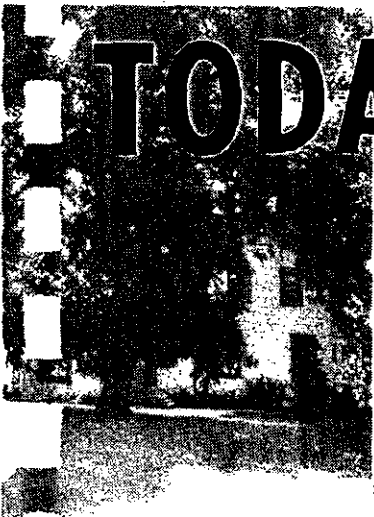


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TODAY

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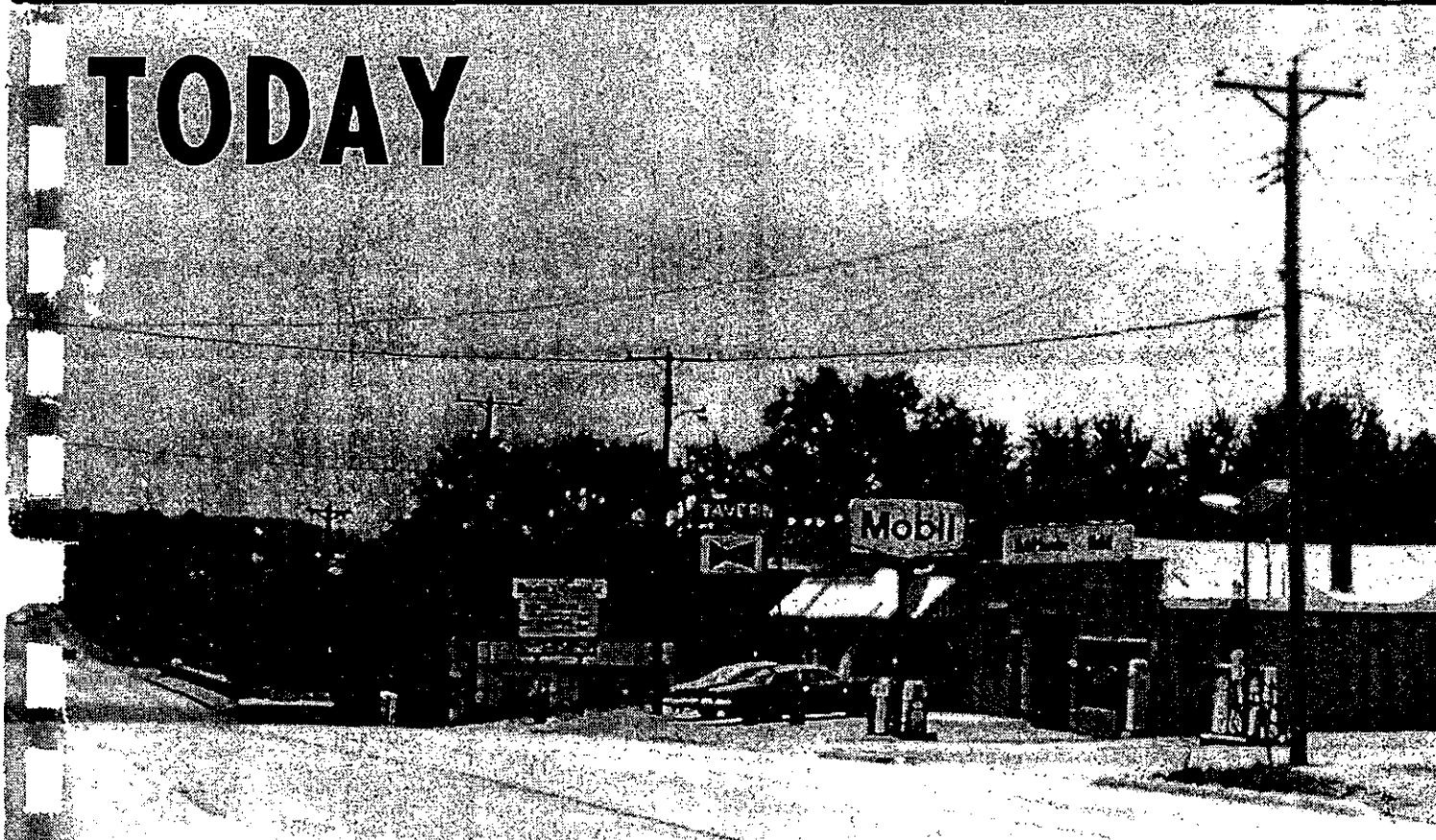
HISTORY  
OF  
NEW MILFORD  
1835 - 1975

STUDY RESEARCHED  
BY  
JACK L. BAXTER





**TODAY**



**HISTORY OF NEW MILFORD  
1835-1975**

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BY  
JACK L. BAXTER

*WE MUST ALWAYS HAVE OLD MEMORIES  
AND YOUNG HOPES.*

— Arsene Houssaye

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*YESTERDAY IS BUT A DREAM  
AND TOMORROW IS ONLY A VISION.  
BUT TODAY WELL LIVED MAKES  
EVERY YESTERDAY A DREAM OF  
HAPPINESS, AND EVERY TOMORROW  
A VISION OF HOPE.*

— From the Sanskrit

## SPECIAL NOTE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

One hundred forty-one years have come and gone since white men began to exercise dominion in the area that is today known as the New Milford community. Those years have been full of constant changes - unbelievable changes even in those first forty-one years when pioneer men, their devoted and hardworking wives and their children were adjusting to the settlement life. There is little left of the old reminders. Advanced civilization and the progressive demands of revolving years have obliterated nearly all traces of Indian occupancy and the early white men settlements until they are remembered only in name and written records.

This study is an effort to continue that remembrance by preserving the information of the records, documents, previously published writings and personal remembrances in a "one place" reference book. This heritage is preserved for all future generations of the present day New Milford community residents. It is to those future generations that this study is dedicated.

*Jack L. Baxter*  
Researcher

*Oh! A wonderful stream in the river of time,  
As it runs through the realm of tears,  
With a faultless rhythm, and a musical rhyme,  
And a broader sweep, and a surge sublime,  
As it blends in the ocean of years.*

— B. F. Taylor

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  - Ila Main Johnson (1975)
  - Eldora Kewish Mumma (1974-1975)

*When I remember bygone days  
I think how evening follows morn;  
So many I loved were not yet dead,  
So many I love were not yet born.*

— Ogden Nash

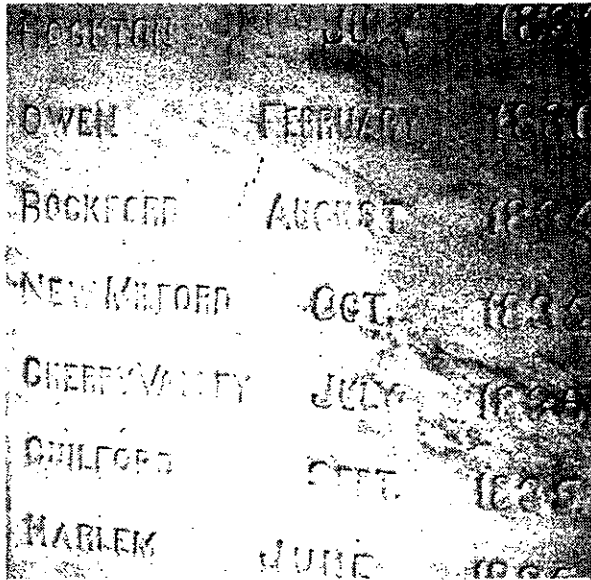
## EARLY SETTLERS

The area first white settlers generally came from New York state and other localities of New England. They arrived in the Rock River valley and settled along the Kishwaukee River possibly as early as 1834. The earliest documented settlement in the area known today as the New Milford community was in October 1835.



These early pioneers included, among others, Samuel Brown, Joseph D. Morris, John Prentice, John Adams, Horace Allen Miller, Robert Rothwell, David Smith Shumway, Samuel Ramsey, William R. Wheeler, Richard Hogaboom, Phineas M. Johnson, James Campbell, John B. Long, Benjamin Horton, Luke H. Lee, Freeman Clothier, R. H. Harris, J. N. Saylor, Thomas W. Evans, Daniel

Kinson, John Baxter, Mr. Paddleford, Dr. A. M. Catlin, Jason Marsh, Mander Cone and Luther Maxwell.



All these men and their families bore a conspicuous part in the early settlement of the area which was designated New Milford Township on 6 November 1850. They were closely connected with the early material progress of the farming community. Their names were inseparably associated with many events which constituted the pioneer history of this section of the county. Their systematic labors and diligence brought them to the goal of success toward which each man turned his life as he started his pioneer future. These pioneers, with their families, new land, dwellings, and other improvements, as well as their hardships and heartaches, made that first short period determine all the future. They possessed and enjoyed the land. The future seemed promising and they only had to prepare for it. Other settlers were following close behind.

For the very first settlers, those who pioneered in the area from 1835 to 1839, considerable prairie land was broken for cultivation. But the newly broken soil was of little use until its turf had rotted and mellowed. A good horse could be traded for a yoke of oxen. A common prairie plow would cut a 22 inch wide furrow. With a 15 inch cut prairie plow and a three yoke oxen team the prairie could be broken without difficulty. Because of the soil mellowing process there was probably little

raised the first year in crops by the earliest settlers, except possibly sod corn, potatoes, vines and vegetables. Winter wheat, however, was sown for the following spring.



James Campbell came in September 1835. Samuel Brown arrived in 1836 and settled on eighty acres which he possessed 23 October 1839. Joseph D. Morris settled at the mouth of the Kishwaukee River on seventy acres in 1836 coming to the area from Ottawa, Illinois, where he moved in 1834 from Broome County, New York. Freeman Clothier came to the area in the fall of 1838. R. H. Harris came to Winnebago County in the fall of 1839 from Brattleboro, Vermont, where he was born in 1817. Mander Cone came to Winnebago County in 1837 when all was mostly a new country.

Horace Allen Miller's brother, Ezra L. Miller, came to the Rock River valley in 1838. He induced his brother by letters to purchase land with him between the Kishwaukee and Rock Rivers.

Horace Allen Miller was born in Stockbridge, Berkshire County, Massachusetts on 20 September 1798, the son of Jonathan Allen Miller. He was married to Hannah Clark in Amsterdam, Montgomery County, New York, on 7 June 1817 when he was nineteen years old. Hannah Clark was the daughter of Gardner and Hannah Badger Clark. The Horace Millers lived in Portage and Mount Morris, Livingston County, New York in 1835. They had six children, including Horace Gilbert Miller, grandfather of Hope Miller Matthews, genealogist of the Miller family, who lives in Evanston, Illinois. Another child of the Horace Allen Millers was Nancy Eliza Miller who married Philip Wells Marsh.



Mr. Miller left New York state in February 1839 with two teams loaded with farm tools, accompanied by two carpenters, two Irish workmen and a maid Sally Ann to cook for them. They arrived in the Rock River valley on 1 March 1839 where they spent the spring and summer putting in crops, building sod fences and constructing the seven room homestead. Horace Allen Miller then returned east for his family.

The pioneer party, consisting of three Miller families, arrived at their Rock River homestead site 10 October 1839 after being two weeks enroute from Mount Morris, New York, where they left 27 September 1839. They traveled by wagon to Buffalo and from there by boat to Chicago. From Chicago they traveled west to the Rock River valley by wagon.

Finding accommodations along the way for the twelve caravan members was quite difficult. Dwellings at that time were very small and far apart. Angelina Hill wrote to her sister on 13 December 1838 of their pioneer house, "We moved into





our house two weeks ago today. It is 24 feet square, and lighted by eight windows. I assure you we find it much more pleasant than one 12 feet by 14 feet and lighted only by a chimney." The earlier 12 by 14 house was further described in a letter written 18 March 1839. She wrote, "...shake roof, puncheon floor and destitute of hearth and windows. Had no chairs, tables or bedsteads." For the traveling Miller families uncommon foods were scarce.

For the traveling Miller families uncommon foods were scarce.

In the area that became known as New Milford Township Horace Allen Miller, a Methodist and Republican, became a good farmer and stock raiser. He acquired about 1,250 acres, some of which received 1838 land patents Nos. 9708 and 9709. Today much of the original Miller land is the site of the Greater Rockford Airport. The Miller homestead Terrace Farm is today the 385 acre Gladys B. Ross farm on Corlett Road; the John Peterson family are tenants.



Horace Miller was a director of the first agricultural society of Winnebago County which was organized 13 April 1841. Jason Marsh was also a member of the society. The society's first show, the first agricultural show in northern Illinois, was held 13 October 1841. Among the many premiums awarded were those to Samuel Brown for best three year old stallion and Horace Miller for best heifer calf and best thoroughbred Berkshire boar. Two years later the state legislature voted to hold annual state fairs. In 1877, James R. Bartlett was the New Milford director of the Winnebago County Agricultural Society.

Horace Allen Miller died 5 August 1864 and his wife died 14 September 1877. His influence in the community was important to the early settlement of the area. It is understood Mr. Miller named Mount Morris, Illinois after the New York community where he lived in 1835. Another account establishes the fact that Mount Morris, Illinois was named in honor of Thomas A. Morris, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Streets of the community honoring Methodism include Wesley, McKendree and Seminary Streets.

Robert Rothwell immigrated from England in 1826. He first settled in Massachusetts. Mr. Rothwell went west from Massachusetts in 1837. After living a short time in Marion, Ogle County, he settled in what became New Milford Township on one hundred and sixty acres of government land. His son, William A. Rothwell, was born when the family lived in Ogle County where he was the third white child born in the locality. His grandson, Lester R. Rothwell, who was born at Kishwaukee, died in 1971 at the age of one hundred and one



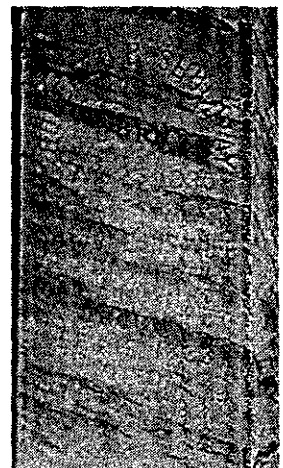
years old. Lester Rothwell had farmed the family farm at Kishwaukee nearly all his life where he had experienced the county's growth from the horse and buggy days to the jet age.

David Smith Shumway was born in 1803 at Jamaica, Vermont. He married Sally Greeley in 1825. They moved to Ohio in 1828. While there he built a sawmill. In April 1836 they left Lorain County, Ohio, with a team of horses, yoke of oxen and single horse buggy. They passed by the Fox River and arrived in the Kishwaukee River area on 29 May 1836. At that time only two buildings were to be seen, a log house and a shanty. That winter they occupied a small log house near Rock River. David Shumway built a small sawmill on Kilbuck Creek which was burned by the Driscoll gang. This organized band of robbers, which included John and his four sons, known as the Banditti of the Prairie, terrorized farmers in Ogle and Winnebago Counties until they were caught in 1841 and shot by the Regulators near Oregon.

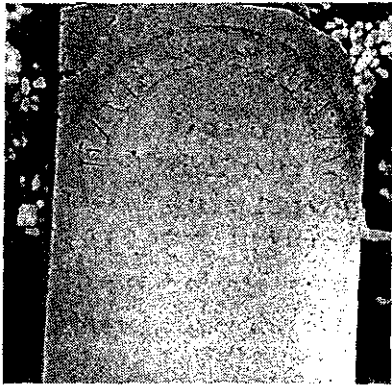
Mr. Shumway then built a sawmill at South Bend where lumber was cut for the hotel built at Kishwaukee in 1839. The family settled on prairie land which they developed as a farm. This farm, known as the Old Shumway Place, it is suggested became the site of the present day community of New Milford. More correctly, it was the site of the Kishwaukee community.

David Smith Shumway secured the contract to deliver mail from Beloit to Dixon. His son, Rolenzo B. Shumway, as a lad took the mail semi-weekly from the present day New Milford area to Westfield Corners. He made the trip on horseback having to ford the Rock River. In the spring and fall when the water was high Rolenzo swam the horse across the river. In the winter he could cross on the ice.

David S. Shumway's son Rolenzo, who was born in Lorain County, Ohio, on 25 May 1835, was the grandfather of Mrs. Myrna Graham Heivilin. Mrs. Heivilin recalled recently that, when her grandfather died in 1912 a man of noble character, the community of New Milford was shrouded in mourning. As a respected resident, Mr. Shumway was asked for advice whenever important business in the community was to be transacted. He served the community well for many years as assessor, clerk of the Board of Trustees of New Milford and treasurer of New Milford school board. He was a respected stock dealer. He dealt with Lovejoy Johnson of Stillman Valley and Baxter-Nashold of New Milford. Rolenzo B. Shumway had married Sarah E. Hall on 26 June 1858; their daughter Nora, born 11 August 1863, married George Graham on 20 November 1884. Mrs. Myrna Graham Heivilin, the daughter of Nora and George Graham, has lived in New Milford many years.



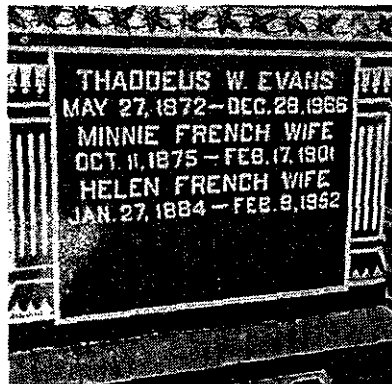
Another of David Smith Shumway's five sons was Roland H. Shumway. Roland was born in 1842 at Kishwaukee. He became a nationally known Rockford seedman; at one time Roland H. Shumway paid the heaviest tax upon personal property of any Rockford resident, a fact which indicates that he had been a prosperous career. David Smith Shumway died 22 July 1879.



Jason Marsh purchased government land in 1841. John Prentice, a native of Allegheny County, New York, arrived along the Kishwaukee River in September 1842. Samuel Ramsey arrived in the fall of 1840. Daniel Kinson homesteaded in the area in 1848. J. N. Saylor, born in Thompson County, New York, on 20 April 1818, came to Winnebago County in 1843. Benjamin and Phoebe Horton purchased land in what became New

Milford Township on 3 October 1842 and arrived in the area in 1843 to claim it. Luke H. Lee who came to what was to become Winnebago County on 2 May 1834, settled along the Kishwaukee River on 3 December 1854. Less than nine years after the earliest settler arrived in the area John and Maria (Myra) Horton Baxter arrived in the community in 1843 from New York state with their five children. They settled on land that belonged to her family owned by Benjamin Horton. Luther Maxwell came to the area in 1846, the year his son Frederic H. Maxwell was married.

Thomas W. and Caroline Crill Evans came from Oneida County, New York in 1835. They settled north of Monroe Center in Ogle County. Thomas W. Evans was the son of John J. and Anna Williams Evans of Wales, where they were married. They had a three months journey to America. Thomas Evans was born in Oneida, New York. He married 4 July 1848 to Caroline Crill, daughter of Henry and Betsy Brooks Crill. They had eleven children; five of the children matured to adults: Belle (Mrs. Russell Barrows), John O., Henrietta (Mrs. J. C. Thompson), Gene Paul and Thaddeus Wilbur Evans. From the second marriage union of Thomas W. and Laura E. Lewis Evans was born one daughter Mattie Lois who in 1892 was fourteen years old. At that time the Thomas W. Evans family was living in their hillside home on Section 26 of New Milford Township. The son, Thaddeus Wilbur Evans, is remembered by long time residents of the New Milford community as one who expended himself in service to his community from the late 1800's until he died 28 December 1966 at the age of ninety-four years old.



## EARLIEST ILLINOIS SETTLEMENT

The first permanent white settlement in northern Illinois was in the summer of 1824 at LaPointe, known later as Galena. With the exception of the Galena miners of 1824 and a very few scattered fur traders, there were no white settlers in all of northern Illinois at that early time. The area was almost entirely unoccupied by white men until after the close of the Black Hawk Indian troubles in 1832.

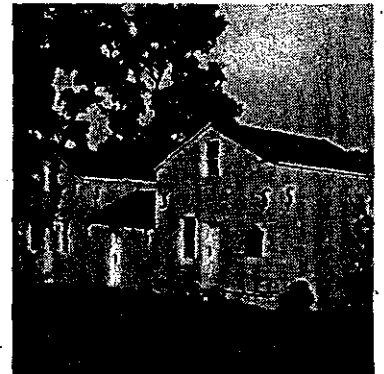
The fifteen week Black Hawk Indian campaign was climaxed 2 August 1832 at the three hour Battle of Bad Axe in which nearly three hundred Indian women, children, old men and warriors were shamefully massacred by direct fire, drowning in small rafts on the Mississippi and by hunger and exhaustion. Black Hawk's army had not been a force of marauding warriors, but a migration of women, children, old men and braves. During the fifteen weeks of the often termed war only seventy settlers and soldiers were killed. Black Hawk died a man with broken spirits in a cabin along the north bank of the Des Moines River near his people established on Indian land in the Iowa territory.

The men composing General Winfield Scott's army, in his campaign against the Indians, were disbanded in the fall of 1832 at what we know today as Dixon. During the Indian campaign the soldiers had traveled a large part of the country along the Rock River valley where they observed its great natural beauty and the fertile soil. Upon their return to their homes in the east they carried with them such glowing descriptions that the Rock River valley became regarded as a paradise.

## MACKTOWN

In 1829 Stephen Mack was the first white man to make permanent settlement in the area that became known as Winnebago County. He first settled near where Dry Run Creek meets Rock River midway between the present day Rockton and Roscoe. In 1835 he settled at the junction of the Pecatonica and Rock Rivers at the site known as Bird's Grove where he took possession of 1,000 acres. There he operated a trading post. Mack referred to his land as Pecatonica. Later the area was called Macktown. A few years earlier Black Hawk and his army were chased along the Rock River into Iowa Territory where he surrendered 27 August 1832. This action, which freed the area of most of the Indians, was perhaps more important than anything else to the rapid settlement of northern Illinois by early pioneers from New York state and other areas of New England. From then until the turn of the century only occasional families of Indians would be seen in what is today known as Winnebago County.

Families in the east were most concerned about the safety of their relatives who pioneered in the far famed Illinois. Angelina Hill wrote to her uncle 20 April 1839, "...we do not know whether these, with a thousand other stories we have heard are true or not. But this much we do know, we have not seen an Indian since we came here, and that we do not fear them as much as we do the mosquitoes, which infest our grove in the summer." Near what is known today as Grand Detour, Stephen Mack married Hononegah, daughter of the Potawatomi chief, and with her fathered eleven children, nine whom survived infancy, five daughters and four sons.



