

## CHERRY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER JULY, 2010

On April 11<sup>th</sup> several of us traveled to Genoa, IL for our spring trip. First we enjoyed lunch at the Spring Grove Restaurant. Then we toured the Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society Museum. Their museum consists of two buildings: the 1882 Milwaukee Road Depot, and the circa 1902 Waterworks Building. In the latter there is the first horse drawn hearse used in DeKalb County and a 1923 Overland car. The president of the society and her husband were the docents. There were many other very interesting artifacts in both buildings. They also have a 1950 Caboose outside which was decommissioned after 32 years in service. They are very organized and have everything cataloged.

We held a bake sale on May 21 and 22<sup>nd</sup>. We sold all the homemade baking and made a profit of \$279.10. At present we are preparing another float for the July 4<sup>th</sup> parade in Cherry Valley. We are planning on having the original jail of C.V. on the float, etc. This is a steel cage jail. The jail was purchased shortly after the village hall was erected in 1899. Prior to its' purchase, the criminals were housed in a homemade wooden cage made of two by sixes spiked together. This was located in the rear of the village hall.

There have been no deaths of Cherry Valley residents since the last newsletter. Recently, Erma Horn and I have completed a binder book on all the obituaries from C.V. If you have any that you could copy and send to us, we will include them. The book is in the museum room for the public to view. The obituaries are a great help when one is working on genealogy.

In December, 2009 I copied part of a story of the Charles A. Fox family history in the newsletter. It was well received, so I will send you more of the story as told by Mr. Fox:

“My grandfather, Allen Fox, with his family of ten children, came from the east in the year of 1842 with ox teams and covered wagons. One child was born after they came. Grandfather and grandmother settled in the township of Franklin, DeKalb County in IL. He bought eighty acres for \$100 from the government, now owned by Charles Lee. It has always been in the Fox family.

My father came here when he was eleven years old and lived here all the rest of his life. He died in 1900 at the age of sixty-nine. My grandmother Fox raised their eleven children here and died in 1889 at the age of eighty-seven.

I use to hear of early day history from Jacob Cline and Henry Cline. They were sons of Adam Cline. Lewis Keith came here as a small boy and lived with his grandmother Spencer. William Lee, Lewis Shirley, George Leaman, Thomas Farley, and many others also came here in an early day.”

“The winter of 1842 was known as the “hard winter”. The first snow fell on November 7<sup>th</sup> and the last one fell on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Much suffering resulted from the intense cold and the loss of many cattle occurred. The snow averaged 30” and drifted to a height even with the fences. The snow fell before the ground was frozen and froze a crust so hard that it bore horses and cattle. During the winter a great slaughter of deer took place.

The settler’s homes were poor and open. Many of them without a tree or shrub to protect them from the wind. There were no storm doors or windows.

Every kitchen had a tea kettle. As they would cool off, they would sing for some time. At first there were cast iron kettles. Later they had a copper bottom.

The first kitchen stoves were made of cast iron. Then stoves were built with a warming closet above the stove with a smoke pipe running through it. Next, they were made with a water reservoir at the back of the stove for dishwashing water.

We had upright hard coal stoves. You put the coal into the magazine at the top. This held about two shuttles of coal, and that would last twenty-four hours. In those early days, everyone in a family that was big enough had to work.

About the month of March every year all the kids had to take sulfur and molasses. Some wore safetida around their necks to ward off germs. It stunk. No self-respected germ would go near it.

My generation was raised on salt pork, potatoes, and canned goods in the cellar. We had good home-made bread and biscuits. Now and then a chicken, and all the milk and eggs we wanted. There was a meat wagon which came twice a week from Fairdale and later Cherry Valley in the fall.

My father said in 1893, 1894, and 1895 there were really hard times. There was no work for thousands of men. The government gave no relief then. You begged or starved. The soup kitchens in Chicago served soup for one cent a bowl.

Tramps came along. They would sleep in straw piles or hay stacks and beg for food. If you gave one a handout, they would mark your gate post or tree, and ere long another would be there to beg. Most of the freight trains had tramps in empty cars.

Before fences were built, you traveled straight across the fields. Before Flora Township was surveyed, a Mr. Griggs (first settler in Cherry Valley) settled as a squatter on property near the Flora township hall. He and his sons plowed a furrow for a boundary line with a team of oxen.”

