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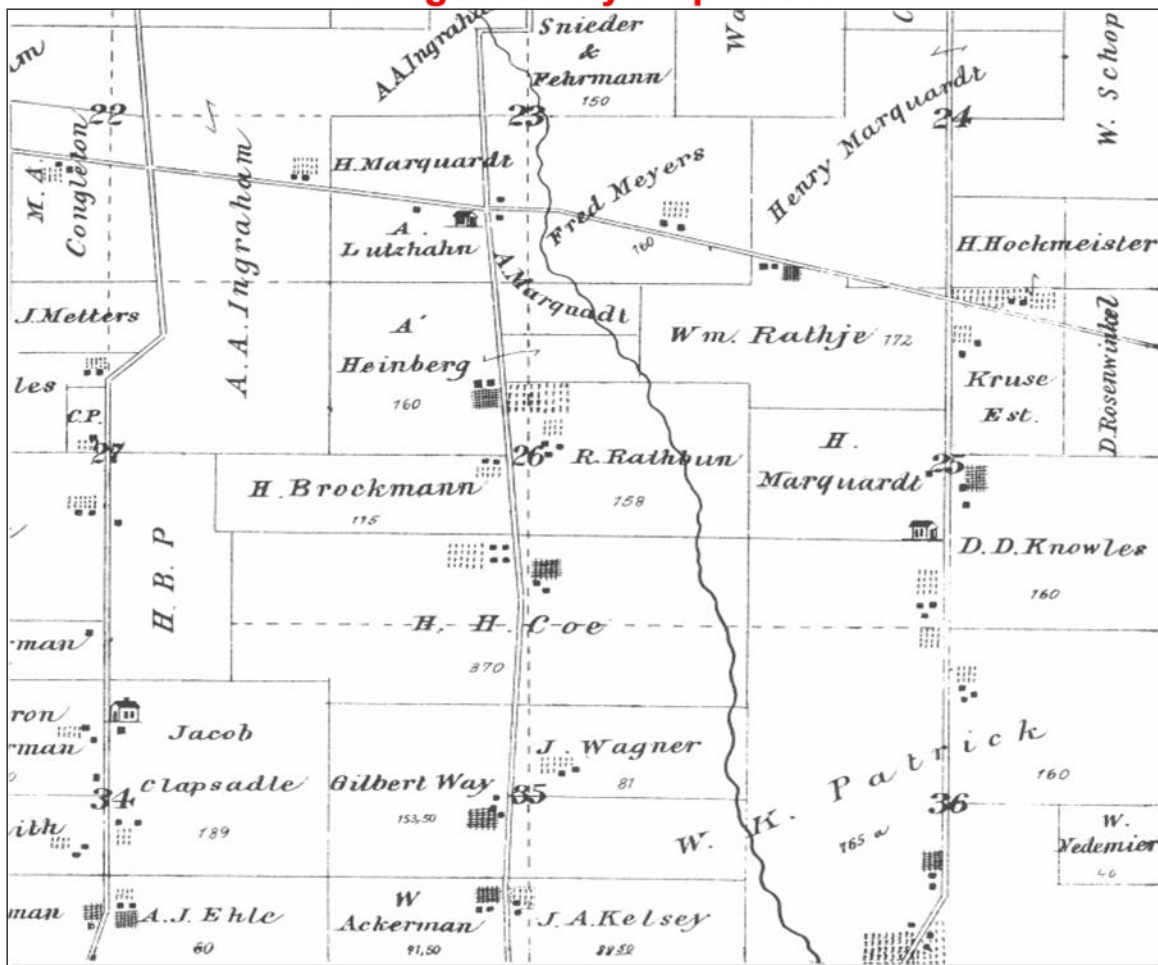
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Gretna, Illinois

Anning S. Ransom, a veteran of the War of 1812 and a New York resident, was among the first pioneer families to settle in the area now known as DuPage County in the early 1830s. He traveled with his bride, Melissa Bingham Ransom, an Ohio resident. They traveled by wagon with an ox team. Oxen were often used to pull wagons at that time because they were less expensive than horses.