## MIDWAY AND ROCKFORD

On 24 August 1834 Germanicus Kent and Thatcher Blake arrived from Galena to make homes on sites along the Rock River some distance south of Macktown. The Indian name for Rock River was Sinnissippi, which signified a stone or rocky river. In legislation proposed by Thomas Jefferson in 1784, it was suggested the territory be called Assenisipia, the Indian spelling of Sinnissippi. It was the Sinnissippi valley that Chief Black Hawk fought to hold from the advancing white settlers.



Following his exile from his beloved Sinnissippi valley, Black Hawk, the defeated Sauk Chief, said, "The Rock River country is beautiful country. I loved it. I fought for it. It is now yours. Keep it as we did."

The site founded by Kent and Blake along the Rock River became known as Midway. It was so named in a letter



written to a friend on 17 June 1835. He chose the name because the settlement was midway between Galena and Chicago. Later the settlement was officially established as Rockford on 1 April 1839 when the two villages on each side of the Rock River incorporated into one village. The name Rockford had first been suggested on 17 October 1835 by Dr. J. C. Goodhue. Kent had built a sawmill on the west bank of the river and Blake started a farm.

On 9 April 1835 Daniel Shaw Haight arrived as the first settler on the east side of the river. His wife arrived in May to become the first white woman in the community. In June 1835 the settlement numbered only eleven persons. In the fall of 1835 the settlement had increased to twenty-seven adults. Midway was about six miles north of the community that later became known as New Milford.

Angelina Hill wrote on 6 January 1839 to her family in the east about the settlement of Rockford, "I visited Rockford in company with brother and Smith. Found it flourishing little village, situated on both sides of Rock River which Edwin and I crossed on the ice, partly for the purpose of saying I had been west of Rock River. There are four well-filled stores in the place, one of which is a splendid building built last summer by Esq. Miller of Philadelphia. He has a fine lot of goods in it."

At about this point in time the community we know today as New Milford and Midway were approximately the same size in inhabitants with the settlement along the Kishwaukee River having perhaps even a larger population than Midway. At least that is the story remembered from ancestors of long time residents of the New Milford community and the story, being a good one to remember, is not forgotten by present day New Milford pioneer descendants. More correctly, however, the population comparison should be between Midway and Kishwaukee.

The 1837 U.S. Census indicated a population of only 1,086 white inhabitants in Winnebago County. In April 1839 Rockford was a village of only 235 people. The Illinois state population had nearly tripled to 476,183 people by 1840, of which 4,609 inhabitants lived in Winnebago County. By December 1845 the population of Rockford had rapidly increased to 1,278 inhabitants. By that time Rockford had grown considerably in population and industry. So New Milford was in the shadow of the growing community to the north, a position it has retained throughout its history.

The Rockford population in 1850 was 2,563 people, but by 1855 it had increased considerably to 6,620 inhabitants. The county population in 1850 was 11,773 people; by 1860 it had more than doubled to 24,491 inhabitants. Winnebago County's population in 1865 was 25,541 people. By 1870 the population increased to 29,301 inhabitants. So Rockford was well on its way to becoming the metropolis of northern Illinois. The Illinois population in 1870 was 2,539,891 people.

## WINNEBAGO COUNTY

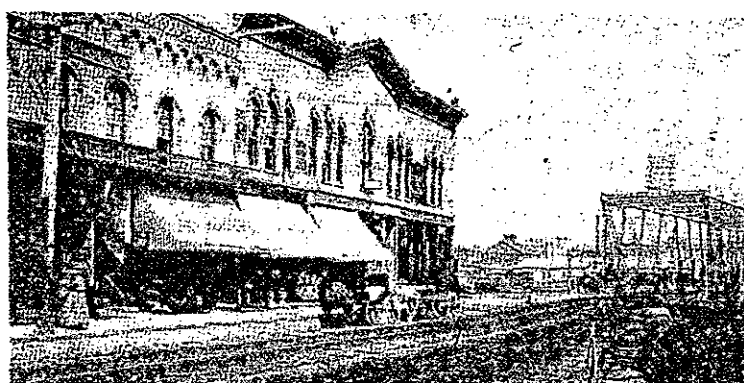
On 16 January 1836 Winnebago County, covering an area of five hundred and thirty-three square miles, was created by an act of the Illinois legislature. Winnebago, an Indian word, meant fish eater. Rockford was selected as the county seat at an election held 4 April 1836. Among those places considered as the site of county government were Winnebago and Kishwaukee. The county government was organized in July 1836 and the first courthouse was constructed eight years later.

When the county was organized Illinois was sparsely settled, particularly in the northern third of the state. In 1833 according to Thompson's plat of Chicago, that settlement was then only a small village of 150 people. Another account, however, more accurately established the population of Chicago at 350 people in 1833 when it was incorporated as a town. In 1830 the entire state white population was recorded at only 157,445 inhabitants, about the population of Rockford today.

At the presidential elections in 1836 only 158 votes were polled in the county. Of these twenty-five votes were from the Kishwaukee precinct, now known as New Milford, Cherry Valley and part of Rockford. Sixteen votes were Democrat; nine were Whig. The Democrat Martin VanBuren was elected the eighth President of the United States. In the elections on 14 October 1837 at the direction of the County Board of Commissioners Philetus M. Johnson and William R. Wheeler were elected judges. William Clark and William Randall were elected constables.

Angelina Hill wrote from the area 6 January 1839, "We were quite happy to receive the results of the election in the Empire State, and one of our own Whig friends remarked the picture itself was worth five dollars to place on the wall for the admiration of our VanBuren neighbors, they being numerous here . . . You seemed to fear that that part of your letter treating upon the subject of the election might not be interesting to me . . . it should be a subject of as deep interest to myself as yours. If we had wise and interested men at the head of government our country will prosper."

The State Board on Assessments set the value of New Milford Township in 1874 at \$332,051.00. The county wide total was \$10,402,378.00. These assessment figures were assembled primarily to establish payment for the new courthouse planned for Winnebago County. The contracts were awarded 8 March 1876 with the cornerstone laid 22 June 1876. A year later, on 11 May 1877, the dome of the new construction



collapsed killing nine workmen and seriously injuring twelve workmen. The courthouse was completed 10 August 1878 at the cost of \$211,000.00;

At that time New Milford Township was one of the sixteen townships of the county which was organized by county government on 6 November 1850. The 1876-1878 courthouse replaced the original courthouse which was built on the same square on 24 July 1844. That building was paid for by subscription. The present Winnebago County courthouse was built in two stages in 1967-1968 and 1971-1972. An addition to the building is currently under construction.

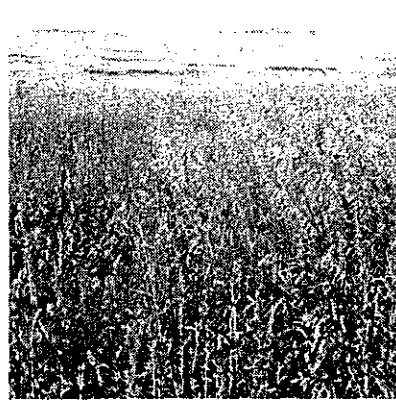


## THE PRAIRIES

In 1833 the Fox River valley began to settle up rapidly so the Rock River valley and Kishwaukee River area began to receive the advance guard of industrious and prosperous pioneers in 1834 which was then nearly free of Indians. The entire northern part of the state was a trackless prairie which was left as worthless for agriculture by frontier people who pioneered in the southwest part of the state along the Mississippi River in the early settlement period of 1700 to 1800.

The prairies were described in a letter written 18 March 1838 by Abi Tuttle from what we know today as Roscoe. Abi Tuttle wrote to her parents in Pennsylvania, "From Chicago west, it was one continuous prairie - some containing from eighteen to twenty thousand acres." There were miles of undisturbed prairie grass. Another letter, written by Abi Tuttle 14 July 1838, mentioned the "prairies have been a continual flower garden since the first of April, which has offered many a pleasant ramble for us through these blossoms."

Angelina Hill, daughter of Henry Hill, wrote from the area to her sister 13 December 1838, "But weak creature that I was, after traveling over 650 miles under the intense heat of a July sun, we found ourselves lodged in a miserable house in the far famed Illinois . . . Besides being beautiful, our prairies are extremely fertile."



On 8 September 1839 Angelina Hill married Samuel Brown, New Milford pioneer, who was born 11 October 1809 in Decatur, Otsego County, New York. He came to the area that became known as New Milford where he settled in 1836 and he claimed the north one-half of Section 24. Angelina Hill, who was born 17 December 1815 in Sweden, Monroe County, New York, came to northern Illinois with her family, including her father, Esq. Henry Hill, and brother Edwin, in 1838. They settled in Ogle County. The Hill family took up residence in a previously pioneered 12 foot by 14 foot cabin at Strawberry Grove along Kilbuck Creek. This area is today identified as just west of present day Lindenwood Road north of U.S. 72. Within a year they had built a twenty-four foot square home, near where four other pioneer homes had been built within one and a half miles on the east side of Kilbuck Creek. The larger home was lighted by eight windows and reported to be the loveliest claim on the Kilbuck Creek. They had neighbors to the north and south, but as she wrote, "East the sight is not. The same may be said of the prospect west."

Samuel and Angelina Hill Brown had three children, Jonathan Eden Brown, born 2 August 1840, Alice M. Brown, born 17 May 1842, and Sarah E. Brown, born 24 February 1848. Jonathan E. Brown graduated at Lombard University, Galesburg, in 1860, and believed to have been the first native graduate. He was in the 153rd Infantry one year. He was a member of Company G, commissioned as Captain 27 February 1865, mustered out 21 September 1865. The 153rd Infantry Illinois volunteers were organized at Camp Fry, Illinois by Colonel Stephen Bronson. On 4 March 1865 the volunteers moved by rail, via Louisville and Nashville, to Pullahoma, reporting to Major General Millroy. The regiment was assigned to the 2nd Brigade, defenses of Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. Brevet Brigadier General Dudley commanding the Brigade. In the later part of March, Major Wilson and three companies went on a campaign into Alabama and returned. Daughter Alice M. Brown married S. P. Wilson of South Haven, Michigan.

Daughter Sarah E. Brown married Milo A. Jones, who was a hardware merchant in Byron. He was born 29 April 1841, the oldest of seven children, the son of Benjamin and Catherine Peck Jones. Benjamin Jones was born 28 April 1809 and died 26 September 1899. His wife Catherine Peck Jones, who was born 13 October 1819 and had married in Jewett, Green County, New York, on 15 April 1842, died 28 April 1889. Milo A. Jones grew up on the family farm near Jewett, Green County, where he was born. On 29 August 1862, when he was twenty-one years old, he joined the Union Army, Company F, 120th New York Volunteer Infantry. He was assigned to the Army of Potomac. The regiment participated at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.

At Gettysburg he received a gunshot wound in his left thigh which permanently disabled him. For several months he was confined to a hospital at Baltimore; when he partially recovered he was ordered to Washington, D.C. There he was on duty in the Provost Marshal's office for about a year. He was then put in the detective service and was in the Provost Marshal's office another year. Milo A. Jones remained there until hostilities ceased when he was mustered out in July 1865 at which time he returned to New York state.

In February 1866 he travelled to northern Illinois where he settled in Winnebago County. Milo A. Jones rented land and engaged in farming. He married in March 1869 to Sarah Ellen Brown, daughter of Samuel and Angelina Hill Brown. For a few years Milo Jones operated the old Brown homestead and later engaged in the grain and stock business at New Milford for several years.

In the fall of 1883 he went to Byron where he continued a grain and stock business. Mr. Jones was instrumental in forming the stock company that erected the first elevator at Byron. In 1888 he purchased an interest in a hardware store in partnership with Williams Dodds. The partnership continued until 1897 when Mr. Jones purchased Dodd's interest. Mr. Jones carried a full and complete line of shelf and heavy hardware, stoves, tinware, buggies, wagons and agricultural implements. He enjoyed a large and lucrative trade. He was a Republican; cast his first vote for Lincoln in 1864. While a resident of Winnebago County he had served as deputy sheriff for two years. Fraternally, he was an honored member of the Masonic Lodge of Byron, Ancient Order of United Workmen and the Grand Armys Post at Rockford. The Jones family is buried in Byron. The Milo A. Jones's daughter, Ellen Jones, a Rockford teacher in 1897, married Henry Weld. The Weld's daughter Gladys married Hugh McNeil.



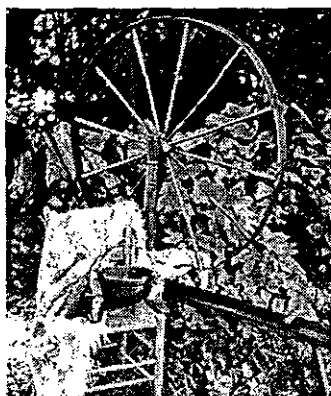
Their daughter, Ellen McNeil McHugh, great great-granddaughter of Angelina Hill Brown, is married to Dr. John McHugh. The McHughs have six children and live in Tullock's Woods, Rockford. Mrs. Ellen McHugh's Weld relatives are buried in Stillman Valley and the McNeils are buried in Manistique, Michigan. Samuel Brown, who died 2 August 1866, is buried in New Milford Cemetery. Buried beside him is Angelina Hill Brown who died 28 November 1911. Mrs. John McHugh, who is exceptionally interested in early Illinois history, possesses many of the letters Angelina Hill wrote to her relatives in the east between 16 September 1838 and 2 June 1839. Angelina Hill was then about twenty-three years old. Those letters, vividly describing the pioneer life, generously provided documentation for this study of early New Milford history. Ellen McHugh also has a collection of her great great-grandmother's possessions, including her spinning wheel, collection of pencil sketches, hand loomed quilts and land documents.



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Angelina Hill wrote 2 June 1839, "You wrote me that the apple trees were in full bloom, so also is our world of prairie. And who that never has seen it can have any idea of so extensive a flower garden."

The state had a population of only 40,000 inhabitants just prior to 1818 when it was admitted to the union. During the period of 1820 to 1830 the state population grew three times its original size. A major reason why the northern section of the state was neglected by pioneers was the scarcity of timber for fencing and building materials.



Angelina Hill wrote from the area to her relatives in the east on 6 January 1839, "There is a great scarcity of timber here which may seem strange to you, but if you could once behold our prairies on fire, it would be a great wonder that there should be as much timber as there is." She described the trees along Kilbuck Creek in a letter, dated 16 September 1838, "On the banks of the creek we find crab thorn apples, meadow plums and grapes. Black and white walnuts, hazel nuts and acorns are also abundant."

Nathaniel Fish Moore of New York wrote of the trees on the northern Illinois prairie in 1845 in his account of travels in the Rock River valley, "Along the banks of the Rock River, and of other less considerable streams is a good deal of wood, and occasionally oak openings or scattered trees and clumps added to the beauty of the wide spreading prairies."

The concern for timber did not hold out too long however. Gradually a change came over the minds of men. The prairies were then sought after and put under cultivation. As the prairies were easy subjection to farm tillage, and rich return came to be known, their fame spread rapidly. Northern Illinois began to be regarded as a Vale of Paradise.

## SETTLEMENT ALONG KISHWAUKEE RIVER

Some of the early settlers staked out their farms in 1835-1837 on government land along the Kishwaukee River. Kishwaukee, Kishwacokee in Indian language, meant clear water or sycamore, a name reasonably descriptive of the stream. By the summer of 1835 the settlers in what became known as New Milford Township were officially recorded as Samuel Brown, William R. Wheeler, Richard Hogaboom, Phineas M. Johnson, John Adams, James Campbell, John B. Long and Mr. Paddleford.

Settlers arriving in the area in 1838 and later found that all of what was considered the most desirable land sites near the river had been preempted by earlier settlers who located with an idea of getting near the river to secure water and timber. The area back from the river generally was prairie with exceptionally few trees. There was good tree growth along the Kishwaukee River. The next sizable wooded area was along Kilbuck Creek.

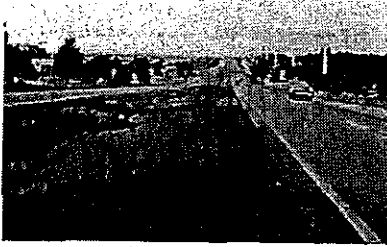
There was also the huge woods between the river and the creek, part of which is today called Trailside Forest Preserve. In 1871, this woods was owned by eight families. Each owner had a small plot which was generally about five acres. Such concentrated ownership indicates the importance of trees to the pioneer families. The owners in 1871 were A. C. Horton, F. L. Crosby, L. R. Moore, Richard McIntosh, G. Wilson, Charles C. Clark, E. S. Wilcox and T. Watson. The farm land back on the prairie was considered much less desirable. Angelina Hill wrote 2 June 1839 to relatives in the east, "A goodly number of the colony from Pennsylvania . . . have arrived and are building houses, and breaking prairie two miles from our grove, the nearest timber . . . our prairies will soon be settled. When we first heard of their intention to settle on the prairie, we thought it the height of folly, but have since concluded that timber is not so indispensably necessary as we imagined."

No longer evident, but at one time, until rather recent years, were the wet bogs, sloughs and prairie ponds that were especially troublesome to the farmers in wet seasons. The conditions made farming most difficult in the area one mile or more each side of the present day Eleventh Street Road between New Milford and Rockford, the airport area and between Sandy Hollow Road and Harrison Avenue. These sloughs also presented unusual problems for early road con-



struction so that until about seventy-five years ago the present day Kishwaukee Street Road was the only road south from Rockford.

Only in the past fifty years have ground conditions improved substantially. Today those wet bogs and prairie ponds are, of course, no longer major farming areas. They are filled with factories, motels, commercial buildings, runways, warehouses and many subdivisions of hundreds of suburban homes.



Those early pioneers who were forced to locate back somewhat from the river, with time, proved the land to be superior as farming land to that near the river because of improved soil conditions. After 1837 settlers came rapidly into the new prairie land. The land was most often purchased from the government for as little as \$1.25 an acre. The land was made available according to the provisions of the 24 April 1820 Act of Congress entitled "An Act Making Further Provisions For The Sale Of The Public Land." Patent Certificates issued under those provisions were filed at the Receiver's Office at Dixon, Illinois. The 1842 patents were issued by the Department of Interiors, General Land Office, when John Tyler was the tenth President of the United States. In 1841 Patents were filed at Galena.

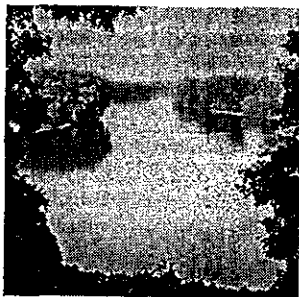
### RIB TOWN

During the early settlement period of the area that became known as New Milford Township, a village was started along the Kishwaukee River on what was known as the Old Shumway Place. This was perhaps as early as the late 1830's. Soon there were from thirty-five to forty frames erected in the settlement. But only a few of them were enclosed as dwellings. This fact gave the place the appropriate name of Rib Town.

Documents are not at all clear if this settlement was what eventually became Kishwaukee or New Milford. The problem of research is complicated by the fact that the names of Rib Town, New Milford, Kishwaukee and Lee Town were frequently used interchangeably by settlers, visitors and the recorders of documents of both communities in their earliest days of settlement. The ridiculing name of Rib Town, however, is documented fact. It is believed it possibly evolved into the present day New Milford. More likely, however, Rib Town was the beginning of Kishwaukee.

### KISHWAUKEE

In 1838 Dr. A. M. Catlin came from the Western Reserve in Ohio, in company with the Rev. Hiram Foote and Siles Tyler. They were of New England stock, and were part of a



movement to found an institution of learning similar to the one then flourishing in Oberlin, Ohio. These missionary educational managers selected a site for their institution near the mouth of the Kishwaukee River where the Kishwaukee River empties into the Rock River. At that point is a hill commanding a magnificent view of both rivers. Here in 1839-1840, under the leadership of George W. Lee, the town of Kishwaukee was laid out.

Along the side of the hill, beside the wagon road, buildings soon sprang up. Lee's pioneer community, complete with stores, hotel, a blacksmith shop and several dwellings, was planned to rival nearby Rockford.

For a brief time the settlement along the Kishwaukee River known today as New Milford and Mr. Lee's town were both named Kishwaukee. Sometimes Mr. Lee's community was called Lee Town in honor of its planner. Lee envisioned

Kishwaukee as the seat of government for Winnebago County. That effort, however, was actually lost to Rockford when that community won the election held 4 April 1836 and became the seat of Winnebago County. It seemed for a time that Kishwaukee might indeed become the metropolis of this section of the state. Construction was started on as many as forty dwellings.

Angelina Hill wrote on 6 January 1839 to her family in the east about life in Kishwaukee, "We returned by the way of Kishwaka and found that little town in quite a bustle. There was to have been a wedding in the morning, to which the whole town was invited, and a ball at the P.M. . . nature had done much for Kishwaka, and we hope wealth and enterprise will soon place it on a level with the first of western towns." She had written 13 December 1838 to her relatives in the east a good description of the town, "The little towns or villages in this part of the country, or at least those I have seen, are scarcely worthy the name. Kishwaka, the town I have so exalted an opinion of, I resume will in time become a flourishing place, but at present it is far from being a neat and thriving little village. The colonists who came here last spring calculating to erect a seminary, have turned their attention wholly to farming. At present the most prominent characters in town are a quarrelsome set of speculators. . . I acknowledge it is finely situated on Rock River, a beautiful stream. . . the little mounds in and about the town are very interesting."

The region was described in a letter written from the area by Angelina Hill to her grandfather in the east. The 23 March 1839 letter stated, ". . . we rode from our grove across the prairie to Kishwaka Grove on a river of the same name, where we dismounted, and rambled about on the bluffs, which overhang the river, until our ponies were rested. When we returned, we were away from home four hours. Saw 21 deer and one wolf but no fire. Our prairies are as yet uninhabited, and Kishwaka Grove though all claimed, is not settled on this side of the river." Other wild game on the prairie included numerous sandhill crane and prairie hen.