“During the spring thaws, water would come to the top of the bridges, so they couldn’t use them. It was good fishing though. Rivers had to be forded. In the 1800’s there were no fences and it was the youngster’s job to see that the cattle or sheep didn’t get into the crop land. They would get them at night into the yard made of poles from the woods.

The first fences were rail and some sod, then board. The boards were from white pine and hardly a knot in them. They cost \$16 per thousand. Next came Osage fences (from trees full of thorns). Then came barb wire made mostly in DeKalb. They were painted, not galvanized until 1900.

There were very few roads marked in 1922, so they had guide books. There was a guide book put out in 1915, and it covered about six or seven states around IL. There were no licenses required to drive a car. My daughter Mildred drove my car when she was eight years old until she was fifteen when she had to have a license.

No cars were licensed at first and there were a great amount of them stolen. The thieves would repaint and file off the engine number. There was no lock on the ignition so they were easy to steal. Some chained the wheel to the frame and padlocked it.

In 1918, war time, the auto firms cut back on making new cars. A car bought new in 1917 for \$375 would sell for \$500 after one year’s use. Most auto owners took out fire and theft insurance. But I don’t think there was accident insurance. The cars didn’t go fast enough for an accident.

Water Power came first, then steam, gasoline, and electric power for manufacturing purposes. Windmills were made of wood. All wagons and buggies had wood wheels.

Before coal oil (kerosene), all farmers made their own candles out of tallow. Some farmers had smoke houses made of stone and mortar. After curing the ham and bacon in salt, they would hang them in this house. They built a smoldering fire of green hickory under them, letting it smolder for several days, and then left them hanging there until it was used up.

After the country was surveyed and the roads were laid out, there was a poll tax levied and man either worked one day on the road or paid one dollar tax. There was no gravel hauled on the roads until the last of 1880’s. In 1900 there were only a few cars.

The only plastering material was quick lime, and it was used with sand and hair for the inside of the house walls. There was no cement used on farms until late 1900’s. Then you bought it in barrels mixed with sand. Three cast irons were heated on a cook stove at one time, and as the one the woman was using cooled, she put it on the stove, and took a hot one to iron with.”

“Most men wore fur overcoats. Dog skin, cow hide, wombat, raccoon, etc. A wombat resembles a small bear. Most every farmer had a buffalo hide for a ride in the wagon or sleigh. They heated a soap stone in the oven before going for a ride in the winter to keep their feet warm. Next came felt boots and over shoes. Then rubbers. Our feet would sweat in them, so at night they would fill the boots with oats to absorb the moisture.

In the 1900's horses were still used for drawing street cars. Many Swedish people came to Rockford in the early days. The farm hands were all good workers, working early and late. They made \$16 to \$20 a month. Most every home had a hired girl. They got \$2 a week and they earned it.

When the men worked in the winter with the sun reflecting off the snow, it was very hard on their eyes so they wore the women folk's sunbonnets.

In the spring of the year, Belvidere was a puddle of mud up and down State Street. There were hitching posts along the street to tie the horses to. A hitching shed (behind the Second National Bank) cost ten cents to put the horse in and feed it.

The Almanac was very valuable in the early days. It told you when to sow and when to plant your crops. Also they learned sunrise and sunset from it.

Horses were the main asset of the farm and main power for transportation. Most all farmers would raise colts, both for farm work, driving, and dray horses for the city. The charge for mating a mare was \$6. The colts were hard to break and drive. My father loved to trade horses. He had seventeen at one time. He traded them in on a forty acre farm.

There were a great amount of hogs raised. It was easy to buy a car load most anytime. Some hogs caught cholera. The hog killing time came in the spring and the fall.

Every farmer raised poultry. The old hens and young roosters were shipped to Chicago in a crate made of lath, which would hold about twenty-four birds. Those commission farms in Chicago would sell the birds and send back the empty coop. The eggs were taken to the grocery store and exchanged for groceries. Before egg crates were made, they packed the eggs in a receptacle of oats, so they wouldn't break in transit. Some of the grocery stores used the oats to feed their delivery horse.

My folks and others used to put beef in a solution of salt, sugar, and other ingredients to cure, then hang it up to dry. Then they put it in the oat bin to keep it from molding -- dried beef. It made great sandwiches for us kids to take to school. It would keep indefinitely in an oat bin.”

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