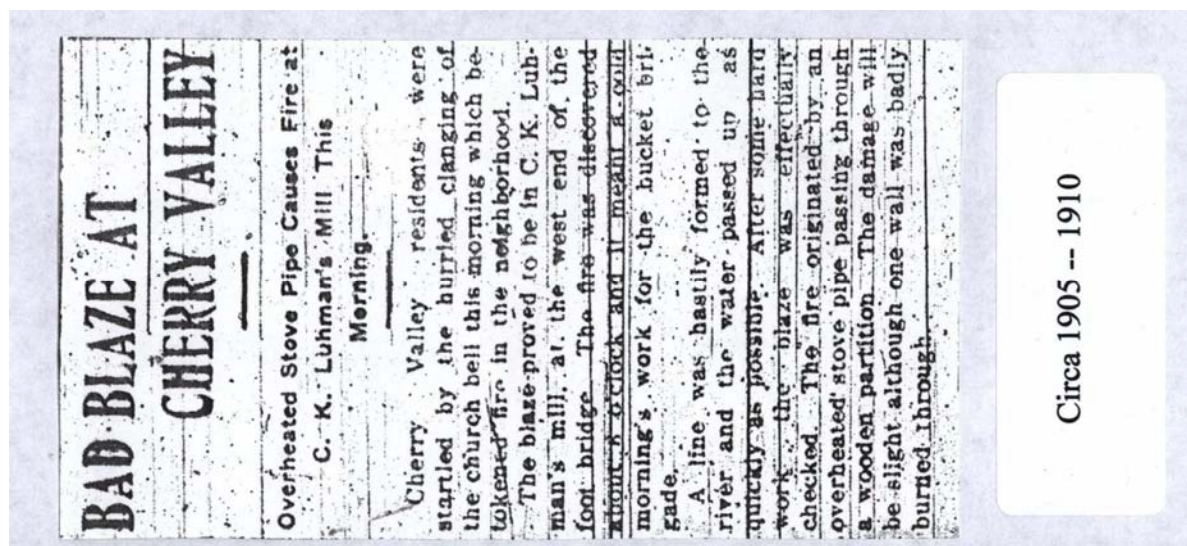
Oscar King: Druggist building owned by Dr. Van Buren, loss on building \$1,500, insurance \$800.

Farley & Hovey Grocery: loss on building \$1,500, no insurance. Loss on stock \$3,500, insurance \$1,500.

B. B. Blaco - Post Office & Dry Goods: loss on building \$1,200, insurance \$500.

Howe & Terry: Dry Goods, double brick store.

The fire is a disastrous blow to the business of a thriving village, but we learn that steps will soon be taken to the erection of a more substantial building upon the site of those destroyed. Lyle Wilt found the following article in our museum in 2010.



ESTIMATE OF LOSS PLACED AT \$150,000

Two Cities Send Aid to Village

Fire starting in the C. B. Culver general merchandise store, at Cherry Valley early this afternoon threatened to destroy the entire business block at a loss of thousands of dollars.

Telephone service was paralyzed. The flames were spreading to the residential district.

As firemen from Belvidere and Rockford labored to check the conflagration, a breeze from the south fanned the flames and made a roaring furnace of the Culver store, the Clyde North grocery, the Gordon Brothers general merchandizing establishment and Mrs. Harry Burke's clothing store.

between \$100,000 and \$150,000. The fire is considered one of the worst Cherry Valley ever has experienced. Owing to the lack of a sufficient water supply, firemen from Belvidere were unable to furnish much resistance to the flames until the arrival of a power pump from Rockford.

Starting in the outbuildings of the Culver store at 12 o'clock, the fire quickly spread to the main structure and thence to adjoining buildings. These three buildings are in the same block, but a fire wall protects the Burke store and firemen had hopes of saving it at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon.

Cherry Valley
January 5, 1928
South side of State Street

Falling Wires Imperil Workers.
Scores of men, women and children, hastily organized into salvage parties, rushed into the North Gordon Brothers and Burke stores, which lay directly in the path of the fire, and carried out all goods that they could remove before the fire ate its way into these buildings.

Power lines extending along the south side of the street, directly in front of the burning structures, were snapped by the intense heat and dropped onto the sidewalk and street, imperiling the volunteers who were working desperately to save contents of the stores.