A hotel was built in 1839. The lumber was cut at the South Bend sawmill built by David S. Shumway along the Kilbuck Creek. Kishwaukee was beautifully located and Lee expected to establish a thriving steamboat trade. Some boats did come up the river. Angelina Hill's 23 March 1839 letter described Kishwaukee, "Rock River is now open for boats. A keel boat came up this week to Kishwaka, and will return next loaded with potatoes for St. Louis. One year ago there was a post office established at Kishwaka, and the mail carried on horseback to Rockford. It is now conveyed by stage, and from Kishwaka to Dixon's ferry 32 miles south." A large imposing edifice to be used as a seminary was begun. From the fall of 1845 until near Thanksgiving 1846 Mr. Philip W. Marsh operated a mercantile business in Kishwaukee.

But then reverses came to the little village. During the winter of 1843 the average snow on the ground was thirty inches deep and many cattle died on the surrounding farm land. Great hardships were upon the early settlers. There was much sickness in 1846 from fever and ague (chills and shaking) which took a heavy toll in Kishwaukee. Sickness in the pioneer days was constantly a family and community problem. Angelina Hill described the common ailment of ague in her letter, dated 16 September 1838 to her New York state relatives. She wrote, "Alas, there is scarcely a house on the creek which does not contain more or less sick, generally with the ague. When a person is taken with fever, our physician, if he visits them at all, pays strict attention to them until he gets them to shaking. Then he says they can cure that as well as he can, and leaves them to shake as long as they choose."

Of course, Rockford leaped ahead when the state road was located through there connecting Chicago with Galena. The area development race was over when Rockford's water power district was constructed. This district authorized the Rockford Hydraulic and Manufacturing Company on 28 February 1843 to build a dam across the Rock River. The dam, which was completed in 1845, provided plentiful power to the ambitious owners of new industries in the community.

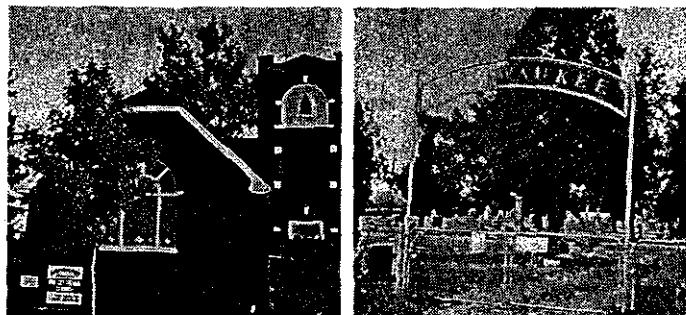
Residents moved out of Kishwaukee, the buildings were

sold and moved away by the farmers. The seminary building stood for some time as a reminder of the first attempt to found a seminary in Winnebago County. Its black, broken windows looked like great eyes from which the spirit of life had fled. Finally, the unfinished seminary building was carefully dismantled and its boards were sold for building material. The farms of the surrounding area have buildings, some which still stand today, that were built with materials that once graced the wagon roads of the community of Kishwaukee.

In 1921 the Kishwaukee Social Club held its reunion picnic at Sinnissippi Park, Rockford. The club was organized during the summer of 1881 by thirty-five young people of the Kishwaukee area for the purpose of mutual improvement and better sociability. People active in the club, among others, were Will Jones, James Agnew, Raleigh Paradee, Jessie Ellis, Will Hart, Ira Davis, Mariana and Eliza Banks, Art Lake, Mary Prentice, Si Smith, Will Sovereign, Charles Clayton, Orlan Beach, Orval Prentice and Julia Mae Agnew, long time secretary of the club. The meetings consisted of programs of orators, songs, skits and other less impersonable social activities. The big event each year was the Fourth of July picnic with hayrack rides, boating, singing, speeches and good eating. Members wore silver badges engraved S.C. for social club. Sometimes it was called the sparking club; that, to some, is what it turned out to be.

The present hamlet of Kishwaukee is a short distance below the mouth of the Kishwaukee River. The Church of the Wesleyan Methodist Society at Kishwaukee in Winnebago County was organized there on 17 May 1844 in a one room log school house with only four members. They were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rothwell, William Johnson and Freeman Clothier. The first circuit riding pastor to serve the church was the Rev. Jephtha Noe. The church was reorganized on 21 November 1863. A house of worship was erected in 1868 and a parsonage was built in 1870. Both of these buildings were later replaced. The present brick church was built in 1929.

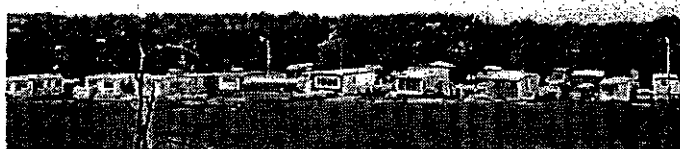
In 1877 the pastor was the Rev. A. R. Brooks and there were sixty-five members. The church school was attended by an average of forty persons and the superintendent was Miss Lucy Hart. By that time the post office at Kishwaukee had been in service for several years. The post office originally opened in 1838 as one of the earliest post offices of the Rock River valley area. Mrs. Lewis (Emma C.) Clothier was post mistress of Kishwaukee in 1877. By the turn of the century there were only fifty members in the Kishwaukee church. In 1916 the pastor was the Rev. George Pegram and the church was in the Illinois Wesleyan Methodist Conference which included less than a dozen churches. In that era the post office was still functioning in Kishwaukee. But it was closed long ago and mail is now delivered by rural delivery throughout the farming and suburban area.



All that remains of Kishwaukee today is the Kishwaukee community cemetery and the church, now named Kishwaukee Community Presbyterian Church. The present pastor of the church is the Rev. Jon R. Voskuil and there are 110 members. The present school building, which was built in 1915 and later enlarged and located near the church, has been vacant since 1969. Children of the rural area now attend school in either Rockford or Stillman Valley which is about ten miles south of the Kishwaukee community area. Part of the school building is currently being razed.

## NEW MILFORD AND NEW MILFORD TOWNSHIP

The community of New Milford is in the central eastern part of the original New Milford Township of Winnebago County. The township boundaries were what are now Harrison Avenue (north), Rock River and Meridian Road (west), Edson Road county line (south) and near Mulford Road and Twentieth Street connected by Kishwaukee River (east). The township was consolidated into Rockford Township on 1 May 1916. The community of New Milford remained as the only settlement in the former New Milford Township until 1951 when nearby Morristown was established. Morristown was incorporated in 1955.



In the early 1860's the New Milford Township was drawn up in the involvement of the Civil War. Quota of troops called 1 July 1864 was 2,778 men for Winnebago County. New Milford Township's quota was eighty-five; 136 men, age twenty to forty-five years old, enrolled. A total of 4,627 men enrolled in the entire county. The January 1865 quota for New Milford Township was twenty-two men; 106 men enrolled.

One day after Lincoln took the oath of office and became the sixteenth President of the United States, Scroggins, a former resident of New Milford wrote from Chicago on 5 March 1861. He wrote to his school friends, the editors of "The Leaf", "Though I am

in The City of the West, and where one is almost barricaded with piles of corn, wheat and hogs, mixed up with now and then some exciting secession news, yet I must remember "The Leaf". Well, this is next day after inauguration. We yet live, move and have our being. Yes the sun rises this morning as usual!!... Chicago is the same Chicago that it was two weeks ago. Our merchants have gone east for their spring and summer supply of goods. . . We think the dark cloud is passed.

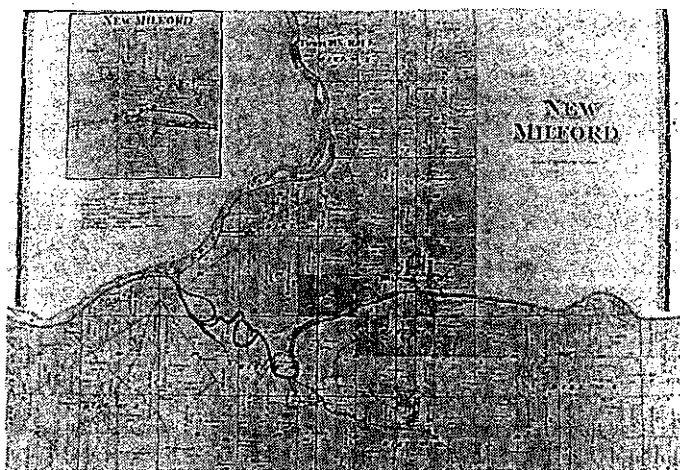
But how are you getting along out there? I should judge from reading "The Leaf" your little city was prospering, too. I understand you will have the iron horse run down your way one of these days, is that so?"

On 19 April 1865 the community of New Milford joined with people of Rockford in a day of fasting and prayer for Lincoln's death.

Hopes have always been great in New Milford, but the community's proximity to a mushrooming Rockford have been a dominating factor in New Milford's growth throughout its history. New Milford Township ceased to exist as a political entity in 1916 when it became the first of the original sixteen townships in Winnebago County to be absorbed by Rockford Township, the giant to the north. Guilford Township was absorbed into Rockford Township in 1929. Since that date the county has consisted of fourteen townships.

In March 1958, amid debate over the advisability of annexing to Rockford or incorporating as a village, 354 residents (80% of the voters) went to the polls in what was up until that





time the largest voter turnout in the community's history. They voted overwhelmingly against incorporation. So unincorporated New Milford, a cluster of comfortable homes and a string of small businesses, remains a pleasant community of a few thousand people straddling a very busy four-lane highway and hugging the river bank in the shadow of an ever expanding Rockford. The city limits of Rockford now borders the New Milford community and its schools belong to the Rockford school system.

Today some people call New Milford a village. In present day legal terms it is an unincorporated area. It is a community of pleasant people gathered together in an undefined area occupying their private property and doing as they wish most happily without a dominate governing and taxing body.



If a vote were taken in 1975 as it was nearly twenty years ago, most likely the results would be similar. Generally, the residents feel the expense of running a government far outweighs the few disadvantages of being operated by Rockford Township and Winnebago County. In the long run such a relationship has worked out fairly well for the New Milford community residents. Usually there are few issues that have raised the ire of the people. The most recent issue was some annoyance with the nearby airport regarding the practice of a touch-and-go maneuver of military and commercial aircraft. This practice was sometimes conducted in the late evening and early morning hours. New Milford residents circulated a petition to limit the maneuvers; action by the airport authorities, as a result of the petition, improved sleeping conditions of the residents.

## ORIGIN OF THE NEW MILFORD NAME

The origin of the name of the New Milford community is not documented. However, there are at least three possible explanations for the name. A possible explanation is that some early settlers came from Milford, New York; Milford, Connecticut or some other Milford of the New England states. So the belief is the new community along the Kishwaukee River was named after that eastern locality.

Indeed, one such early settler did come from Milford, Connecticut. It is recorded that New Milford Township was named in 1851 by a committee of Philip Wells Marsh, Mr. Moore and Horace Miller. That was about fifteen years after Winnebago County was organized. That committee selected the name New Milford, the name of the settlement in Litchfield County, Connecticut, where Philip W. Marsh was born

22 December 1815, the son of Bradley Marsh. That town, located on the Housatonic River less than ten miles from the New York state border, is today a community of about 5,000 people.

Philip W. Marsh came to Illinois in June 1839 where he lived at the Terrace Farm of Horace Allen Miller for one year. He then returned to Connecticut. Philip W. Marsh came again to northern Illinois in the fall of 1845 by railroad to Albany, canal to Buffalo where he embarked on a steamer to Chicago.

Chicago, at that time, was a rapidly growing western town with considerably less than 30,000 inhabitants of which less than half were born in America. The city was flooded with many people from foreign nations including particularly those from Ireland, Germany, Poland, Italy and Sweden.

Mr. Marsh traveled to Kishwaukee with a farmer who was in Chicago disposing of grain. At that time, except for small settlement, northern Illinois was sparsely settled. Deer, bears and other animals roamed over the countryside at will. Much of the land was still government owned.

On 22 December 1845 Mr. Marsh married Nancy Eliza Miller, daughter of Horace Allen and Hannah Clark Miller. The Rev. J. Luccock of the New Milford Congregationist Church officiated. Mr. and Mrs. Marsh had four children, Philip, Arthur A., Clarence and Frank M. Marsh. For awhile Mr. Marsh operated a mercantile business in Kishwaukee, then owned a farm in the New Milford Township until 1883. A descendent of Philip Wells and Nancy Eliza Miller Marsh is their great grandson, Arthur Marsh Lawton, who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. His mother, Mrs. Florence Edna Marsh Lawton, lives in Rockford.

The above story conflicts somewhat with another account in as much as the area was officially recognized as New Milford Township on 6 November 1850, perhaps as much as a year earlier than the 1851 meeting. Most certainly the above mentioned meeting actually took place in the fall of 1850 instead of 1851 as recorded.

Another very logical explanation for the New Milford name is that because of the flouring mill located near the ford of the Kishwaukee River early settlers called their settlement Mill Ford. Twenty years ago many long time residents still referred to their community as Milford.

Another very reasonable explanation, and most commonly believed by many long time residents, is that when the new grist mill was constructed just east of the ford of the Kishwaukee River someone in the community decided to call the community New Mill Ford. An early mill had been established at South Bend in 1838 which was usually referred to as the old mill.

The records of the cemetery association in 1854 referred to the organization as the New Milford Cemetery Association. Also, the 1857 Illinois state incorporation of the cemetery was called the New Milford Cemetery Association. Later, of course, the name was shortened to New Milford.

It is not documented, but it is generally believed that the village of New Milford was established at the time the town of Kishwaukee was abandoned. That is, between 1845 and 1849.

In 1853, however, the New Milford community was not the village that it became twenty years later in 1871. There were less than ten permanent buildings in the village in 1853, half of which were located in a triangular plot bordered by the present day Eleventh Street and Rydberg Roads. Throughout the Township there were somewhat more than just fifty permanent dwellings scattered along present day Rotary Road (nine), Baxter Road (three), Lindenwood Road (two) and New Milford School Road (two). Of course, throughout the farming area there were many small log houses which served as home-stead shelter for the pioneer farmers without sufficient resources to erect permanent dwellings.

According to a Topographical Map of the township, dated 1853, published by H. F. Walling's, New York, from the



drawings of the County Surveyor, Thomas J. L. Remington, the roads that are familiar to the contemporary residents today were well established in 1853. There were, however, some roads, then no doubt only a dirt trail, that were later abandoned. Such a road was an east-west road between the present day Eleventh Street Road and Rydberg Road as an eastern extension to the present day South Bend Road. Of special interest on the 1853 map is the concentrated ownership along and north of Kilbuck Creek where six plots were laid out. It could be this land was purchased for access to the creek, but more likely it was speculation for south extension of the roads we know today as U.S. 51 and Rydberg Road. It should be remembered that during that early time the main and only roads south from New Milford beyond the present day Baxter Road were the present day Lindenwood Road (then called Lynnville Road) and the Kishwaukee River.

Large land owners of 160 acres or more in 1853 were, among other, J. Eastman, J. Stafford, O. Gregory, S. Ramsey, W. Hunt, G. V. Bauder, F. W. Maxwell, Henry Strong, S. L. Horton, Charles Craig, S. Brown, William R. Wheeler, Joshua Beale, Horace Miller, F. G. W. Parks, C. B. Johnson, M. Cone, R. Moulthrop and D. S. Shumway.



Regarding the 1853 map of the township, it should be pointed out that the 1853 map is the earliest map found in researching the township history. The New York Public Library and The Library of Congress do have in their map collections an 1859 map of Winnebago County. The New York Public Library's copy is "Winnebago Illinois, 1859, Topographical Map," mounted on linen. The Library of Congress copy, the same map, is listed in "Land Ownership Maps," an index of old maps published in 1967 by the Geography and Map Division. The 1853 map, a treasured document in New Milford, is similarly mounted on linen. An interpretation of the township property lines in 1853, reprinted in this story section, is based on the historic document.



By 1854 New Milford was a flourishing village. By 1859 documents referred to the village as Town of New Milford. The 1862 county surveyor was Thomas J. L. Remington, a position he had held for ten years.

In any event, the community has been called New Milford for more than 125 years. It should be remembered the settlement may have been first called Old Shumway Place, then possibly Rib Town, sometimes mistakenly Kishwaukee, often Mill Ford, and New Milford for six generations. It was officially recognized as New Milford on 18 May 1850 when the federal

government opened a post office in the settlement. Six months later, on 6 November 1850, when the county was divided into townships, the township was named for the community.

## KILBUCK AND SOUTH BEND

Just southwest of the present Kilbuck Bluffs Forest Preserve site, and north of the South Bend Road on the cliffs behind the long abandoned South Bend school house, there was an area of some activity for many years. Indians made camp there for years and much later at least fifteen families maintained small cabins there. As many as sixty graves, both Indian and white man, were uncovered in the area years ago. For awhile a feed and flour grinding mill operated on Kilbuck Creek in that area.



David Smith Shumway and his family came to the Kishwaukee River area on 29 May 1836 with his team of horses, yoke of oxen and a single horse buggy. At that time only two buildings were to be seen, a log house and a shanty. He established their home in a small log house near the Rock River. Shumway built a sawmill in 1837 on Kilbuck Creek, but the mill was later destroyed by fire started by the Driscoll gang. He then built a sawmill at South Bend on the Kilbuck Creek, two and a half miles southwest of the present community of New Milford. There he sawed the lumber for the hotel which was erected at Kishwaukee in 1839.

The grist mill, erected in 1838, at South Bend was the first in the area. There were, of course, grist mills located at Sayersville, Rockton, Rockford and other pioneer settlements. The South Bend mill was the center of a community of three or four small houses. It is believed the flouring mill was located near the site of the old Shumway sawmill at the mouth of the Kilbuck Creek. In 1877 half owner of the South Bend Mill was E. B. Betts; it was valued at \$6,000.00. Mr. Betts, a Baptist and Republican, came to Winnebago County in 1855. At that time the mill did custom grinding, making New Process Flour on all grists ground.

The mill was powered by two water wheels which turned the massive millstones. The mill was three stories high built on a frame of hand hewn timbers held together with wooden pegs. The corner braces and wall studs were all mortised into the main beams at both ends. The last to operate the mill as a flour grinding establishment was James S. Ritchie, who recalled in 1951, then seventy-nine years old, that he started working there in 1896. He quit when the mill went out of business in 1899. The mill was then used briefly as a creamery by Harry Betts, son of E. B. Betts.



The mill was torn down in the early 1900's and moved to a nearby farm. Fifty years later, in August 1951, the structure was razed on the Clayton Holsington farm. Workers tearing down the more than one hundred year old structure found more than thirty pieces of the old mill stones in the ground beneath the building where they were used as fill material.

## NEW MILFORD COMMERCE AND ACTIVITIES

### POST OFFICE

A functioning post office was established in New Milford on 18 May 1850. The community was a part of a growing state.

By 1850 the Illinois population reached 851,470 inhabitants. From September 1837 until 1850 letters for the residents of the area that then became New Milford Township were picked up in Midway/Rockford or most generally Kishwaukee. The Midway post office was established 31 August 1837 and the Kishwaukee station a year later.

On 31 August 1837 the first mail arrived in Midway and David Haight was named the first postmaster. During that early period letter writers from the area included Angelina Hill who wrote to family in the east. She vividly described the settlement life in northern Illinois. Another regular letter writer was Horace Allen Miller. Regular mail was delivered in Midway after 1 January 1838 when the first stagecoach pulled into the small village from Chicago.

The stagecoaches followed the road from Meecham's Grove in Cook County to Galena by way of Midway at the ford on the Rock River. This road was created by the state legislature when it formed Winnebago County on 16 January 1836. The road followed a route that included a wayside inn stop on Cleveland Road, known today as Sandy Hollow Road. A stagecoach stop was made in 1838 at a dwelling near the present day South Gate Shopping Center. This same dwelling, located on the site of the present day Ponderosa Steak House at South Gate, was used during World War I as an officer's mess. Cleveland Road was so named for the 150 acre farm that Truman L. Cleveland maintained in New Milford Township, section 1.

In regard to the Cleveland name reference is made to an all but forgotten abandoned settlement between present day Rockford and Belvidere, which was first called Sayersville. Sayersville, which consisted of 660 acres, was named for Col. Mahlon Sayers. Later the area was called Newburg farm. Benjamin F. Hoyt bought the property. He established a house-hotel for travelers going between Chicago and Galena. The community rapidly grew and included a gristmill, blacksmith, two general stores, dry goods shop, tailor shop, carding mill, sawmill and distillery. Farmers for forty miles around were in the habit of going to Newburg for trading and to have their grist ground. In those early days Sayersville was larger than Belvidere or Rockford. Later the name of the settlement was changed to Cleveland and then Newburg. In 1855 the property was purchased by John P. Jones. Later the settlement, because of the growing importance of Rockford, was abandoned. Newburg Road, connecting Rockford and Belvidere, is the only reminder today of this once pioneer settlement.

The settlement of Newburg, of course, should not be confused with the present day village of Cherry Valley. Newburg was located somewhat northeast of the present day Cherry Valley which in 1836 was known as Grigg's Ford. Prior to 1850 the settlement was named Butler. In the 1850's Mrs. Joseph Butler's name of Cherry Valley was selected by a community wide lottery.

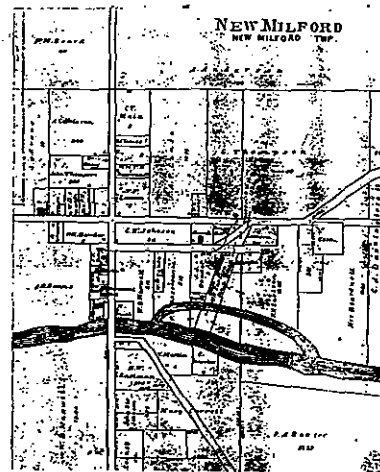
By 1877 the post office in New Milford had been functioning for more than twenty-five years. The post office was located in the general store. From 1889 until 1899 when Lovejoy Hall operated the store, his daughter Inez would help with



the mail sorting and distribution. The mail would be brought from the railroad depot by John Cooney, Emma and Eva Cooney's father, who carried the leather pouch on his back. Inez would help her father sort the mail and place it in the mail pigeon hole boxes. The residents of the community would come in daily to pick up their mail. The farmers would frequently come from the surrounding countryside in the early evening to purchase supplies, learn of the community news and pick up their mail. The store was

thus a community social center as well as a business establishment.

The New Milford post office was discontinued on 15 August 1910 when its population dropped below one thousand inhabitants. Mail then started to be delivered by rural route delivery in the community and throughout the surrounding rural area.