DuPage County Map - 1847





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Entitled to a tract of land in the newly acquired Indian Territory due to his military service, Ransom selected a slight knoll in north Milton Township along St. Charles Road as the site for his first home, a log cabin. Like many families, the Ransoms lived in their wagon until the cabin was completed. Later, he built a larger home on the north side of St Charles Road near Pleasant Hill Road.



Gretna Illinois Old Train Station - Now the Carol Stream Historical Society.

The Ransoms made an annual marketing expedition to Chicago to trade their produce and grain for the staples needed to operate a home on the northern Illinois prairie. The trip to Chicago was made over St Charles Road, improved to a wagon road in 1836. In order to cross the Des Plaines River west of Chicago, the Ransoms would unload the bags of grain and carry them across the river on their backs to keep them from getting wet. After leading the cow and wagon across the river, they would reload the wagon and continue the journey into Chicago. The return trip would be made in much the same fashion.



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In 1842 Daniel Kelley came west on a land purchase trip. Returning to his home in Danby, Vermont, he obtained enough funds to return the next year and acquire 1,400 acres of land in north Milton and Bloomingdale townships. He began construction of a home for himself and his bride-to-be, Mary Elizabeth Huls of St. Charles, a former Vermont neighbor.

The Kelly's planned on raising Spanish Merino sheep. The Kelley's and their 11 children (eight sons and three daughters) all became actively involved in Wheaton's political and business life in the latter quarter of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. The home, known as "Tall Trees", was on the north side of St. Charles Road at Main Place in Carol Stream.

Daniel Kelley donated land for the original First Baptist Church of Wheaton. His wife and daughter lived in the small house which later became the church parson-age. He also donated a new right-of-way for St. Charles Road when the original roadbed was acquired by the Chicago and Great Western Railway for its tracks when the railroad came to Gretna in 1885.

By that time the destiny of Milton Township had been determined by a generous land donation from Warren and Jesse Wheaton and their brother-in-law, Erastus Gary; they had offered land to the officials of the Galena and Chicago Union Railway in 1849 if the railroad would be platted through their adjoining farmlands near Roosevelt Road rather than following a course which at the time would have taken it through Gretna. Despite the loss of the railroad line in 1849, the community in north Milton continued as a small service area serving the farmers of the area who continued to use St. Charles Road.

The Germans who settled in the Gretna area were primarily Catholics from southern Germany. At the time, there was no Catholic church in the county other than Sts. Peter and Paul in Naperville. Once a month, one of the priests from the church would gather his religious articles for the journey across the prairies to Gretna. By 1852 the bishop of Chicago had authorized construction of a wooden Catholic Church and school with a churchyard cemetery. St. Stephen's Catholic Church was dedicated the same year by Bishop James Oliver VandeVelde.



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Gretna Illinois Cemetery. Now the St. Stephen Cemetery.

The vast farming area around Gretna and in Bloomingdale and Wayne townships continued in use as rich agricultural land in the county until after World War II. The family names remained the same, it was merely the generations that changed. Included among these area farmers were the Kramers, Kuhns, Dieters, Nagels, Hahns, Klocks, Paulings, Starks, Neddermeyers, Barnes, Lies and Kammes. Very few of the young men were called upon to serve in military service since they were already involved in a vital wartime industry - that of providing food for the armed forces abroad and for the people on the home front.



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Following World War II, a few changes were made as the older farmers retired in order to give their offspring a chance at a place to live and work. The slow but steady migration of city dwellers into the suburban countryside was underway. However, for central DuPage County it would be another few years before the cornfields would come alive with new homes almost overnight.

In the spring of 1953, the Illinois Department of Agriculture began a search for a farm and a farm family who would become the stars of a new television show on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). One of the thirty-five farms on the itinerary was the Harbecke Farm on Gary Avenue, rural Cloverdale in Bloom-ingdale Township, operated by Harbecke's daughter and son-in-law, Bertha and Wilbert Landmeier. Tracing their roots to pioneer German farm families, the young couple had moved to the Harbecke Farm to operate a dairy farm. They had recently installed dairy equipment which carried the milk in refrigerated tubes from the milking machine to cooling tanks on the milk truck, which transported the commodity to an Addison dairy. The farm also had a hay drier which was another piece of modern machinery not found on every farm in 1953. These advantages, plus the fact that the location was considered one of the best between Chicago and the Fox River for beaming the television waves, made the selection of the Harbecke-Landmeier Farm ideal for the show. Thus, "Out on the Farm" began the first of a two-year run from the Harbecke-Landmeier Farm in the summer of 1953.