Interurbans, Trains Halted.
Belvidere fire fighters hurriedly strung a line of hose from Kishwaukee river, across the railroad tracks and up to the scene of the conflagration.

Signalmen were sent for distances both ways down the North Western track to flag trains, while interurban service through Belvidere was held up for more than an hour during the blaze.

So intense was the heat that the firemen, passing along the north side of the street, were forced to shield their faces from the fury of the flames.

Stocks of merchandise, office equipment and everything else removed from the burning buildings was piled on the sidewalk across the street, or taken into nearby structures that were removed from the menace of the fire.

Until the arrival of the Belvidere and Rockford departments, residents of the village were forced to stand by and watch the flames gain terrific headway.



McCormic-Deering
Impliment Co. (on right)
owner -- Luke Kehoe

Charles Culver
General Merchandise store
January 5, 1928



CHERRY VALLEY FIRE January 25, 1928 by Ruby (Culver) Rutishauser

It was just before noon and I was in school. I was 13. The Methodist Church bell, and the town's fire alarm, began to clang widely, endlessly. Looking out of the west school windows, we saw black smoke billowing to the clouds over the downtown area.

"Our store, our store," I cried, running out of the school in a panic of fear and dread, hoping desperately that I was wrong. But then I saw what we had always dreaded, flames leaping, a volcano of smoke, yes our corner store. From the front window in our home, I watched the flames leaping higher over the trees and houses, blocking my vision. The smoke became blacker and denser with explosion after explosion. Little could I know then, but learned later, that my father, in his desperation to save his credit file, cash register, and safe had barely escaped from the falling east brick wall.

The fire departments from Rockford and Belvidere had been called, but six and seven miles then was a long, time consuming distance. Water hoses had to run from the River. Too late!! The fire swept from one store to another, consuming the C. B. Culver General Merchandise, the John Jordan Meat and Grocery Store, and the Ray Lee Hardware. All were two story buildings with basements.

I later found my dazed father next to the Post Office, sitting on a chair, head in hands, sobbing, shaken, and mumbling in disbelief. "All those rubber boots (Ball brand)! Hundreds of new rubber boots just arrive -- all gone! Just last week the insurance man wanted me to take out more insurance. I said no, I don't need it. What will I do now? My lifetime of work gone. If only I could have saved those boots."

I remember how the sidewalk along the east side of our store was raised about three feet above the street level, with rings imbedded in the cement to tie the horses when people came with their various wagons and buggies. Our east building was comprised of a large grocery department.

The adjoining west part of the store contained kerosene lamps, etc. The rear area contained tanks of kerosene and oil. People brought their empty cans here to be filled for home consumption. These frequently dripped on the floor in this process, but was carefully wiped up. However, over the many years the old wooden floors became thoroughly saturated, although dry in appearance. The fire, from all available observation, apparently started between the wall of this area and the John Jordan store. It was believed to be the result of spontaneous combustion and tinder box conditions.

Nothing remained, not even the walls, except intense heat in the blackened holes of rubble and the popping explosions of canned goods for several days. Father built a gasoline station on our two lots in 1928. There is much more to this story beginning on page eighty-seven in *Our Memories Are Warm* book. We have more pictures of this fire in our museum. They were photographed by Kathryn (Chesak) Oberg.

Cherry Valley United Methodist Church

112 S. Cherry Street, Cherry Valley, Illinois 61016

Worship Service: Sun 10 am
Sunday School: 8:45 am to 9:45 am



"The Church in the Valley"



Office: Tue-Fri mornings (815) 332-5075
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Shop: **4337 South Perryville Road, # 110**
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

1-1/2 miles south of Harrison Ave, south of Cherry Vale Mall
Near I-39 & I-90 Interchange - Rockford exit

Email: rachel@RawsonCustomWoodworks.com

Rockford

5112 Linden Rd.

1619 Meridian Rd.

3722 Baxter Rd.

5315 Sandy Hollow Rd. aplaceforspace.com

Belvidere

1821 Chrysler Dr.

24/7 Self Rental/Payment Station
at all Locations

Your newsletter reporter, Beverly M. (Oberg) Scholz,

6645 Fincham Dr., Apt. #307, Rockford, IL 61108