## TOWN HALL

Art Brown tore down the old stone town hall in 1919. The stone was crushed for use on the community's roads. The stone town

hall was originally located on a triangular plot just to the northeast of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the building identified today as the New Milford First Baptist Church. The town hall was built sometime between 1853 and 1871. The stone building had served as the community's first school and the meeting place of the Methodist Society before their church was built in 1887.

About 1898 there were only twenty dwellings in the community according to Harry Graham's remembrances. The accurate figure was closer to more than thirty dwellings. The population of New Milford Township in 1910 was 909 people. The New Milford Post No. 297, Grand Army of the Republic was instituted 21 February 1868 by Captain W. D. E. Andrus of Rockford. The organization had fourteen members. Before the turn of the century the organization had been discontinued. Other early 1900 organization included New Milford Camp No. 419, Modern Woodmen Association, and Camp No. 20 of the Home Fraternal League.

## FOUNTAIN REAPER

As early as 1854 there was a foundry and reaper factory in New Milford where James L. Fountain made his first revolutionary reapers. Reapers, of course, had been made by other inventors as early as 1831, including Cyrus Hall McCormick who was granted a patent in 1834. Obed Hussey was granted a patent in 1833. That patent was defended by Abraham Lincoln, then an Illinois attorney, in a court case against McCormick.

Fountain's factory was located on the north bank of the Kishwaukee River just east of the flouring mill. When Fountain perfected his machine he demonstrated his invention in the grain field of John Baxter, father of Charles Meritt Baxter,



southeast of New Milford. Following the demonstration of the reaper, John Baxter bought the first reaper that James L. Fountain sold. The reaper did not have a reel, so the straw had to be raked off the machine. However, it did have an excellent sickle cutting bar. It is documented that James L. Fountain invented the superior sectional knives of the reaper. With this horse drawn machine it was no longer necessary to use the long handled scythe at harvest time.

The story is told that once when Mr. Fountain was in Chicago on business he happened to meet and engaged in conver-

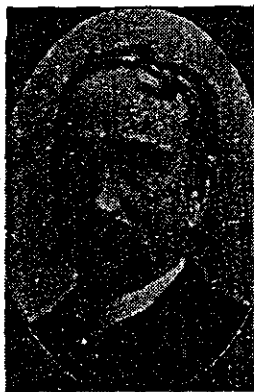
sation with Cyrus McCormick. Mr. McCormick had moved to Chicago in 1847 where he built a factory. There he developed a very prosperous business. They discussed their common problems on improvements to their reapers. Mr. McCormick expressed his disappointment in his inability to develop a superior tying device for his reaper. Mr. Fountain told him about his tying device and drew a diagram of its working parts. This information he gave to Mr. McCormick. Unknown to James Fountain, Mr. McCormick perfected this invention and had it patented. Because he was a poor man, Mr. Fountain was unable to test this action in court.

At approximately this same time an industrious young man, John H. Manny, arrived in Rockford from New York state. Manny started to manufacture a combined mower and reaper which he had invented. By the spring of 1853 Clark and Utter, Rockford, had manufactured 150 of the Manny reapers. Abraham Lincoln visited Rockford during the summer of 1855 as an attorney for Manny in another patent case against McCormick. On 16 January 1856 Manny was upheld in a court battle against Cyrus H. McCormick for patent rights to the Manny reaper. McCormick, whose basic inventions were combined with inventions others had made to produce binding and reaping machines, is given national recognition as inventor of the Reaper.

Rockford became known as The Reaper City and John H. Manny became very wealthy. His reaper won many metals in competitions. Illinois, with a statewide population of 1,711,951 people, became an important farm products manufacturing center in 1860. By that time there were about one hundred companies manufacturing reapers in the United States.

Following the death of Manny his wealthy widow married Robert Tinker. Mr. Tinker was elected mayor of Rockford in 1875. He lived at his Tinker Cottage until his death in 1924 at the age of eighty-eight years old.

The James L. Fountain factory in New Milford met with only modest success mainly because of the outstanding popularity and salesmanship of the Manny and McCormick reapers. The Fountain family lived on a small farm bordering the present day New Milford School Road. At that time it was a six-



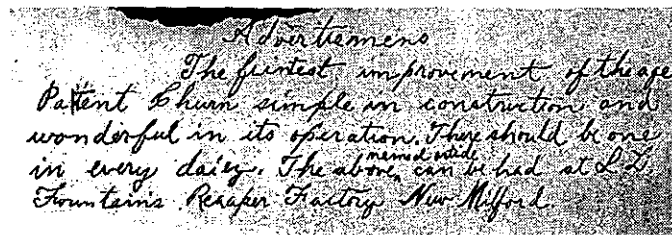
teen and one-fourth acre farm which James L. Fountain owned. Present resident of the farm house is Mrs. Harriett Elwood Jensen, daughter of William Elwood, who has lived in New Milford more than sixty-five years.

Just east of the farm house was the community school which occupied an acre plot. This plot, the Fountain farm and more than sixty additional acres were all part of the original Samuel Brown's eighty acres

which he entered and purchased with his wife Angelina Hill Brown on 23 October 1839. Mr. Fountain also owned eighteen acres south of the Kishwaukee River along the east side of the road.

"The Leaf", a New Milford school hand written newspaper prepared in 1861 advised, "The greatest improvement of the age. Patent Churn, simple in construction and wonderful in its operation. There should be one in every dairy. The above mentioned article can be had at J. L. Fountain's Reaper Factory, New Milford." By 1877 the reaper factory had been closed down for several years. There was a

period when the factory was referred to as Marsh's Harvester Plant. Much later the foundry and reaper factory property was owned by Harry Graham, who lived in New Milford more than eighty years prior to his death in 1973.



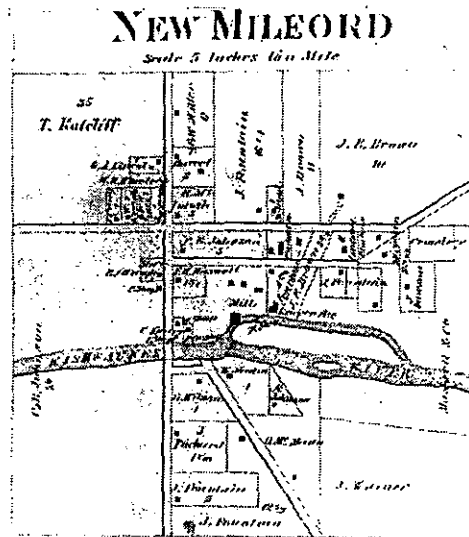
## OTHER INDUSTRY

There was also a flouring mill where they ground the grain with mill stones, a cooper shop and a sawmill owned by Grant Brothers. It is not documented, but it is generally believed that the race was built by Samuel Brown. The race, a man made waterway used industrially to power the mill and reaper factory, is considerably overgrown with brush today. However, in low water periods the west end of the race can easily be viewed from the New Milford bridge.

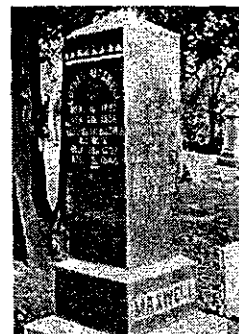


In 1871 George A. Crosby was township supervisor and Frederic H. Maxwell was town clerk. Frederic H. Maxwell was born 12 January 1824 in Franklin County, Massachusetts, the son of Luther and Elizabeth Baldwin Maxwell. Luther Maxwell was born 17 March 1797;

Elizabeth Baldwin was born in July 1796. Luther's father was Hugh Maxwell, who came to America in 1733 from Ireland because of religious persecution. He died 14 October 1799 upon a return trip from the West Indies with a cargo of horses which he had hoped to sell there at a profit. Luther Maxwell, one of five children, bought 100 acres in Massachusetts and owned a half interest in an iron foundry. He came to New Milford in June 1846, where he bought 720 acres in Sections 25, 26, 35 and 36, or which he farmed 400 acres. Luther died 20 November 1856.



Frederic H. Maxwell married 29 March 1846 to Harriet M. Pierson, who was born 14 October 1828, daughter of Hiram and Maria Holabird Pierson. They had nine children, Ellen T., Edwin L., Elizabeth M. (Mrs. Frank Marsh), Arthur H., Walter B., Hattie M. (Mrs. John Beale), Fred B., Beecher H. and Clarence Hugh. F. H. Maxwell died 25 March 1893, his wife died 24 November 1903. A descendent of this family is Ronald I. Maxwell, grandson of Arthur H. Maxwell. Ronald Maxwell's father was Cascius Maxwell; brothers and sisters of Cascius Maxwell were Roy, Fred, Bessie, Alice and Lucille.



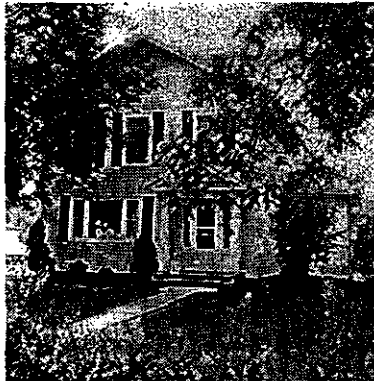


Frederic H. Maxwell was the town clerk when the New Milford community was founded and he faithfully served the community in that position for more than twenty years.



Maxwell and Johnson were proprietors of the New Milford Mills. In 1871 A. H. Shafer was the miller. At that time Ralph S. Coshum was a New Milford fancy stock breeder. In 1877 Walter Carey was the New Milford miller. He was a Civil War veteran and had learned his trade in Dixon coming to Illinois in 1852.

By 1874 the community also had a railroad, blacksmith shop, creamery and cheese factory, butcher shop, ice house, nail factory, general store and several fine dwellings. Prairie schooners were seen passing through the community from time to time. Boat loads of men, women, children and household goods came down the Kishwaukee River. Because of the dam they were compelled to unload and carry their goods on land for some distance before they could launch their boats again and proceed on their courageous journey. It must be remembered that one hundred years ago there was a much greater flow of water in Kishwaukee River so it was generally several feet deep even in low water periods.



The dam is identified on a 1905 map of the community so it is believed it still served some purpose until at least that date. Clam diggers blew the dam near the turn of the century to get shells from which to make buttons. By that time the dam was no longer needed to divert water to the race to provide water power. The mill was then powered by a gasoline engine. The engine was more reliable than the fluctuations in the water supply that fed the race and water wheels of the mills.

Evidence of the dam, which was located just west of the east entrance to the race, is still noted in the Kishwaukee River when the water is quite low. In later years John Evans, grandfather of John (Jack) Evans, operated the grist mill, then powered by a gasoline engine. For many years that mill property was owned by Harry Graham, long time resident of New Milford.

## THE RAILROAD

The Iowa Railroad, which passed by New Milford about a mile to the west, was put through in 1875. This date conflicts



considerably with an advertisement in "The Leaf", a New Milford school hand written newspaper produced in 1861 which gave notice that the railroad was soon to open near New Milford. The advertisement advised, "To Rockford by railroad. On the 20th of September next the students of the New Milford Seminary are invited to meet at the depot at eight o'clock in the morning for a grand ride on "The Rail". Dinner at one at The Holland House. Return at three P.M. Hope you have a merry time children."

Just a few years after 1861, in 1872, there were only 5,904 miles of railroad throughout the entire state of Illinois. The New Milford station was permanently located in 1876. A circa 1878 map of the county indicates the railroad was known at that time as the Chicago, Rockford and Northern Railroad. Twenty-six years earlier the first train of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, pulled by the Pioneer engine, arrived in Rockford on 2 August 1852. Delegates from Chicago to Galena had gathered in Rockford on 7 January 1846 in convention where they agreed to build a railroad as quickly as possible. That railroad was chartered in 1836, the year the county was founded. Work had been suspended in 1838 because of a depression in 1837.

In 1878 a telephone was in operation at the New Milford depot and the village became a stock and grain market. One thing that most likely kept New Milford from flourishing was that when the railroad was put through in 1861 it was located about one mile west of the settlement.

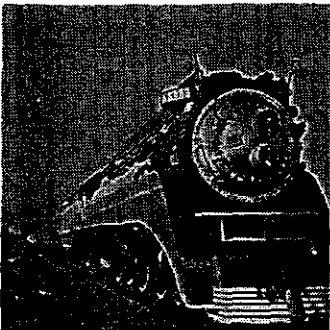
The depot was located directly west of the railroad tracks across from the site of the present day New Milford Lumber Company which is located on the original site of the grain elevator. The depot had a large round coal stove in the waiting room. For many years the depot agent was Mr. Smith who lived nearby with his wife and children, Guy and Helen. For many years residents of the community traveled by train to Rockford. During her teenage years Inez Hall Ritchie, now ninety-six years old, recalled recently that she took the train to Rockford daily to attend high school. Fare for the round trip was 18 cents. The unnecessary luxury of high school was looked upon, especially for a girl, with some disfavor by a few neighbors of the family. Dr. Hobert Edson rode the train to Chicago weekly to attend medical school, however, he most frequently boarded the train at the Harrisville depot southwest of New Milford.

In 1916 the railroad was known as the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. During that era the railroad Red Bridge over the Kishwaukee River was constructed in 1919. Winter fun for the community's young people included skating on Kishwaukee River from the New Milford covered bridge to the railroad bridge; it was about a two mile round trip. The old Red Bridge was a favorite jumping off place for summer swimmers through the years and even today is a picturesque spot for hikers and fishermen. A train of national fame to cross

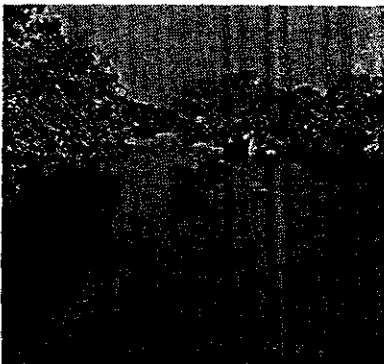


over the nearly sixty year old bridge recently was the American Freedom Train which passed through the community in August 1975. The train attracted more than 40,000 visitors while it was sided near Greater Rockford Airport.

Today the tracks of the railroad serve the Burlington-Northern Inc., the nations longest railroad. Regular service includes one north bound and one south bound freight train daily. The Chicago, Milwaukee and Pacific Railroad also uses the same tracks with two south bound and two north bound freight trains scheduled daily.

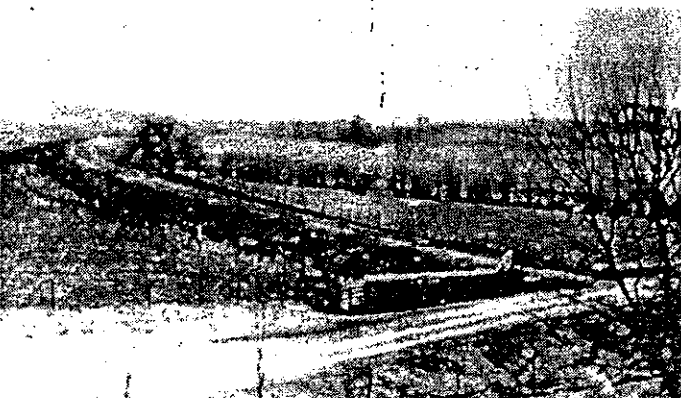


## HARRISVILLE AND THE RAILROAD



Seventy years ago, in 1905, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Gary Railroad started laying tracks south of Rockford which would connect the growing city with Gary, Indiana. The railroad was laid just west of New Milford, then cut southeast through the George Baxter farm. It then proceeded east where it crossed the road running directly south of Kinson School. Here the right-of-

way passed through the John S. and Abbie Stickley Watson farm and just north of the homestead built by the Watson family during the 1861 beginning of the Civil War. The farm house was built on two eighty acre tracts of Section thirty-two. Mrs. John S. Watson was a relative of Daniel Webster. John S. Watson plowed the first furrows for Rockford's race when it was constructed along the Rock River in the 1840's.

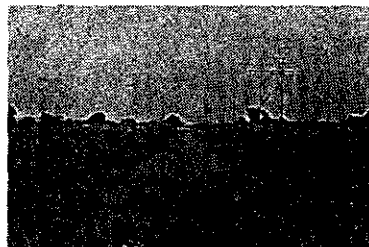


The farm and homestead has been occupied by John S. Watson's grandson Emery and his wife Linda for many years. George Skinner, father of Herb Skinner, lived on the north portion, southeast corner opposite the Kinson School, of the

Watson farm for many years. He served as school director in 1886 and again in 1903. Herb Skinner left for California in 1911. The rather steep, long hill of the road running south of the school house thus became known as Skinner's Hill. It was a favorite sledding area in winters by many generations of the neighborhood.



Some distance east the railroad crossed into Boone County passing through Vanland and proceeded east to Momence on the Illinois-Indiana boundary. At the road crossing south of the school house a village was soon booming. The village was built on land donated by Godfrey Hilderbrand, whose farm was on the county line. The donated land was to be used by the village as long as the railroad maintained service through Harrisville.



First to be constructed were the depot, section house and elevator. Quickly to follow were the stockyards, general store, blacksmith shop, farm implement shop, buggy shop, dance hall, lumberyard, feed grinding mill and gas storage area. Bill Ryman opened the general store, dance hall and feed mill. Later Will Oman took over operation of the general store and he was followed by the Dresser family. Thus the village of Harrisville was established. It was named after an official of the railroad.

The crew, mostly Italians, who worked on the railroad tracks and track beds, lived in trailers on the railroad right-of-way switching tracks. On Sunday these section hands would go to the clay banks on the Watson farm where they baked bread and made noodles in ovens they had made in the clay area. The railroad was known locally as the High, Dry and Windy, and was active from 1905 until 1927 when service was terminated.

During that time, 1917-1918, for a period of about two years, Mrs. Nellie Agatha Crill Dresser lived in Harrisville with her son Armor Crill and his sister Frances M. Dresser. The family operated the general store. Mrs. Dresser's husband, Robert Louis Dresser, had been a farmer near Winnebago. During that time Kinson School District paid \$43.75 tuition on 2 January 1917 for Frances Dresser when she was about seventeen years old. The District also paid \$55.09 on 2 January 1918 to Armor Dresser for coal. Armor was then twenty-three years old. Approximately two years later on 31 December 1919, Armor Dresser married Helen Lorraine Baxter, first born and eldest daughter of Charles Merrit and Capitola Ina Conklin Baxter. Armor and Helen Dresser moved to another of the Dresser farms north of Monroe Center, Illinois.

During 1917-1918 hundreds of military troop trains, loaded with young recruits, passed through Harrisville from Camp Grant on their way east to participate in World War I. When the boys were coming back from the front Emery Watson, then a teen-ager, welcomed the soldiers in his father's fields as he watched them pass by on the troop trains. Some of the soldiers, in their happiness, threw their helmets or other equipment to him. Some of the young people of the community, like Zada Jane Cameron, daughter of James and Cora Frances Conklin Cameron, rode the train to Rockford to stay the week to attend high school. Among the passengers on the railroad through the years were some of the teachers of Kinson School who came out from Rockford to spend the week where they boarded in the farming community. They would take the train back to Rockford for the weekend.

When work was being accomplished on the railroad, some of the teamsters and their horses were boarded at the Charles



Merrit Baxter farm. During that time Charlie Baxter quickly took advantage of the opportunity to trade horses and mules with the teamsters. But he not only traded horses with the railroad men, as he often picked up new bays and chestnuts from traveling medicine men, music teachers or neighboring farmers.

With the closing of the railroad through Harrisville in 1927, the village soon was a ghost town. Some of the buildings were moved to new locations, while others were torn down on site. The section house was moved and became a pig house on the Watson farm. It is believed the depot burned down. Right-of-way and remnants of rotting ties are still visible just north of Kilbuck Creek on the farm generally remembered as the George Baxter farm. The right-of-way on the Watson farm has been used for many years as a lane to a cattle pasture.

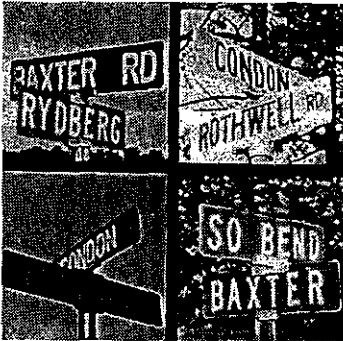
But with Harrisville Road, running nearly two miles north and south from Rotary Road to the county line Edson Road, and the Harrisville Grange, established in 1915 as Patrons of Husbandry No. 1783 and still an active Grange organization, some remembrance still remains of the village and railroad that were built and torn down within a brief lifetime.



## THE ROAD

The small settlement of New Milford along the Kishwaukee River, straddling the principal north-south roadway, grew as an independent community. The roadway has been important to the survival of the village since its earliest settlement.

Angelina Hill wrote regarding the roads of the area on 6 January 1839 to her relatives in the east, "Our roads are the best I have ever traveled on, for they are good in all seasons of the year. If a person wishes to ride on horseback or in a carriage for pleasure, he may direct his course towards any point of the compass he pleases." She further wrote of the roads in a letter, dated 23 March 1839, "Coaches and carriages are as numerous on our public roads as some of yours, and our roads at all seasons of the year are the best I've ever traveled on. In fact, people accustomed to macadamised roads can find but



two causes of complaint against ours. Firstly, they are so numerous that they perplex the stranger; and secondly, we are obliged to ford or ferry the rivers and other streams. But this last will soon be remedied."

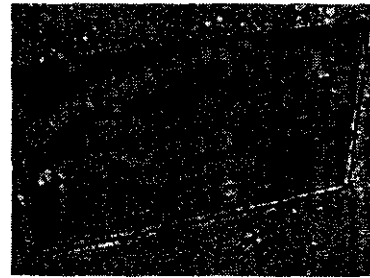
In early times the principal north-south roadway referred to today as Eleventh Street Road provided the communication link between Rockford to the north and the towns to the south. Today, of course, it is the main north-south highway of the state. Prior to 1917 it was a mud and gravel road. J. H. Sabin, County Surveyor, laid out the Meridian Road through New Milford on 14 December 1914 to be 62 feet wide.

Of special interest, as mentioned previously, the roadway known today as Eleventh Street Road ended at today's Baxter Road until sometime between 1853 and 1871. Southbound traffic prior to that time used present day Lindenwood Road (then called Lynnvillie Road) or the more frequently traveled Kishwaukee Road. In 1871 the north section of the road ended at today's Sandy Hollow Road. Traffic then proceeded east to Kishwaukee Road and into Rockford. Thus Kishwaukee Road and Lynnvillie Road were the main and only roads south from Rockford until about one hundred years ago.