During the second season the first outdoor network colorcast originating from Chicago was the pickup from the Landmeier Farm. At the end of the 1954 season, the show was over, as Cloverdale and all of DuPage County were due for rapid change. The emphasis would shift within another year from the fine agricultural county of the past 124 years to a prestigious area of new homes for veterans of both World War II and the Korean War.

It was about this time that Jay Stream of Durable Construction Company, and a long-time Wheaton resident and businessman, began looking for a place to create his own town, one in which industry and residence could exist side by side. Returning to his home town after service in the armed forces during World War II, he turned to the home construction business. One of his business partners was Gordon Oury, whose family



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had an interest in the Imperial Service Company of Melrose Park. They began their new home venture by constructing three homes along Geneva Road.

Durable continued its construction of new homes on scattered sites in Wheaton during the first years of its organization. Then Stream acquired two major tracts for conversion to new homes. These included the old Greene Valley Golf Course, south of Roosevelt Road between Main Street and Naperville Road, and the Hawthorne area, which lies east of Main Street and north of Hawthorne Avenue.

But there was one continuing problem for the families to whom Stream sold homes - high taxes. Many of the homeowners sought advice from the developer. The only answer Stream could offer was that the community had to obtain a broader base for the collection of real estate taxes, which escalated as the need for public services increased. He felt the simplest way to help defray the cost of public services in the City of Wheaton would be to have business or industry help share the tax burden. However, city officials did not want to rezone for light industry.

Thus, by the summer of 1956 Stream and his staff were looking in the Wheaton vicinity for land which could be used to develop a new community, one in which industry would be a built-in part. One of his requirements was that there should be sufficient land for his planned community to expand in years to come. After a number of air flights over the central DuPage area, Durable officials felt they had located the ideal spot for their future town. The land lay generally to the northwest of Geneva Road and Main Street in Wheaton. There was plenty of it, and the views from the air indicated that the sites were adequately drained.

In the summer of 1957, Stream and his crews were completing work on the Hawthorne Shopping Center on North Main Street. This would be a service center for his new community in its early years because it was less than two and a half miles away. Land acquisition began with three farms belonging to the Nagel and Mittmann families as well as the Giesers. This was raw land which had to be cleared, graded, and sectioned off into units. New streets were cut through and sewer and water lines installed. Then a developer could begin to lay foundations for the new homes. Stream reasoned that the homes had to come first since industry would not be attracted to an area which did not offer a work force.



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While the basic engineering and work were under way in the new community, a personal tragedy struck the Stream family.

On Monday August 26, 1957, Carol and three friends were returning from Racine, Wisconsin in a 1949 Studebaker. While attempting to cross U.S. Route 45 in central Kenosha County, the car was struck in the right rear corner, killing 15-year-old Richard Christie of Chicago, the passenger seated there. Carol was ejected through the windshield and into a utility pole. Neurosurgeons at Kenosha Memorial Hospital said the comatose girl might never awaken or, if she did, would likely be severely handicapped.

Meanwhile work on the new village continued. When time came to file plats of sub-division with the county, the engineer asked Stream what name should be given to the small stream which ran through the southern section of the original units. He mumbled the name "Carol" and thus the name was penciled on the plat. However, when it was filed at the county offices, the name "Carol Stream" was applied not only to the small stream but to the entire new subdivision. In his next visit with his young daughter who was still in a coma after four months, Stream told her the new town had been named for her. As he recalled later, the motionless youngster opened her eyes for the first time since the accident months before.

Carol Stream is one of the few communities in America which took its name from the first and last names of a living person: Carol Stream, the daughter of its founder Jay Stream.

By November 1, 1958, Roy and Jeanne Blum, with their infant son, Roy Jr., had moved into the first home to be occupied in the village. Within weeks there were more than 100 inhabitants residing in the new community. Under state law at the time, this was a sufficient number of residents to hold a referendum to incorporate the community as a village. Stream felt this was the only way to make certain that he would be able to carry out his dreams for a well-planned community. Six trustees, a village president and village clerk were elected in a special election held and the village of Carol Stream was incorporated in January of 1959.