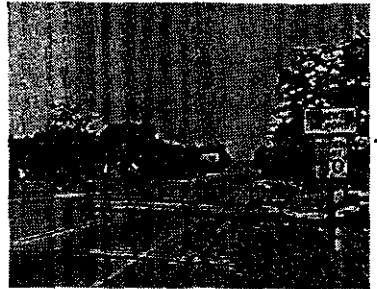
An eighteen foot wide concrete pavement was constructed from Rockford south to one and three-fourths miles north of New Milford in 1917 as State Aid Route 5, Section F, mainly because of the growing importance of Camp Grant. In 1919-1920 an eighteen foot wide concrete pavement was constructed from one and three-fourths miles north of New Milford through the community and to the Ogle County line as State Aid Route 5, Section J15d. The roadway was extended south from the county line to Rochelle in 1927 and the route became known as the Meridian Highway.



In 1926 the states adopted a U.S. system of highway numbering which was recommended by the American Association of State Highway Officials. The concrete paving between Winnebago-Ogle County line and Mendota was started by 1927 and completed in 1929. The present U.S. 51 designation of the highway is indicated on the 1931 state highway map, so the roadway has



been designated a U.S. highway since at least that time. The present day four lane construction was completed in 1952 as SBI 70, Section 105-R1 by Bushman Construction Company of Kansas City, Missouri. At that time the rather unusual, and considered somewhat hazardous, overpass and bridge construction over Kilbuck Creek was built to connect traffic to the Beltline Road circling the south edge of the Greater Rockford Airport.



The present bridge crossing Kishwaukee River at New Milford was started in 1932 and completed in 1933 by Shappert Engineering Company of Belvidere. The bridge is known as State of Illinois station 195 46.5.



Funds came from bond issue Rt. 70, Sec. 105-B and Federal Aid Project 142. When the new bridge was under construction one of the builders was Harold Heivilin. Mr. Heivilin stayed in the community, married Myrna Graham and they have maintained their home in New Milford for more than forty years. Their home site on Eleventh Street Road is part of the original 1841 government land purchase made by Jason Marsh.

Myrna Graham Heivilin is the granddaughter of Rolenzo B. and Sarah E. Hall Shumway. Shumway's daughter Nora married George Graham. George Graham's brother Frank married Mary Bauder who lived many years in the Victorian home just to the south of Heivilin's home on the present day Eleventh Street Road. Frank Bauder raised seed for the Shumway Seed Company which became a nationally recognized seed producing company in Rockford.



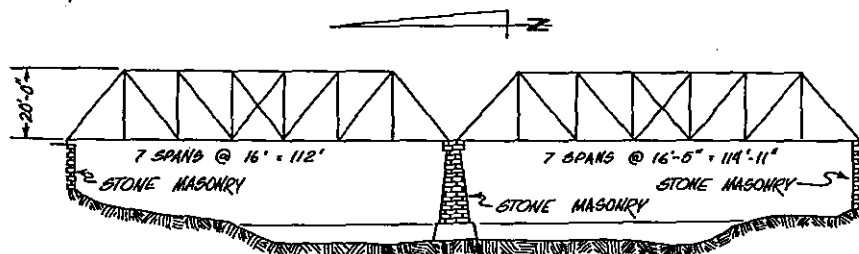
The Illinois Department of Transportation reported in March 1974 that the bridge in New Milford is in good condition and no improvement is planned in the near future for the forty year old structure. It is built with a high water elevation five and a half feet below pavement crown, which would be nineteen feet of flood water. The normal low water mark is two and a half feet of water in Kishwaukee River at the bridge site. So it is usually twenty-two feet from the bridge surface to the water.

The bridge road surface was improved in 1951 and again in 1971. There was a daily average of 10,000 vehicles passing through New Milford using the bridge in 1973. Two years later, in 1975, the average has increased somewhat.

When the present concrete bridge was built great quantities of fill were needed to elevate the roadway approaching the bridge. When fill was being taken from the area, and the huge piling holes were dug, it was believed that a tunnel of an underground railroad station, that was active in a limited way during the period 1840 to 1860, was uncovered near the bridge site. The tunnel was believed to have lead to an underground railroad station that was situated in the cellar of the barn of the New Milford wayside inn, commonly referred to as the Maxwell House. Also, at least two graves were uncovered at the river bank construction site. These skeletons, believed to have been those of a woman and child, were thought to have been remains of persons using the underground railroad or travelers on the Chicago-Galena stagecoach line that traversed through the community earlier. A skull was briefly displayed at the Carlson garage where it was called Cousin Hugo. Because of civic pressure the remains were removed to the Potter's Field at the Winnebago County Farm north of Rockford for a Christian burial.



*Steel Thru Truss Bridge*



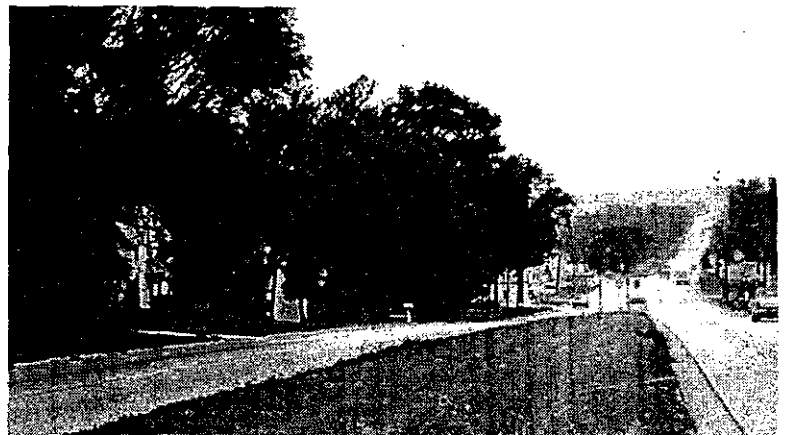
## EARLIER BRIDGES

The present concrete bridge replaced an all metal bridge in 1932. The steel thru truss bridge consisted of two sections each supported on stone masonry. Each section consisted of seven spans which were from sixteen to sixteen feet five inches long. The total length of the bridge was 227 feet. The bridge had a wood floor. That bridge was built by the Winnebago County Highway Department in 1913. It replaced the combination metal and wooden covered bridge. That bridge was one of the last covered bridges in northern Illinois.

The covered bridge was wrecked in 1911 by a very bad storm. Until it was replaced in 1913 traffic was routed to the bridge crossing the Kishwaukee River at what is known today as Mulford Road. More daring travelers and farmers frequently forded the river crossing at New Milford during this two year period rather than detour to the bridge several miles east. When the covered bridge came down in 1911 some of its supporting timbers were used in the construction of the barn on the Charles Merritt Baxter farm southeast of New Milford. This barn was disassembled in 1973 for building materials.

The story is recalled concerning the passing of a heavy load through the covered bridge by two farmers. The one walked ahead and bought a cigar in the general store. He then went in the bridge and stood in the center puffing on the cigar to make a signal light. The second farmer drove the team slowly down the New Milford hill that dark night. He guided his team so that the tongue of the wagon was aimed directly at the lighted cigar. They made a safe passage. These two farmers were John S. Watson and George Edson. The year was 1911.

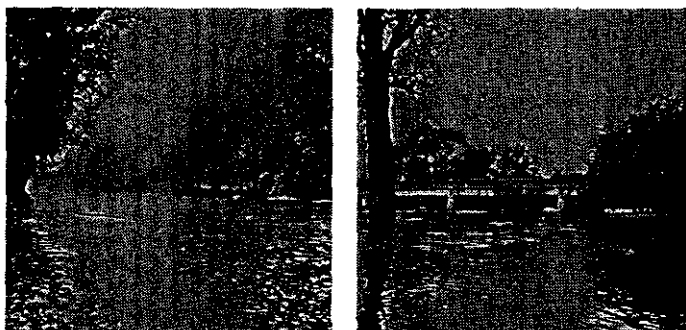
The crude wooden bridge, which the first covered bridge replaced, was the first bridge to cross the Kishwaukee River in the area. Although it is not documented, it is believed the first bridge was built about 1840. No doubt, an earlier bridge had been built near the site of Kishwaukee. The early bridge made it possible so the river no longer had to be forded. It was, of course, built at a much lower elevation than the present concrete bridge. It frequently flooded in high water periods. A farmer, anxious to cross the bridge at flood stage, was warned not to cross the bridge with his heavily loaded wagon. He did not heed the warnings, but rather he rushed his team and wagon down the New Milford hill at a hell bent clip attempting to rush across the bridge. The story is remembered he didn't make it. The



farmer, his team, the wagon and the bridge all went down stream!

Many times the river flooded extensively the lands south of the bridge. One major flood eighty-five years ago flooded to a high water mark of the present day South Bend Road. On 13 June 1890 a deluge of rain raised the Rock River a foot within a few minutes in the most terrible night Rockford had ever known. Another serious flood occurred on 13 June 1926 when 4.37 inches of rain fell within ninety minutes. In Rockford the damage exceeded one million dollars. On 18 July 1952 eleven inches of rain fell which created the worst flooding condition in the Rockford area's history. Damage exceeded one million dollars and two people drowned in the Rockford area. In the past twenty-five years, although the river annually overflows its banks, there has not been major flooding of the Kishwaukee River causing serious property damage, except for the flood in 1952.

Mrs. James S. Ritchie, Rockford, now ninety-six years old, recalls flooding of the New Milford hill during heavy rainfall occurring in the twenty-five year period from 1890 to 1915. Before the cement road was constructed in 1917 the extensive rains would make the roadway excessively hazardous with deep ruts. Those ruts would fill with rain runoff. The runoff flooding would extend from the top of the hill to the river.



## TELEPHONE SERVICE

In 1878 the first telephone in the area was installed in the depot of the railroad station. It was the only telephone in the community until 1903 when the first general telephone service was introduced to the New Milford settlement. Telephone service in Rockford was inaugurated twenty-three years earlier on 9 April 1880 when the population stood at 13,129 inhabitants.

Mr. Thaddeus W. Evans organized and constructed the first telephone company in the New Milford community. Mr. Evans was then thirty-two years old. The first telephone exchange operated in a leanto of the Tom Lawson dwelling. This dwelling is today the home of the David Breit family at the corner of Eleventh Street Road and New Milford School Road. Bessie Lawson operated the switchboard. In 1907 directors of the New Milford Telephone Company were Arthur Chase, Ned Cleveland and Herbert (Bert) Baxter.

The operation was taken over by Bessie Robinson who served as central telephone operator. She hand cranked signals to customers over party lines over a ten mile area. Bessie and her mother, Mrs. Hannah Jane Thompson Robinson, were in charge of the switchboard which was located in their home. George Robinson had died when Bessie was a small child. Mrs. Robinson and her daughter took turns watching the switchboard during the day. After ten P.M. the switchboard was officially closed, but they turned the buzzer signal up to ring loud enough to wake them in the night in case of emergency. The Rockford operator would be reached by long distance if anyone needed a doctor during those times when there was not a resident doctor in the community. During these party line days there were from eight to ten homes sharing the same line.

Bessie recalled in 1966, when she was celebrating her eightieth birthday, that, "we sometimes had to ask a long-winded talker to give up the line, but they never got mad. We made a lot of friends through our telephone service." Bessie

and her mother collected the bills and kept the books for the company in the office they had made from a small bedroom in their home. When Bessie married Earl McLarty in 1910 the Robinsons gave up the telephone company work. The Robinson home was that which is remembered, by many in the community today, as the Thad Evans house on the present day New Milford School Road opposite the school house.

The telephone exchange moved in 1920 to the New Milford hill house where it remained until 1955. When the telephone company moved to the hill house a new telephone company was formed. It was financed by each subscribing family contributing \$25.00. Operators at that location included Ila Main Johnson and Harriett Elwood Jensen.

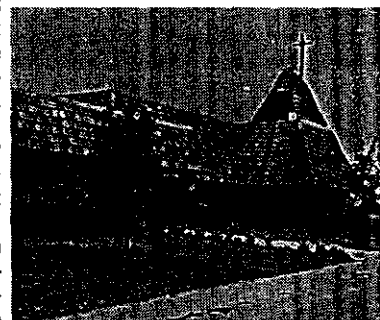
In more contemporary times, until 1955 when the telephone service became automatic with modern dial telephones and buried cables, the switchboard was capably handled by Lulu Woodman and her sister Zillah Beard. Their interest and concern will long be remembered by residents still living in the New Milford and surrounding farmland. They operated the office from the telephone house on the east side of the New Milford hill road today called Eleventh Street Road. In 1955 telephone service in New Milford changed from manual switchboard operation to automatic dialing.

In 1964, the telephone company, by then part of General Telephone Company, moved into a new building at the corner of Twentieth Street and Blackhawk Road. Further modernization in 1967 made direct distant dialing possible. For the past eight years New Milford residents have been able to dial places country-wide without contacting an operator.

Another utility, electricity, came to the farming area only rather recently. In 1952 the electric company completed its project to bring electricity to the area's farmers. Rockford's residents, who had been using gas lighting since 1857, first experienced electric service in April 1883. Electricity was brought to New Milford in 1926; most residents had electricity by 1930.

## THE CHURCH

New Milford United Methodist Church, presently located on Cindy Drive just south of Kishwaukee River and west of the U.S. 51 highway, has its history rooted deep in the community of New Milford. The present award winning worship center, described as contemporary architecture with an European community influence, was built in 1965. It was consecrated by Bishop Thomas M. Pryor on 22 August 1965. In that same year the congregation of 160 members sold its former old, traditional, country school house type church on New Milford Church Road. The old church, located just west of the community cemetery, was built in 1887. It had been the center of much of the religious and social life of the community for nearly eighty years. This old church is now owned by the New Milford First Baptist Church congregation.



The church's influence of and concern for the Methodist congregation in the community has long been a part of New Milford history. There had been several attempts to organize churches in the New Milford settlement. It is known that the Methodist Episcopal Church began as a Bible class which was formed in 1838. That was about four years after the first settlers established their farms along the Kishwaukee River. It was about two years after Winnebago County was formed. At that time there were only 1,086 inhabitants in the entire county. Less than two hundred people were then living in the Midway (Rockford) community located about six miles north of the New Milford settlement. The first Methodist sermon preached in Winnebago County was made by the Rev. Samuel

Pillsbury in June 1836, six months after the creation of the county. The first Methodist class organized in Midway was on 2 September 1836 in the house of Samuel Gregory. Court Street Methodist Church, Rockford's largest Methodist congregation, was formed on 1 January 1852.

The exact location of the first Methodist meeting place in New Milford is, of course, unknown. However it is believed the earliest Methodist Society met as a class in one of the dwellings of the community. Sometime after 1838 a Congregational Society was also formed in the New Milford settlement. In 1845 the Rev. J. Luccock was the minister of the Congregational Society. The two congregations, Methodist and Congregational, met in and shared the same stone meeting hall when it was built. This building was built of limestone; it served the multiple purpose of church, school and town hall. The town hall building was located just northeast of the present day New Milford First Baptist Church and situated on a triangular plot. Art Brown tore down the old stone hall in 1919.

Records indicate that the two early churches shared the same building. It seems that difficulties and disagreements in the church are not just contemporary problems, because at that early period of the church the two congregations were unable to agree on where the organ should be kept - in the balcony or in the chancel. That problem resulted in the one congregation moving to other quarters. Trustees of the New Milford Union Church Association, Horace C. Miller, John McFurline and Levi D. Horton, quit claimed the church property to Philip S. Marsh, Baltus J. Heagle and Edwin L. Rosecrance, trustees of

the Methodist Episcopal Society of New Milford on 24 April 1876 in consideration of \$1.00. The property consisted of one and three hundred eighty-four thousandths (1 and 384/1000) acres. For the real property the Methodist Society paid the First Congregational Society the sum of \$800.00. The Congregational Society trustees obligated themselves to expend the \$800.00 on the erection of a



church edifice in New Milford. This action took place at a meeting held 22 April 1876. The property deed was filed 11 May 1876 by Frederic H. Maxwell, Township Justice of the Peace; Mr. Maxwell was the first and long time Town Clerk of New Milford. The Congregationalist Society built a church in 1877. This church was built on the site of the present day New Milford school. The Congregationalist Society was later abandoned and the building was used up until 1914 as a school house.

It was in 1860 that the Methodist Society was formalized as a congregation by Quarterly Conference action. This organization was accomplished by the Rev. D. J. Holmes who became the group's first preacher established by Quarterly Conference action. By that time the community of New Milford was firmly established as a commercial center with many fine dwellings and thriving businesses to serve the residents and the farming people settled north and south of the Kishwaukee River.

The New Milford Circuit was organized as a pastoral charge at a conference held at New Milford 24 October 1860. That conference is recorded in a volume of minutes of Quarterly Conference meetings entitled "Stewards Record For New Milford Circuit", which is still kept as a treasured book by the present local minister, the Rev. Jeffrey Baer. The New Milford Circuit was formed by the Rock River Conference at its annual session in October 1860. The Rock River Conference was organized at Mount Morris on 26 August 1840 in a log house which belonged to the Rev. Thomas S. Hitt. The Rev. Hitt

founded the Methodist Church in Mount Morris in 1837 and he was its first local preacher. He urged starting the first Methodist Seminary in Mount Morris at that conference. The Mount Morris institution was established in 1839. Later the seminary moved to Evanston, Illinois. Horace Miller, New Milford area pioneer, was one of the organizers of the 1840 Rock River Conference. He gave several scholarships to the Mount



Morris academy. Bishop Waugh presided at the first conference session. Prior to the 24 November 1860 conference services in New Milford had been conducted by the preacher in charge of the Cherry Valley Circuit. The earliest settlement in Cherry Valley Township was made in July 1835 when James S. Gunsolus arrived to pioneer in the area. The community we know today as Cherry Valley was called Butler until at least 1850.

The first pastor of the New Milford Church, the Rev. D. J. Holmes, was a young man who the following year entered the traveling ministry in the Rock River Conference. He continued a faithful member of the conference until his death at Palatine, Illinois on 5 June 1904; The presiding elder in 1860 was Richard A. Blanchard. Other members of the conference were active church leaders and included M. J. Hill, a local preacher, M. R. Bigalow, William H. Saylor, Dr. William P. Jones and John N. Saylor. All these men served the church with interest and devotion for several years. Other servants of the Lord's work in the early New Milford church included Thorn Dubois, Battus J. Heagle, Mr. Sniders, Peter Andersen, George Stocking, A. G. Walker, John P. Avail, D. M. Letts, George W. Miller, W. H. Bigeton, Horace G. Miller, R. H. Bigalow and Marvin P. Hill. John N. Saylor was elected Recording Steward, an office which he held for fifty years. He was faithful in keeping the "Stewards Record For New Milford Circuit" from which some of these facts of early church history were researched:

The conference fixed the preacher's salary at \$450.00 of which a small amount was paid. A good Sabbath School was reported in operation. The year passed without anything of special note. At the end of the year the Rev. Holmes was succeeded by the Rev. E. C. Cochran who served the church for two years, the time limit for pastors at that time. During that time there were seventy members in the congregation. In 1863 the Rev. Cochran was succeeded by the Rev. C. S. McCreading, Jr., a thirty-nine year old single man who described himself as a very poor minister.

Charter members of the church included Mrs. Harriet Saylor, Dr. and Mrs. Alonzo James Edson and Mrs. Agnes Height. Kilbuck was also given as a preaching point on the circuit. Kilbuck, located about two and a half miles southwest along the banks of the Kilbuck Creek, was the site of a small community which included the site of the David S. Shumway sawmill built in 1837, the South Bend Flouring Mill and several dwellings. The first marriage recorded was that of Dr. James S. Rosecrance to Miss Fanny Rogers, both who remained worthy members of the church until removed by death. Each provided the means by which their work might be continued in the church and community after their death, including the Rosecrance Home For Children. The first death recorded was that of Mrs. A. J. (Mercy May) Edson in 1862; there was no other recorded death until 1868, that of Mrs. G. L. (Amanda) Horton. These events were recorded in the minutes of the Third Quarterly Conference held at New Milford 20 January 1868, when the Rev. M. H. Triggs was pastor.

Other early (1864-1873) ministers were James Bush, L. Anderson, M. H. Triggs, Leonard Holt, S. T. Show, N. Critchett and A. C. Schoonmaker. The 13 August 1864 Quarterly Conference minutes referred to the church as the Union Church New Milford, which indicated it was at that time that the Methodist and Congregationalist were meeting in the same fa-

cility. At the 23 December 1865 meeting the church seemed to be at an exceptionally low point. The Sabbath School had been discontinued and the financial status was extremely critical with great indebtedness. Although there always seemed to be a shortage of operating funds, this particular time must have been considered grave. The general condition of the charge was reported mildly as not very flattering. By 1868 the Sabbath School was prospering with over one hundred attending classes taught by eighteen teachers, there was a church library of two hundred and fifty volumes and there were four interesting Bible classes. The preacher at that inspirational period was the Rev. M. H. Triggs, a faithful pastor who was "always leaving his charges in better condition than he found them." This was a remarkable recovery from the three previous years. The church school has been active since that early time. A preaching place at Scott was also added. Scott, as a geographical reference, was a small settlement southwest of Kilbuck Creek approximately midway between the communities of New Milford and today's Davis Junction. Within those twenty-five years of early church history, the New Milford Methodist Episcopal Church seemed to be flourishing except for a very few low years. During the term of the Rev. S. T. Show in 1870, Mr. R. B. Shumway was elected Treasurer of the church. As the conditions at the church were good, the Rev. Show was requested to return for the third year. At the Quarterly Conference held 23 October 1869 a committee of P. W. Marsh, Battus J. Heagle and William Cushman were authorized to purchase a chandelier, side lamps and reflectors for the church. Willie Miller was requested to act as sexton. The secretary was requested to inform the trustees of the Congregational Society that the Methodist Society proposed to occupy the house as before, which indicates that the two churches continued to occupy the same building at that time. The final entry in the "Stewards Record For New Milford Circuit" was 25 April 1874, now more than one hundred years ago.

In the autumn of 1874 the Rev. John Adams became a very able and enthusiastic leader of the church for three years. Under his efficient leadership the society was built up spiritually and considerable material prosperity was realized. Good revivals were held and large numbers of persons were gathered into the church. The church property, which had been held by a union association, was purchased by the Methodist Episcopal Church. During that time Kilbuck was given up as a preaching place and Monroe Center was added. Also, evening services were added at Davis Junction by the Rev. Adams and kept alive all winter there. Mrs. Adams returned to New Milford in 1927 for a very successful church and community Home Coming event.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, which was formed some years before in New Milford, gave \$25.59 as benevolences in 1878, a considerable sum nearly one hundred years ago. Mrs. Mary Wilson was the society's leader for many years until she moved to Rockford in 1898. The society was one of the leading activities of the church, and it has continued to be so today under the contemporary title of United Methodist Women (UMW). The present UMW president is Mrs. Eldora Kewish Mumma. Eldora Mumma's family history is rooted in New Milford; her grandfather, W. D. Kewish, came from Ohio to settle in New Milford in 1850. He married Louisa G. Pease in 1865 and was the village blacksmith. Another organization, United Methodist Men, have been active in the church for more than ten years. They are particularly noted for their "in the park, no charge, pass-the-hat" breakfasts. The UMM president is Ronald I. Maxwell, a position he has held for many years.

By 1878 other preachers to serve the church were the Rev. O. C. Burch and William H. Height, whose service was divided between New Milford and Monroe Center. New Milford paid \$500.00 and Monroe Center paid \$300.00 of the preacher's annual salary. Names of faithful church workers during that period included D. S. Pardee, Jonathan and Mary File, Sidney and Frances File, DeWitt C. Miller, Willet Height, Hermon Height, Jonathan Eastman, Mrs. Clara F. Haegle, S. P. Nicols, Henry Eastman, John Pardee, H. Hotelling, Joshau File, Price Lewis, M. L. Dickerman, John P. and M. Jennie Vail (the minister George H. Wells commended, "Oh! How pleasant to see a whole family all devoutly serving the Lord."), C. W. John-

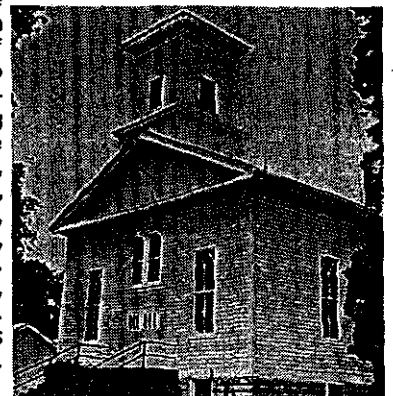
son, Benjamin and Sarah A. ("She was a peace maker!") Baldwin, G. W. Monroe, J. G. Woodman, Solomon Fisher, L. C. Runion, Jeremiah Davis, Frank W. Wilcox, Edward Witherstine, C. W. Hunt, P. G. Bartlett, Phebe A. Benthusen, H. Burgin, James H. Compton, P. B. Dickerman, Orson C. and Mary Fay, Susan Gibson, J. Gibson, Mrs. Elva Marsh, Lucy Miller, Clara Radcliff, Ama A. Southvick, Aruba A. and Phebe M. Work, J. L. McEvoy, Ezra Richards, Edwin L. Rosecrance, P. H. Tagart, Joel Whitecomb, P. G. Bauder, Frederick Bigalow, J. R. Gagart, Stephen Height ("one of the Lord's nobleman"), A. Wilcox and W. H. Gardner.

In 1879 Kilbuck was again taken up and Davis Junction continued as a preaching place. In 1880 Monroe Center was placed in another charge leaving New Milford and Davis Junction a separate charge. This relationship continued so until 1914 when each became an independent station on the circuit following a forty-six year joint charge. These two churches reunited as a joint charge in 1929 due to a shortage of funds in both churches and were served once again by one minister. The reunion continued until 1964 when, under the leadership of the Rev. Harry D. Miller, the New Milford church accepted financial responsibility and expressed the desire for a full time pastor. Now in 1975 the two churches are again reunited and have been a two point charge for a few years.

Pastors to follow were the Rev. George H. Wells (1880-82), J. M. Wheaton (1883-85), John Adams (1886-88/1894-97), who had served the church in the mid 1870's, and A. S. Maxham (1889-90). If historical records are not mistaken, the church building at Davis Junction was erected in 1883 on land donated by Jeremiah Davis during the Rev. Wells' administration. A few years later the Rev. Wheaton was authorized to employ the Rev. B. F. Cartright to assist in meetings at that church.

A servant of unusual faithfulness and devotion in the community was Mary Sylvester Rice Wheaton who died 27 July 1886 at New Milford at the time her husband James Monroe Wheaton was the pastor. She had come from the Northwest Church of Chicago with her husband. In New Milford she continued to labor, doing what she could until God said, "It is enough, come up higher." Her's was a life of self sacrifice and suffering, but few knew her royal worth. Patient, loving, tender, trusting, true, she tried in all things to do her Father's will. About an hour before her death she experienced great visions of heaven's wonder. She exclaimed, "Higher, higher! Climbing higher! They are pushing me on my way home. I'll soon be well. I'll soon be home!"

In 1889 there was a great revival with more than one hundred conversions being reported. A good proportion of those converts united with the church. Active people in the church at the turn of the century, in addition to those mentioned previously, included among others, H. S. Moore, George S. Butler, A. G. Dickerman, John Castle, I. N. Borden, H. E. Fester, A. G. Nash, H. Bushman, J. D. Foster, Arthur T. Chase, D. C. Pepper, Frank A. Baxter, H. V. Horton, Byron S. Beard, H. C. Hall, Thomas F. Larson and D. McMichael.



During the term of the Rev. William A. Cross from 1890 until 1894, the pastoral family was heavily supported by the congregation families, including the Lovejoy Hall family. Mrs. James S. Ritchie, now ninety-six years old, recalls that the Rev. Cross was frequently given eggs and vegetables from the Hall family supplies. Inez Hall, then a teen-ager, sang in the church choir with her sister Maud and the Rev. Cross' wife. Inez Hall Ritchie recalled in July 1975 that the church was an essential religious and social center of the community during her maturing years prior to the turn of the century. The new

church was nine years old when she moved to New Milford from the present day Baxter Road family farm.

In September 1910 stewards of the church included Fred Kinson, George Robinson, Martha James and Maggie Baxter. Hill Robinson, Martin Brown, Arthur Johnson and Burt Lace were trustees. In 1911 Mrs. L. E. Dennis and Emma Cooney were added as stewards.

Francis (Frank) A. Baxter and Helen Conklin Baxter became members of the church on 24 September 1882. They were received from probation by the Rev. George H. Wells. Helen Conklin Baxter died in 1913. Capitola Conklin, sister of Helen, was baptized 7 September 1890 and joined the church 2 August 1891 from probation when the Rev. William A. Cross was pastor. She joined the church with her sisters Martha Terressa, Cora, Kate Marian and Lulu Conklin. Capitola died 24 October 1935. Haskel V. and Celestia Horton joined the church 12 May 1882, the Rev. George H. Wells, officiating.

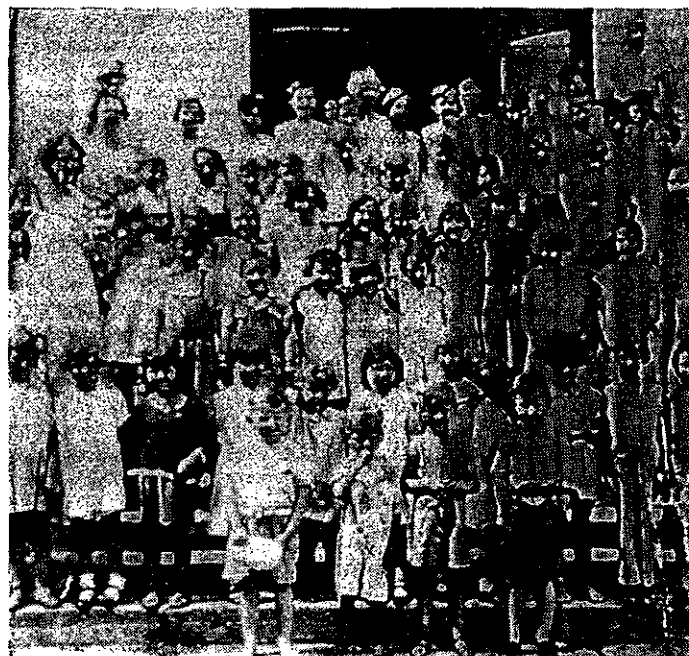


Two active church school classes in the church were those known as the Emma Corlett class and the Eva Kinson class. Emma and Eva were sisters well remembered in the community for their devoted service to their church. Their father was John Cooney. He was a harness maker in New Milford. Mr. Cooney was born in County Meath, Ireland in May 1827 and came to America in October 1849. He married Margaret Reynolds in August 1849. They had eight children, Sarah, Ann, John, Ella, William, Emma, Carrie and Eva. In 1877 son John was a harness maker in New Milford. His brother William was for many years a barber; his shop was at 313 Kishwaukee Street. Emma married Chester Corlett and her sister Eva married Fred Kinson. Emma taught ten to twelve boys, including James Blair, who sat on the back pew on the one side of the church. Eva taught the bigger class of girls who sat in the last pew on the opposite side of the church. Girls in Eva's class included, among other, I. and B. Cameron, Zillah Beard, Gladys Brown and Gladys Evans.

A representative list of members to join the church in the years from 1900 to 1935 follows. Some of these people continue today to be active members of the congregation. It should be understood that these names are only a small part of the congregation as it grew during those thirty-five years of the new century. Arranged in alphabetical order: Hazel Atchison (1908), Edward and Nancy Burdick (1901), Joseph and Phoebe Louisa Brundage and their three children, Joseph, Earl and Florence (1901), Maggie, Gladys (Mrs. Harry Graham) and Mary Baxter (1905), Mabel Baird (1908), Mattie (Mrs. Arthur Johnson) Baxter (1908), Mrs. William M. and son Evert Blough (1901), Mr. and Mrs. Frank (Lulu Conklin) Baxter (1918), James L. Blair (1925), Zillah Beard (1920), Cora Blair (1931), Corliss S. Beard (1931), Bessie Corlett (1901), Ivanetta and Beatrice Cameron (1915), Mrs. Sherman Corlett (1921), Harriet Miriam Elwood (1916), Clara Fitzgerald (1908), Ruby F. Funk (1908), Martha James (1901), Melvin Johnson (1932), Fred, Eva and son Kenneth Kinson (1908), Eldora Kewish (1925), Zada Kinson (1908), Bessie Lawson (1901), Esther and Martha Larson (1916), Lois Lillie (1927), Cascius Maxwell (1905), Jennie, Claude and Asa Pagles (1908), Arvene and Myrle Smith (1931), Fred J. White (1902), Lulu Woodman (1916), Gladys Weohler (1925) and Alta White (1925).

The church stables, which were located just east of the church and arranged in a long row situated between what is referred to today as the New Milford Church Road and the New Milford School Road, were used not only to house the parishioner's horses. In the oat boxes some of the men kept their whiskey flasks buried in the feed for a nip before the ride home on bitter cold or rainy Sundays!

On 10 September 1927 New Milford Church held a Home Coming event at which more than two hundred and fifty persons attended. The community was bright with flags and other decorations, including a huge banner reading "HOME" which was strung across one of the roads. A dinner, business session, election of officers and program were held at the church. Mayor Burt M. Allen of Rockford talked of his boyhood days and the history of New Milford. Another who talked was Mrs. John Adams, whose husband John was pastor at the church four different times, the first time in 1874. Oldest guest at the Home Coming event was Gilbert Thompson of Guilford, ninety years old. The youngest was Ellen Marie, one year old, daughter of Wayness and Dorothy Pagles. Guests came from Oklahoma, Ohio and other states, as well as from Davis Junction and other near-by communities. The event was one of the most successful held in memory in New Milford.



In 1928 the Methodist Episcopal church was in a prosperous condition. The Rev. Newton E. Barrett was the pastor. Much of the social life of the community centered there at that time much as it had for more than fifty years. When the Rev. Wilbur Hopkins was minister the bell of the old church was purchased in 1930 by a committee consisting of Lydia Prentice, Zillah Beard and Eva Kinson. There was some problem regarding the size that the new bell should be and how much should be invested in this important addition to the church. The problem was solved by the purchase of the bell that still hangs in the belfry of the present day New Milford First Baptist Church. The bell was purchased in Elgin, Illinois, and cost \$80.00.



During the leadership of the Rev. William Johnson (1953-1957) the church made some inspirational efforts to increase its membership and considered a new worship center. The Rev. Johnson's parents, the Earl Johnsons, lived in New Milford for several years. They were well liked in the community where they operated the grocery store from 1955 until 1961. They served the church with interest and the community with spirit. New Milford was unsuccessful in stimulating interest in building a new church. However, under the leadership of the Rev. Johnson the Davis Junction church built it \$17,000.00 worship center, which was opened on Easter Sunday 1955. That building replaced the church lost by a disastrous fire 10 January 1953. A good feeling of working together by the Davis Junction community developed in the completion of a beautiful worship center furnished with fine memorial appointments.

Because of the inspiration of the Rev. Johnson, and under the continued interest of the Rev. Bernard Wahl, Ira E. Morgan and Harry D. Miller and certain congregation members, the New Milford church finally successfully voted fifty-four to four, on 24 November 1963, in favor of relocating the church and building a new worship center.

On 1 July 1962 the church once again separated from the Davis Junction congregation. The Rev. Miller became the first full time non-student pastor of the New Milford charge. In December 1963 the church purchased a five acre plot just south of South Bend Road from the Wilbur Strohmman farm for \$10,000.00. The construction of Cindy Drive, on which the church is located, opened a sub-division in which there are now more than thirty homes. Ground breaking for the new \$86,000.00 sanctuary and fellowship hall was made on 5 October 1964. The cornerstone laying ceremony and first Sunday in the new facilities was held 6 June 1965. The church was furnished with \$9,000.00 of chancel furniture, equipment and appointments, much of which was given as memorials. The new \$22,000.00 parsonage was completed 25 September 1965, with the Rev. Harry Miller, his wife Iris and daughter Christa the first occupants. The volunteer work on the new worship center was inspirational. It brought great interest, pride and closeness in the congregation. By 1974 the congregation had paid off \$65,000.00 of its indebtedness. But still the church owes its conference more than \$20,000.00 in low interest loans and about \$5,000.00 on a local bank loan. Improvements to the parsonage basement were made in the spring of 1975 to provide a church school class room, pastor's study and conference area.

The new building interest and closeness in the congregation was renewed in 1973 when the congregation, under the leadership of the Rev. Jeffrey D. Baer, was determined to purchase a bell for its beautiful bell tower. Under great emotional interest and time consuming search, the church purchased its bell from Henry Diepenbrock, seventy-four years old, a retired Freeport contractor and bell collector. The bell is a 1895 bronze and nickel bell from a church in Woodbine. The much treasured bell, purchased for \$800.00 and considered only a fraction of its true value, was dedicated in candlelight services on Christmas Eve 1973.

The church is of God, but composed of women and men working with Him for His divine purposes. Today the New Milford United Methodist Church, with its 220 members representing 120 families, carries on this responsibility in the New Milford community looking to the future in remembrance of its past heritage. The church is open to all and frequently welcomes new families to the congregation. Of course, with the quick traveling time to Rockford, some families in the New Milford community worship today at the many churches there. The church is the servant of the community, its facilities are available to any individual or group in need of them. It was in consideration of that community responsibility that the Methodist congregation was encouraged to build its modern facilities in 1965. New Milford United Methodist Church is joined in that responsibility to the New Milford community by the Southern Conference New Milford First Baptist Church, New Milford Church Road, and the newly organized independent Victory Baptist Church, Rydberg Road.

## ROLL CALL OF PASTORS (Preachers, Ministers) OF NEW MILFORD CHURCH

1860	D. J. Holmes
1861-62	E. C. Cochran
1863	C. S. McCreading Jr.
1864	James Bush
1865-66	L. Anderson
1867-69	M. H. Triggs
1869	Leonard Holt
1870	S. T. Show
1871	N. Critchett
1872-74	A. C. Schoonmaker
1874-77	John Adams
1877	O. E. Burch
1878-80	William H. Height
1880-83	George H. Wells
1883-86	James Monroe Wheaton
1886-88	John Adams
1889-90	A. S. Maxham
1890-94	William A. Cross
1894-95	John Adams
1896	M. E. Froor
1896-97	John Adams
1898-1900	A. H. Kistler
1901-03	J. M. Cormack
1903-05	S. W. Lauck
1905-06	Charles M. McCammon
1907-10	H. J. Collins
1910-13	Louis E. Dennis
1914-15	Aaron W. Haines
1916-17	Edw. S. Nicholas
1918-24	Earnest O. Storer
1925-26	R. N. Joselyn
1927-28	Newton E. Barrett
1929-32	Wilbur J. Hopkins
1932-33	H. F. Tormohlen
1933-36	Franklin M. Zentz
1936-37	L. Ardell Shindledecker
1937-39	Paul Angell
1939-41	Frank Brown
1941-43	William L. Bird
1944-45	Ralph L. Ruhlen
1945-46	Stanley Andrews
1946-47	William B. Farris
1947-49	Maurice Frevert
1949	Robert N. Wells
1950	Milton Bayly
1950-53	Robert F. Wigington
1953-57	William G. Johnson
1957-59	Bernard E. Wahl
1959-60	Ira E. Morgan
1961-65	Harry D. Miller
1966-69	Harold Mitchell
1970-75	Jeffrey D. Baer

## THE CEMETERY

The New Milford Cemetery consists of three and one half acres, a rectangular plot 466.62 feet wide and 326.04 feet deep. It is mostly a hilly area consisting of many old trees situated in Section 24 just off the present day New Milford School Road at the east edge of the community. Except for the high highway hill, the cemetery is located at the highest point in the community. It overlooks the Kishwaukee River. The cemetery has an interesting history going back to the early settlement days of the community.

The earliest identifiable marker in the cemetery is that of Rosannah Shumway who died 3 September 1839. Her death occurred about four years after the earliest settlers arrived in the area. A number of other graves are marked for deaths that



occurred in the early and mid 1840's. The cemetery dates from that historic period. Although correspondence from the Illinois State Library, Springfield, indicates that according to an inventory made a few years ago one burial went back as far as 1834, that grave marker is not identifiable. Nor is it recorded in the current inventory entitled "Vol. I, Winnebago County, Illinois, Cemetery Inscriptions."

On 16 February 1857 the New Milford Cemetery Association was incorporated by an act of the state. The incorporation is recorded in the "Private Laws Of The State Of Illinois" which were passed at the Twentieth General Assembly which was begun and held at Springfield 5 January 1857. Association officials were William R. Wheeler, Horace G. Miller, William C. Grant, Frederic H. Maxwell, George W. Miller and Abel Beard. The incorporation act provided that the cemetery would not be larger than five acres and the lay out of lots would be suitable size for family burial apartments.

The earliest record of the New Milford Cemetery Association was recorded at the meeting held 5 August 1871 at the town hall. Trustees in 1871 were DeWitt C. Miller, Horace G. Miller, E. H. Haight, J. E. Rosecrance and C. B. Johnson, president. DeWitt C. Miller presented a copy of the minutes of the 8 May 1858 association meeting. The trustees in 1858 were Calvin Graves, president, Frederic H. Maxwell, secretary, George W. Miller, DeWitt C. Miller, Horace G. Miller and William R. Wheeler. At the 1858 meeting, held at the stone school house, the trustees resolved that the sexton be allowed the sum of \$2.00 for digging graves and attending services. They further resolved that the price of lots shall not be less than \$1.00 nor more than \$6.00. A committee of G. W. Miller, F. H. Maxwell and W. R. Wheeler were appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws. At the 1871 meeting a \$1.00 assessment on each lot claimed was resolved. It was reported that all minutes of earlier meetings had been lost or mislaid. It was further reported that George W. Miller was a long ago elected secretary, that he had charge of the books and papers belonging to the association and that they could not be found, except for the record of the 8 May 1858 meeting.

At the biannual meeting held 5 April 1875 at the town hall a similar loss of records was reported, except Frederic H. Maxwell, secretary, used the loss date from 15 July 1871. Trustees in 1875 were H. G. Miller, W. H. Gardner, J. E. Rosecrance, E. H. Haight and John Beale. At the 1875 meeting discussion was held on repair of the cemetery fence that was built by David Millard in 1861. To pay for that fence the lot owners were assessed \$5.00. In 1875 most lots were appraised at \$6.00 or \$7.00.

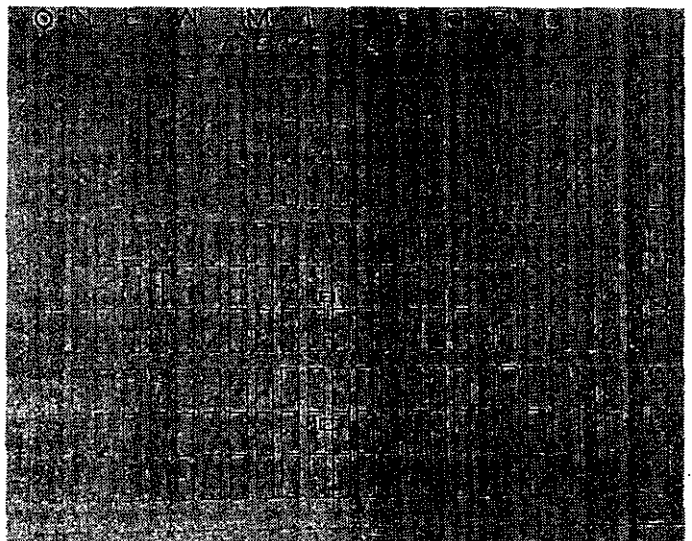
The by-laws of the association were established at its biannual meeting held at the town hall on 2 April 1877. Each person that owned one or more lots was a member of the association. Only they were entitled to a vote. They elected a five member trustee board. The board selected their president, secretary, treasurer and sexton. The sexton dug all graves, fee set at \$2.00 to \$4.00. He supervised the grounds. 1877 trustees were John Beale, J. E. Rosecrance, E. H. Haight, W. H. Gardner and H. G. Miller.

At the 9 May 1891 meeting the association agreed to purchase a half acre from Frank A. Baxter for cemetery expansion. Payment to be \$20.00. Baxter was given a lot of his choice for burial purpose on the new tract. This new expansion added thirty-six lots across the entire east end of the earlier established cemetery. Four lots in the southeast corner were set aside on 14 May 1891 as a Potter's Field. The board of trustees held a meeting on 1 April 1893 because of the death of F. H. Maxwell. They resolved that that charter member's death was deeply felt by all.

The association met 13 October 1894 to discuss the survey of the new addition to the cemetery and plotting it into lots. Also, the surveying, staking out and plotting of the old part of the cemetery grounds were discussed. Further, they discussed the best method of collection \$1.00 assessments made on the 1 April 1893 assessments which still had not been received. Trustees in 1894 were C. W. Johnson, J. L. McEvoy, J. E. Rosecrance, R. B. Shumway and C. B. Johnson. A

meeting was held in the hall over the village store on 2 June 1895. Nothing of significance was discussed at that meeting.

The cemetery, including the original 1839 old part and the 1891 addition, was surveyed, staked out and plotted on 18 April 1896 by E. Balwin, county surveyor. At that time James E. Rosecrance was president and S. E. Haight was secretary of the trustee board. Both of those men were also active in the New Milford Methodist Episcopal Church according to the "Stewards Record For New Milford Circuit." The cemetery consists of two hundred and twenty-five lots, each lot providing burial spaces for a least six persons. Many lots consist of seven grave spaces. So when the cemetery was surveyed in 1896 it provided for at least 1,350 burial spaces. By 1896, of course, there had already been at least two hundred burials in the cemetery, including many in unmarked graves. Among early burials identifiable today are those of Jane Fountain, Ann Augusta Wheeler, Rosetta Shumway and Azuba Gravin. The cemetery, which is believed to have been part of the original Jason Marsh property and given to the community by the Marsh family, is divided into three blocks of seventy-five lots each. These three blocks are each separated by a roadway. In addition, there is a roadway around the entire boundary of the cemetery.



In the late 1890's and early 1900's lot owners were assessed \$1.00 each every few years for care. In the early 1900's care of the cemetery consisted of burning dead grass each spring and mowing twice during the summer. Problem brush, such as sumac and hazel brush, had to be frequently grubbed through the years.

There have been at least seven hundred and fifty persons buried in the cemetery, many in unmarked graves. There has been some extensive vandalism, particularly in recent years. However, considering the age of many markers and the effect of weather conditions, the cemetery markers are generally in good condition. For anyone interested in visiting cemeteries a tour of the New Milford Cemetery is a rewarding experience



because it is historical, interesting and well maintained. There are more than six hundred spaces remaining for burial, an indication of the foresight of earlier cemetery planning, including more than three hundred in Block A, more than one hundred and twenty-five in Block B and more than one hundred and seventy-five in Block C. However, there are no longer any lots available for purchase. The newest improvement to the cemetery are the impressive brick and wood entrance side posts, gate and sign. This construction was

made by the New Milford Lions Club. The service club was founded in the early winter of 1974 with John K. Baxter, president.

In 1929 the steel post and barb wire fence was erected to replace the 1861 fence. The road was repaired that year. A special \$5.00 assessment per lot was levied in 1931 to pay for that work. The association bought the telephone house on New Milford hill, known today as 6354 Eleventh Street Road, following its 3 March 1943 meeting. They paid \$2,500.00 cash. The house was sold on contract 16 October 1961 for \$7,500.00. Unpaid payments were settled in May 1975 when the Ray Jollys sold their home to the Gaylord Winterbergs, present owners. The contract income from that property provided perpetual care expenses for the cemetery for many years.



The board of trustees secured an Illinois state license to operate the cemetery in 1949. The license was demanded by new state laws relative to cemeteries. Discussion on license requirements had been held at the trustee meetings on 29 March 1948 and 30 November 1948.

The community of New Milford has its cemetery to thank for the continued existence of the village. Many people, still living in the community today, recall that, when World War I broke out and Camp Grant sprang up on the farm land between Rockford and New Milford, the military reservation threatened to overrun the community. Fortunately, the federal government was unable to claim the cemetery. As a result the camp grew around the community of New Milford. The rifle range of the camp was situated just south of the cemetery on both sides of the Kishwaukee River. Often the pastors of the church had to encourage officials of the rifle range to interrupt target practice so that funeral services could be held reverently and safely in the cemetery.

Among the more unusual markers in the cemetery is that of Oscar Rogers who died a prisoner-of-war on 26 April 1864 at Andersonville, Georgia. The impressive marker, located near the Rosecrance family marker (Mrs. Fannie Rosecrance was a Rogers), indicates the grave of the body which was moved to New Milford from the Andersonville Prison where the soldier of Company A, Twelfth Illinois Cavalry died of starvation during the Civil War at the age of thirty years old. Another unusual marker is that of A. Jasper Colwell, who drowned in Lake Michigan in 1860. This marker is also that for Alice A. Beard Colwell, who died in 1877, and Harrieta A. Cowell, whose death occurred in 1858. An old story is told that suggests that A. Jasper Colwell was buried face down. When he fell from a boat and was drowned he was found in the water face down. The family marker is in the shape of a tree stump. Special note can be taken of the Daniel Cummings family marker, which is shaped like a stack of logs with letters shaped like twigs.

Other impressive markers are those of the Gunsolus and Horton families. These markers are the tallest obelisks in the cemetery. The Eastman family marker is the largest pillar and column marker. The Frederick Beard family marker is the largest block marker in the cemetery.

The cemetery is the resting place for members of many early settlers and their descendants. Among the many family names in the cemetery one can observe markers recognized as representative of these settlers. Special note is made of these family names: Archer, Armstrong, Bauder, Baxter, Beard,

Bordwell, Cameron, Conklin, Cooney, Corlett, Cummings, Eastman, Edson, Evans, Fannon, Fountain, Freeman, Graham, Gunsolus, Haight, Haley, Hall, Horton, Hotteling, James, Kewish, Kinson, Lace, Lewis, Main, Maxwell, McEvoy, Miller, Pell, Price, Rice, Rose, Rosecrance, Saylor, Seek, Shumway, Skinner, Thompson, Ward, Watson, Weeks, Wheeler and Wilmarth. There are markers indicating burials for most of these families at least one hundred years ago.

Today, one hundred years later, there is an average of ten burials in the cemetery each year. Recent year burials were: 1969 - seven, 1970 - ten, 1971 - thirteen, 1972 - nine, 1973 - fifteen, 1974 - ten and 1975 - four.

Among the foreign born persons buried in the cemetery in recent times are Vasili Ilyick Komarewsky (1895-1937), born in Moscow, Russia. Earlier burials were for Eliza Lawson, 1809, died 19 November 1891, and Henry Lawson, 1805, died 2 February 1874. These two stones are both marked "Born In Scotland." An unidentified grave is for a World War II German prisoner-of-war who died at Camp Grant. That prisoner-of-war was buried at the west end of Block C in an unmarked grave just south of the George W. Baxter family marker. There are a number of military people buried in the cemetery. Note is made of the grave of Alton Gunsolus (1857-1877) who was shot in battle at Clearwater, Idaho with the Twenty-First Infantry on 11 July 1877. A constantly decorated grave is that of Earmon R. Derrington (1948-1969), who died a corporal in Vietnam. All the military graves are appropriately decorated with flags on Memorial Day.

Earliest identifiable births recorded on family markers are those of Allen Miller, born 1789 - died 1868, age seventy-nine years, and his wife Hannah Miller, born 1789 - died 1877, aged eighty-nine years. The person to live the longest that is buried in the cemetery appears to be Elizabeth Miner Turney. Born in 1870, she died at the age of one hundred and four years old in 1974. Her grave is marked with a simple marker in Block B.

The New Milford Cemetery Association, which conducts the official business of the cemetery, consists today of these members: Stanley Pagles, president, John Mumma, secretary, John (Jack) Evans, treasurer, Asa Pagles and Ronald Maxwell. For about fifty years the business of the cemetery was conducted by Thaddeus (Thad) W. Evans, a long time resident of New Milford, who died on 28 December 1966 at the age of ninety-four years old. It was from his records that some of this history of the cemetery was researched.

A study of the cemetery was made in 1974. The researchers, including Alice Williams, New Milford School teacher, attempted to examine certain hypotheses. The hypothesis of women living longer than men was not proved to be true in the examination. Of the men buried in the cemetery, 49% of the population lived to be 71 years old or older. Of the women, only 43% of the population lived to be 71 years old or older. Other hypotheses conducted by the researchers were not of significant importance.

Persons interested in the names of some of the old families buried at the cemetery might find information in the book, "Vol. I, Winnebago County, Illinois, Cemetery Inscriptions" compiled by Hazel M. Hyde and Taylor Decker, published by Heritage House. This book is available at the Rockford Public Library, Local History and Genealogical Records room.

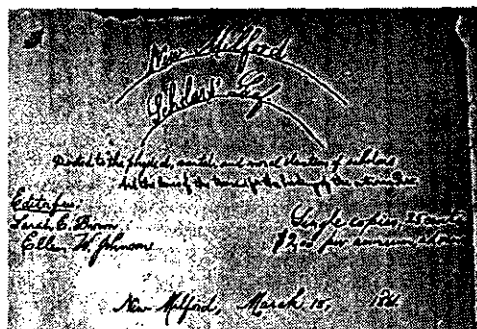
## THE SCHOOL

The first public school in New Milford opened for classes about 1850 in a stone building that also doubled as a church and town hall. The square structure stood for years on a lot next to the former New Milford Methodist Episcopal Church on what is now New Milford Church Road. The church is now identified as the New Milford First Baptist Church. That stone building was used up until at least 1910 as the community town hall. The early teachers included Ziphy Vandercook, Halsey Clark and Miss Weed.

School records indicate that there were ten small school districts in operation in New Milford Township by 1856. The

stone school in New Milford, called Common Elementary District No. 109, was operated by directors C. B. Johnson, Fred-eric H. Maxwell and Mr. Irvine.

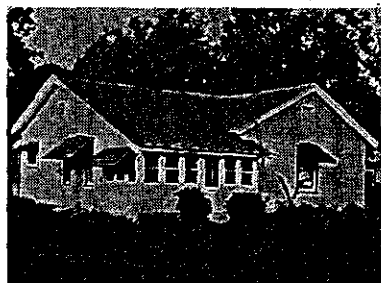
In 1861 Sarah E. Brown, daughter of Samuel and Angelina Hill Brown, was an editor of the "New Milford Scholars Leaf." Her co-editoress was Ellen W. Johnson. The handwritten school newspaper, consisting of several pages, sold for 25¢ single copies, \$2.00 annually in advance. The paper was devoted to "the physical, mental and moral elevation of scholars, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations", an indication of the paper's name origin, the concern for the spiritual needs and the heartaches over the secessions and impending Civil War. Sarah E. Brown, then thirteen years old, became the great grandmother of Mrs. Ellen McNeil McHugh, Rockford. Another descendant of Sarah Brown, Mrs. Lucille Potter Holliston, Mendota, preserved the handwritten copy of "New Milford Scholars Leaf". Mrs. Holliston's mother Mrs. Alice Jones Potter, was a sister of Ellen Jones Weld.



The 15 March 1861 issue of the "New Milford Scholars Leaf" contained mostly philosophy, but some insight in the life of the New Milford community was vividly preserved in the document. The editors wrote, "... Speaking of exertions reminds me how necessary to success in anything we undertake it is that we go to work with spirit and determination. Our winter school is drawing to a close and those of us who have worked and endeavored to perform our duties that have been appointed us properly and to the best of our ability will feel as if the time spent here has not been in vain. ... a change has taken place in the affairs of this nation, as are going on in nature. Mr. Lincoln is a last established live and safe at the head of our government and it is hoped he will equal to the great responsibility involving upon him. Affairs at home are progressing in a very quiet safer manner, but I expect we will put on airs when the railroad gets here ... "

Billy wrote in the same issue, "Oh! How we boys hail winter and think of the skatings, snowballings and sleighings down hill that we shall have, but that is not all winter is good for, in the winter we boys have a chance to go to school and learn, but in the summer we have to stay at home and work. I hope I have made good use of my time in school this winter. I meant to any way. I have had a good teacher, and if I had not learned as much as I ought, it is my own fault."

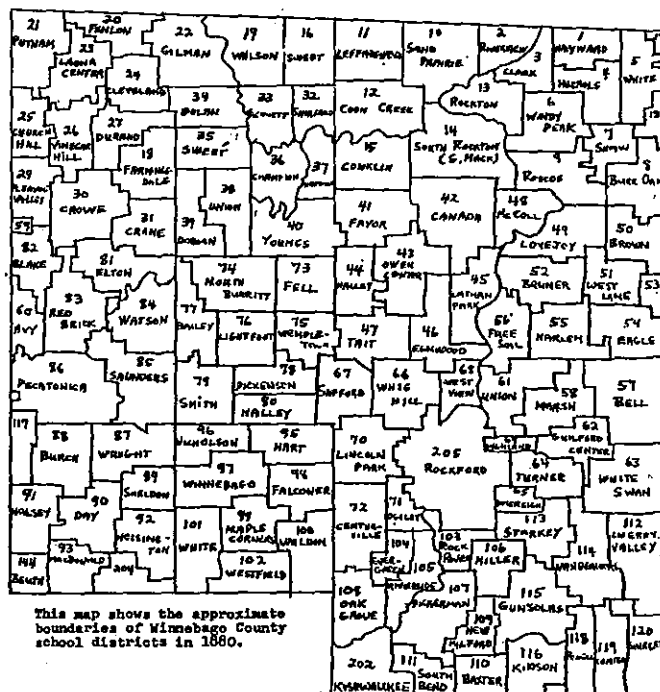
By 1871 the schools in New Milford Township had been consolidated to nine school districts and the New Milford School was in District No. 7. Nearby schools were Kinson School (District No. 8), Baxter School (District No. 10), South Bend School (District No. 4), Kishwaukee School (District No. 3) and Dickerman School (District No. 1). In 1877 the New Milford School was operated by George C. Sanborn and his wife. Mr. Sanborn, a Republican, came to Winnebago County in 1863. He married Cora E. Allen of Shabbona Grove on 28 March 1876. In 1877 he was twenty-four years old, Cora was twenty years old. The district later moved classes successively



into a frame building and the remodeled Congregational Church. The frame building, located just east of the James Fountain farm, was the site of the school in 1871. Today that location is the residence of the Roger DeGarmos. For many years, until 1975, that dwelling was the residence of the Bergie Swensons on New Milford School Road.

The remodeled Congregational Church, which was located on the site of the present school, was wood painted white with a belfry. In 1914 the building was cut in half, one half moved on the present day New Milford School Road site of the home of the John Evans family. When the half was moved it was remodeled as a dwelling for Joe Thompson, brother of Gilbert Thompson. That dwelling burned down. The back half of the old school became the home that Alice Roser raised her family in on the New Milford hill site. It was later razed to make way for her present home.

The residents of the New Milford District joined with the citizens from Dickerman Common Elementary District No. 107 (to the west) and Baxter Common Elementary District No. 110 (to the south) to approve a referendum in April 1914 creating New Milford Consolidated District No. 123. The election, which proceeded the third successful consolidation in Winnebago County, was followed within a month by a successful \$7,500.00 bond issue for construction of a new building.



A two story brick veneer school, thirty-five feet by fifty feet containing four rooms, was subsequently erected on the site of the old school building. It was built under the supervision of school directors W. H. Robinson, T. W. Evans and Sherman Corlett in 1914. Harry Graham helped dig the basement. He hauled all the lumber and bricks for the building with a team of horses and wagon. Harry Graham was the son of Hugh Graham who immigrated from Ireland. Hugh Graham worked in New York state to make money to travel west where he settled near the Kishwaukee River. Harry Graham, who was married to Gladys V. Baxter, died in 1973 after living for more than eighty-five years in New Milford. He was considered to be one of the oldest and most active residents of the community. Mr. Graham said he could remember when there were only twenty dwellings in the New Milford community. His wife Gladys, born in 1890, died in 1970.

The new brick school building was opened 28 October 1914. Enrollment included sixteen high school and fifty elementary pupils under a faculty of three, including Reed Williams and Mrs. Alma Norton. By 1917 the enrollment was seventy-seven and the faculty consisted of five teachers. A serious series of financial problems developed in 1919 and plagued the school district for thirty years.

First, in 1919, action was taken by the federal government in acquisition of the Camp Grant area as a federal reservation



that drastically cut New Milford's tax revenue by shearing 23% of the district's assessed valuation. In 1928 it was not only decreed that the acquisition land was detached from the district, but simply declared non-revenue producing property. This forced the district to educate all children living in the Camp Grant reservation despite the fact that the area was contributing no revenue.

Second, probably the most exciting day in New Milford history was 21 January 1936 when the school burned to the ground in a disastrous fire. Firemen estimated that if two hundred gallons of water had been available when they arrived the fire could have been extinguished without difficulty. Nearly one hundred pupils dashed again and again into the smoke and flame filled school in an effort to save books and equipment. Examinations were being held the day of the fire and some of the students watched the fire with tears in their eyes because they were unable to finish the tests and much of their work had been destroyed. This disastrous fire created great educational hardship and serious financial problems.

When the school burned classes were held at Camp Grant until the new school was ready to be occupied. The new school, constructed on the same site and reopened in 1937, was financed by \$23,000.00 in federal WPA funds and \$19,000.00 local funds, including a \$10,000.00 insurance settlement. The school then included a three year high school with ninety students and two buses. Students came from as far away as Rockford's southeast end because of the preference for a smaller quality high school. The new building consisted of six classrooms and a gymnasium.

The third problem, in 1939, was considerably more involved and is only briefly detailed here. Principal of the school, Luther Hester, resigned, the teachers went without salary for a year, the school directors resigned, there was a near doubling of the tax anticipation warrants beyond the legal limit for its bonded indebtedness, there was a taxpayer's suit and some other problems to solve.

Somehow, in the years to follow, the school district solved its problems and the school, not only survived, but made considerable progress. Today it is one of



the leading schools of the county. It includes Sky View School on Rotary Road to which Kinson School was consolidated in 1967.

New Milford and Sky View Schools became a part of the Rockford District No. 205 on 1 July 1969. Students are bussed all over the district. In 1974 there were 545 students enrolled in the New Milford School. These children came from 337 families. The 1975 enrollment was 400 students taught by a faculty of twenty teachers. Long time teachers at the school

include Mrs. John Evans and Mrs. Darlene Smith. In addition to those families that live in the New Milford community, many families that live in Morningside Heights, a former section of Camp Grant, have children attending New Milford School. The Sky View School, built in 1966, serves residents of Morristown, the rural area southeast of New Milford and the subdivisions of Kirkwood Heights and Sierra Heights, north of New Milford. Sky View School's enrollment in 1975 was 270 students, representing 187 families. The school is staffed by Stan Filips, principal, twelve teachers and eight special educational personnel.

## KINSON SCHOOL

School District Township No. 8, the third oldest district in Winnebago County, started its history in 1855. The first director, William H. Saylor, was elected 10 September 1855. But it was about six years before L. S. Sverrey started classes in 1861 in a building near the corner of the roads identified today as Rotary and Harrisville Roads. L. S. Sverrey was paid \$64.00 for the December 1861-March 1862 term and it is believed she was the district's first full time paid teacher. In 1863 there were sixty students and a thick willow hedge hid the school house from the dust of passing horses and buggies. At that time Lucilla Follett was the teacher.

Sarah L. Gunsolus, mother of the late Illinois state Senator Hunter, was the teacher for several terms. She taught during May-August 1864, December 1864-March 1865 and May-August 1865. Sarah Gunsolus was paid \$150.00 for these three terms. She was the daughter of Sophia Babcock and James S. Gunsolus. He was the first settler in Cherry Valley Township in 1835. He served all through the Black Hawk War. Sarah L. Gunsolus had six brothers and two sisters. In 1850 the community we refer to today as Cherry Valley was called Butler.

A meeting was held on 16 October 1865 which was called to order by Daniel Kinson who was appointed president of the district. A. L. Baxter was secretary and Herman Jamon and H. B. Cole were judges. At that meeting it was moved that the directors build a school house on the site of the old building where the school had been established and was active at least as early as 1861. The motion lost by a majority of fourteen votes. This was the first recorded meeting of the directors in their School District Record. The directors then voted that a new school house be built on Lot 8, the SE corner of the W½ of the SW¼ of Section 29. That site is the location of the present day school house building site at the northwest corner of today's Harrisville and Baxter Roads. The motion carried by a majority of fourteen votes. It was moved that a tax of 3% on the taxable property of the district be levied for the new school house. The directors further moved to borrow money to construct the building.



On 24 March 1866 Levi D. Horton was paid \$25.75 for the school house lot and 90¢ for recording the deed for the site. It is believed that Jacob Eastman and Daniel Kinson were paid the same amounts. It is generally believed the school was named after Daniel Kinson, president of the district in 1865, and an active district board member and community leader for many years. He homesteaded in the area in 1848. Daniel Kinson, born 21 August 1827, the son of John and Melinda Lamphere Kinson of Vermont, farmed 160 acres on the



present day Baxter Road. John and Melinda Kinson's other children were Lewis and Cynthia Sophia. Daniel Kinson married Joanna Baxter, daughter of John and Maria Horton Baxter, on 23 May 1855. He died 28 December 1891.

On 10 July 1866 the directors paid Stephen Suman \$742.25 per the district contract. \$80.20 was paid to George Mills for plastering and \$25.00 was paid to Solomon Wheeler for lumber for privies. Within a few months the district had spent \$1,249.65 for the new building, including \$12.00 to build the belfry. Clara Horton was the teacher for the 2 August-10 October 1866 term and was paid \$33.00. It is believed she was the first teacher in the new school house. On 1 March 1867 the district clerk received \$647.97 from collector Peter Harvn which gave the clerk a balance of \$782.98 to pay the school expenses. Among other early teachers in the new school was Thomas M. Lee who was paid \$140.00 on 1 April 1867 for teaching four months. Annie E. Smullin also taught for four months, but was paid only \$80.00 on 1 September 1867. A teacher of memory in the new school was Thomas Davis, who taught from 1 December 1868 to 19 March 1869. He was paid \$200.00 for the four month term. Mr. Davis had a wonderful personality, but was not very ambitious. He was recalled in a letter by Lovejoy Hall. Mr. Hall started school in 1867. He wrote to the school for its reunion held on the school grounds 27 August 1939.

In 1870 the directors voted to have four months school instead of three months during the summer term. The school paid 50¢ a gallon for kerosine in 1870 to use in its lamps and for fire starting. Edgar Baxter was paid \$18.00 on 25 February 1870 for four cords of fire wood. Lamp chimneys cost 15¢, wicks 4¢ each, brooms 45¢, kerosine cans 40¢, box of matches 20¢, chalk 60¢, stove shovels 75¢, dippers 90¢. Although the paid out entries in the School District Record through the years were too numerous to mention here, it should be pointed out that a review of them for these early years indicated steady ex-

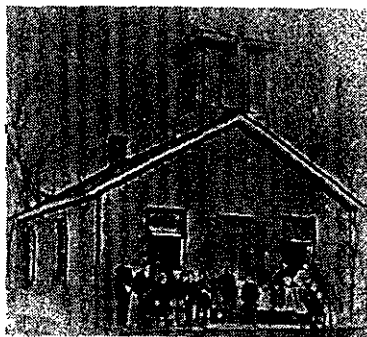
penditures for lamp chimneys, brooms, water dippers, repairs to toilets, windows and seats, cleaning of the school house, painting and white washing. So it appears it took considerable effort and money to keep the school in supplies and repair.

Again in 1871 the district voted to have longer school terms. At a meeting held at the school on 3 April 1871 the directors elected for three years that there would be four months of school each term instead of three months as per the law. The winter term was followed by a break and then a summer term of four months. These breaks were made to allow students to intersperse their learning with work in the fields at home. On 11 April 1871 the district paid \$164.00 to School District No. 11 for their portion of school property appraised by the trustees. On 12 October 1871 Mrs. McCoy was paid \$2.50 a week for boarding teacher Laura McGlashren who was paid \$72.00 for teaching four months. Mrs. McCoy was paid \$45.00 on 22 January 1872 for boarding the teacher Charles Temple for the four month term. Mr. Temple was paid that same time \$160.00 for the four month term. Later the teachers were boarded free at the homes of different families in the district. Two weeks were spent at each farm house. One teacher, C. T. Main, lived for quite a spell with the Charles Merrit Baxter family during his teaching years at Kinson School in 1902-1903.

In the 1880's the teacher had her hands full teaching the more than sixty students in the crowded classroom. Perhaps that is why there were many disbursements for repair items! For the responsibility of teaching and discipline the teachers were paid \$20.00 to \$40.00 per month at that time. On 21 June 1880 Libbie J. Watson was paid \$20.00 for teaching one month. At a special meeting of the directors held 23 July 1880 at the house of Daniel Kinson it was agreed to levy a special tax on the district for the year 1880 in the amount of \$150.00 for the annual expenses. In five years school expenses doubled. On 31 July 1885 at a special meeting in the field of G. W. Baxter it was agreed to levy a special tax of \$300.00 for the district's 1885 school expenses. During those years C. M. Baxter was usually paid \$3.50 annually to clean and for white washing the school house.

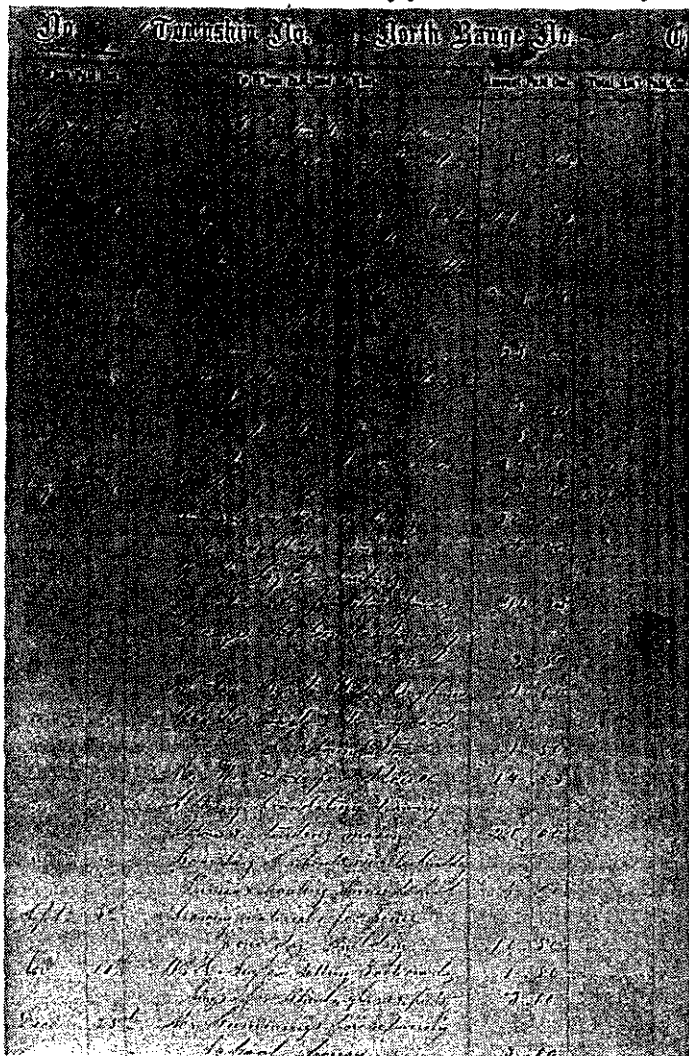
The school was changed from District No. 8 (Township District number) to District No. 116 (County District number) in 1901.

On 4 May 1901 the district's clerk's balance was down to only \$4.90. Apportionments by the tax collector totaled \$469.48 to provide funds for the next term. At the 1 April

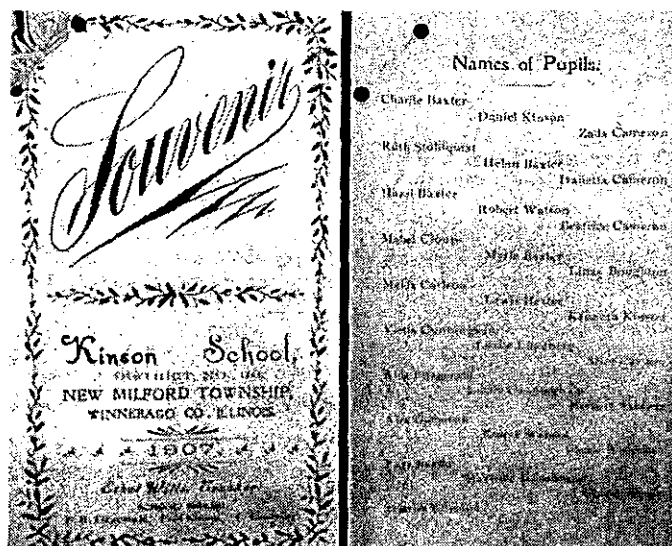


1910 director's meeting clerk reported a balance on hand of \$200.88 at which he received \$27.39 in delinquent taxes and \$124.56 in railroad taxes. 34¢ was received in delinquent taxes, \$119.47 in telegraph, telephone and railroad taxes and \$442.40 in taxes from the collector. These railroad taxes were paid by the CM & G Railroad which maintained tracks through and a station at Harrisville. Harrisville was a busy community from 1905 until 1927. It was located approximately one mile south of the school house.

For more than forty years water had to be carried from the George Skinner or George Fitzgerald farms. The farmers were usually paid \$2.50 a year for water privilege. Discussion of drilling a well was made at the directors meeting on 15 April 1905. At that meeting Ross Baxter was elected director. The well was also discussed at the 20 April 1907 meeting. At the 18 April 1908 meeting the directors moved to have the well finished inside of thirty days. The well was ready for the 1909 school term. Carrie Castle was teaching at that time. John E. Baxter was paid \$2.00 on 2 March 1905 for a load of cobs and C. M. Baxter was paid \$21.00 on the same date for three cords of wood. In case you don't know, that would be a pile of wood covering an area four feet wide by eight feet long by twelve feet high; that's a lot of wood for \$21.00! The last record of buying wood for fuel was in 1909. On 14 Novem-



ber 1910 C. A. Carlson was paid \$14.00 for two tons of coal and cleaning the organ. The school was again refooed in 1910 when disbursements were made in the amount of \$62.50 for shingles, nails, tin, ridge boards and included labor (62 hours at 35¢ an hour). C. M. Baxter had to build another toilet in 1910. He was paid \$22.50 for the job including the lumber. In 1912 the school purchased a new heating plant for \$97.00.



In 1913 the directors elected to have a fence built around the school yard using well pipe. The fence was built in 1914 following the 18 April 1914 meeting. The pipes of that fence hardly had a chance to get rusty. In the more than fifty years when the pipe fence surrounded the school grounds hundreds of students found them nifty for their circus tricks and fancy stunts. Additional improvements were made in 1916. The directors moved on 5 April 1916 to fix the school house the best way they saw fit according to what the law required. They also moved to put a cement floor in the wood house. Zada Cameron Kinson was teaching at that time; she was paid \$48.00 per month. By 1917 the expenses of operating the school advanced to \$800.00 annually, more than half of which was the teacher's annual salary.

By 1930 students were eating hot lunches on a cooperative basis. A hot dish for the entire school was sent by one family each day and kept warm on the coal stove. At that time approximately a dozen students attended classes. This enrollment was considerably lower than had been experienced in earlier years of the district's history. By 1946 a full time cook supervised preparation of hot lunches in the school kitchen which was converted from the old wood house. This kitchen served the school for more than ten years. In 1957 an all new kitchen was added in the basement when the addition was made to the building.

In 1938 the directors were faced with discussion on Community High School. At the 13 April 1940 meeting, the directors elected Charles Leatherby as Non-High School representative. At that time it was decided to add a stoker to the furnace. The annual school levies were now up to \$900.00 educational and \$300.00 building. The last outside toilet was built in 1941 by John E. Baxter. Electricity was added as a new, modern convenience in 1938. Inside toilets were added in 1950. The modern day had arrived!

Hundreds of tiny feet - some barefoot, others in copper toed boots, dainty slippers, sandals, hand-me-down boots and high buttoned shoes - crossed the threshold of the school in its history. On 27 August 1939 many of these same feet returned



ly of these same feet returned to the school for a special homecoming event. Approximately 250 former students, teachers, neighbors and friends attended the event. Twelve of the more than eighty former teachers answered the roll call. Mrs. Louisa Brundage, eighty-four years old, recalled her early school experiences during the Civil War years. Her first teacher was Lucilla Follett, the school's fourth teacher. In 1939 there were only thirteen students, nearly half were Baxters. Cousins in school included Peggy, Jack, Verna, Dale,





Richard and Jerry Baxter. The teacher was Miss Violet Norman. The class will said that Peggy willed her laughing to Marianne Blough. Peggy's ambition was to become a plain housewife.

In 1940 the enrollment was again only thirteen students. This was among the lowest enrollment in the school's history. Throughout the school's more than one hundred years of history the enrollment fluctuated from a low point of less than fifteen students to the wall busting enrollment of more than sixty students. At a special election held 20 May 1944 the community voted on the district providing free text books for all students. Thirteen votes were cast; twelve votes favored providing free books.

In 1957 Kinson School was the last one room school in Winnebago County. Mrs. Dora Bloom, who had been teaching



building constructed in 1866. With the opening of the two rooms the new teachers were Edna Robb and Ann Nyman.



On Sunday, 9 August 1965, Kinson School celebrated its Centennial on the school grounds. Former students and teachers reflected on earlier times as contrasted with the modern facilities of two rooms, basement kitchen, educational television, electricity, inside plumbing and special education, including a German foreign language course. Among those who attended the Centennial were the four generations of the John E. Baxter family, all who attended the school - there was John E., then seventy-nine years old, his son Merritt E., grandson Richard and Richard's son Dane, eight years old. The thirty-five students enrolled in 1965 were told by former students and teachers that their school life was a country mile from what it was in the old days. Mrs. Fred (Eva Cooney) Kinson, then ninety-two years old, who taught at the school from 1896 to 1898, was the oldest teacher attending the Centennial. The thirty-five students attending Kinson School in 1965 had two teachers, Edna Robb and Floyd Konrad.



By 1966 the enrollment had increased to forty students. But the directors were faced with mounting costs and difficulties in locating qualified teachers willing to teach for the

## KINSON SCHOOL — ROLL CALL OF DIRECTORS

1855 William H. Saylor	1915 Abel Larson
1865 Daniel Kinson	1916 Fred H. Kinson
1866 Jacob Eastman	1917 Daniel L. Kinson
1868 Marvin W. Fox	1918 Abel Larson
1868 R. D. Ladd	1919 Fred Kinson
1868 John McEvoy	1920 Daniel Kinson
1869 John Watson	1921 Abel Larson
1870 Marvin W. Fox	1922 Fred Kinson
1870 William Hall	1923 Daniel Kinson
1871 H. Strong	1924 Abel Larson
1874 A. C. Horton	1925 Oscar Youngberg
1875 J. S. McEvoy	1926 Abel Larson
1876 Daniel Kinson	1927 Daniel Kinson
1877 William Hall	1928 Oscar Youngberg
1878 A. C. Horton	1929 Daniel Kinson
1879 J. L. McEvoy	1930 Abel Larson
1880 Daniel Kinson	1931 Oscar Youngberg
1881 L. C. Hall	1932 Daniel Kinson
1882 G. W. Seek	1933 Abel Larson
1883 G. Ginders	1934 Oscar Youngberg
1884 L. C. Hall	1935 Daniel Kinson
1885 Charles Merritt Baxter	1936 Abel Larson
1886 George Skinner	1937 Oscar Youngberg
1887 T. C. Rose	1938 John E. Baxter
1888 Charles Merritt Baxter	1939 Abel Larson
1889 T. F. Larson	1940 Oscar Youngberg
1890 F. H. Fitzgerald	1941 John E. Baxter
1891 J. L. Castle	1942 Leroy Larson
1892 T. F. Larson	1943 Alma Baxter
1893 F. H. Fitzgerald	1944 Clifford Lillie
1893 George Clothier	1944 Alex Cameron
1894 G. H. Graham	1945 Elvin J. Baxter
1895 J. L. Castle	1946 Leroy Smith
1895 F. H. Fitzgerald	1947 Merritt Baxter
1896 F. C. Rose	1948 Alex Cameron
1897 A. H. Kinson	1949 Louise Baxter
1898 Deforest Hildebrand	1950 Clarence Reed
1899 T. C. Rose	1951 Merritt Baxter
1900 C. A. Carlson	1952 Ray Cook
1901 George Fitzgerald	1953 Marcus W. Baxter
1902 George Watson	1954 Richard Schneider
1903 George Skinner	1955 Ray Cook
1903 W. McMan	1956 Donald Allen
1904 A. H. Kinson	1957 Fay I. Baxter
1905 Ross Baxter	1958 Orrin Sandy
1906 F. H. Fitzgerald	1959 Eugene Blair
1907 Frank Lundberg	1960 Ruth Baxter
1908 John Stohlquist	1961 Charles Halgren
1909 C. A. Carlson	1962 Jean Borgen
1910 John E. Baxter	1963 Lester Lundberg
1911 James Cameron	1964 Jean Borgen
1912 Sherman Baker	1965 John Carlson
1913 Fred H. Kinson	1966 Charles Halgren
1914 Mrs. James (Cora) Cameron	1967 Lester Lundberg

salaries available. So the decision was reached to close the school. The school was permanently closed in 1967. The students started attending Sky View School of the New Milford District.

At the school closing on 7 June 1967 Mrs. Diane Johnson, the first through fourth grade teacher reported, "It may be an old fashion two room school, but it's more progressive than any school I know of; it's an ungraded system here - the students learn at their own speed and there's alot of individual attention given to each one." Floyd Konrad, the head teacher, said, "I like the freedom at Kinson and I'm very disappointed the school is closing. At Kinson we have whatever kind of school we wanted. I think we are caught up in the large central school trend in the middlewest. I feel in about thirty years we'll go back to the small neighborhood schools like Kinson." Many people in the community felt the school closing was change, not progress.

## KINSON SCHOOL ROLL CALL OF TEACHERS

1861	L. S. Srverey	1889	Mary Clark	1927	Alice Baxter
1862	Josephine Cochran	1890	Elizabeth Richardson	1928	Alice Baxter
1862	Alice Brown	1890	Nellie Govern	1929	Clara Cook
1863	Lucilla Follett	1890	William Crandall	1930	Clara Cook
1863	Frank C. Johnson	1891	Flora Clark	1931	Clara Cook
1864	Sarah Gunsolus	1892	Flora Clark	1932	Clara Cook
1865	Sarah Gunsolus	1892	Libbie Powell	1933	Gladys Dennison Hoffman
1866	Clara Horton	1893	Emma Baxter	1934	Eleanor Hueber
1866	Thomas L. Lee	1893	Ray E. McEvoy	1935	Ellen Herlin
1867	Annie E. Smullin	1894	Bert Baxter	1936	Annetta Breckenridge Wells
1868	Elziel Carmichael	1895	Minnie French	1937	Annetta Breckenridge Wells
1868	Thomas Davis	1896	Bert Baxter	1938	Miss Waterman
1869	M. C. Strong	1897	Eva Cooney	1939	Violet Norman
1869	Thomas Davis	1898	Nellie C. Shipe	1940	Edna Austin
1870	Annie Graves	1898	Eva Cooney Kinson	1941	Dora Cronk
1871	John Brown	1898	Enda Jueal	1942	Dora Cronk
1871	Laura McGlashen	1899	Ida Adams	1943	Ida Larson
1871	Charles Temple	1899	Mrs. K. S. Pike	1944	Orian Smith
1872	Miss Maxwell	1900	Mrs. K. S. Pike	1945	Louise Molzahn
1873	Annie Smullin	1901	Cora Baxter	1946	Louise Molzahn
1874	Lillie Bud	1902	Cora Baxter	1947	Louise Molzahn
1874	William Rew	1902	Carlton T. Main	1948	Colleen Peacock
1875	Robert Rew	1903	Carlton T. Main	1949	Helen Jones
1875	Miss Horton	1904	Bessie Griswold	1950	Doris Stites
1876	Maggie Jones	1905	May Smith	1951	Iva Taylor
1877	Lena Carmichael	1906	Cara Stevens	1951	Everett Wright
1877	Joseph McEwan	1907	Ethel Wills	1952	Harold Demus
1878	Heigh McEvoy	1908	Harriet Danforth	1953	Harold Demus
1879	Samuel Clark	1909	Carrie M. Castle	1954	Dora Bloom
1879	Ella Kinson	1910	Francis Scovill	1955	Dora Bloom
1880	Robert McEvoy	1911	Carrie M. Castle	1956	Dora Bloom
1880	Libbie Watson	1911	May Kinney	1957	Dora Bloom
1880	Margaret Jones	1912	Bessie Blair	1958	Edna Robb - Ann Nyman
1881	Margaret Jones	1913	Ina Baker	1959*	Edna Robb - Rosemary Carratt/Mrs. Orr/T. Bentley Worrington
1882	W. E. Haight	1914	Ina Baker	1960*	Edna Robb - Etta Mercer
1882	Margaret Jones	1915	Zada Cameron Kinson	1961*	Edna Robb - Etta Mercer
1882	William Jones	1916	Edna Johnson	1962*	Edna Robb - Etta Mercer
1883	Maggie Graham	1917	Alice Browman	1963*	Edna Robb - Etta Mercer
1884	Ella Jones	1918	Alice Browman	1964*	Edna Robb - Floyd Konrad
1885	C. A. Chase	1919	Ruby Pagles	1965*	Edna Robb - Floyd Konrad
1885	Ella Clark	1920	Marjorie Dennison	1966*	Edna Robb - Floyd Konrad
1886	Ella Clark	1921	Marjorie Dennison	1967*	Floyd Konrad - Mrs. Beal/Diane Johnson
1887	Ella Clark	1922	Amos Eastman		
1888	G. A. Chase	1923	Barbara Dennison		
1889	Fred C. Foley	1924	Barbara Dennison		
		1925	Barbara Dennison		
		1926	Alice Baxter		

\* denotes years of the two room school



The old school house was remodeled into a residence in 1968 by Mr. and Mrs. William R. Cozort who purchased the property. Present residents are Scott and Nancy Nelson; they have lived in the house about a year.

### CAMP GRANT

When World War I broke out Camp Grant sprang up rapidly around the Charles Samuelson farm and on the farmland of Henry Kordie, Manson, Ned Wilmarth, George Robinson, F. M. Beard, Harold F. Beard, William Baldwin, Arthur Maxwell and other area farmers. This farmland was generally

located between Rockford and New Milford. Charles Samuelson refused to sell his land. He even traveled to Washington D. C. to protest the take over of his land by the United States government. William Eyster came from Holcomb to become the railroad depot agent for the Camp Grant station. He met and married Ruth Samuelson. About twenty-five years later part of the Samuelson farm was finally sold, under extreme protest, for Camp Grant expansion during World War II.



It was on 12 June 1917 that the National Army Cantonment, later named Camp Grant in honor of General U. S. Grant, was assigned to Rockford by War Department General Order 95. A committee of eight citizens from the Rockford

**SELECTED LEDGER ENTRIES FROM KINSON SCHOOL**  
**"A District School Record"**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Paid To</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>For</i>
1866	Levi D. Horton . . . . .	\$ 26.65	School house site and recording deed
1866	Stephen Suman . . . . .	742.25	Per contract
1866	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	1.50	Drawing sand for foundation
1868	R. C. Ladd . . . . .	5.75	Class books
1878	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	3.00	Cleaning school house
1879	Ella Kinson . . . . .	72.00	Teaching three months
1880	Libbie Watson . . . . .	20.00	Teaching one month
1881	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	8.50	Cleaning and white washing school house
1884	Maggie Graham . . . . .	70.00	Teaching first two months of winter term
1890	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	4.75	Two days shingling school house 3.00, Repairing fence 75¢, eight fence posts 1.00
1893	Emma Baxter . . . . .	75.00	Teaching fifty-five days
1894	George Skinner . . . . .	1.50	Water privileges
1895	Bert Baxter . . . . .	37.50	Teaching
1897	George Graham . . . . .	1.65	55 lbs. wire @ .03 per lb.
1896	D. Cummings . . . . .	2.50	Water privilege
1896	Eva Cooney . . . . .	53.00	Two months teaching
1896	C. T. Garrett . . . . .	5.25	3½ days working on outhouse
1896	Woodruff & Maguire . . . . .	6.34	Lumber for outhouses
1898	Mrs. Eva Kinson . . . . .	50.00	Two months teaching
1899	John Baxter . . . . .	1.00	Drawing and splitting kindling
1902	Rockford Lumber and Fuel . . . . .	4.90	12 post @ 21¢ each and 12 2" x 4" x 16' long @ 18¢ each
1902	Asa H. Kinson . . . . .	1.82	Lamp 1.00, oil and jug
1902	Cora Baxter . . . . .	24.00	One month teaching
1904	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	19.20	Three cords of wood
1904	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	20.00	Painting school house
1905	John E. Baxter . . . . .	2.00	Load of cobs
1907	Lester Rothwell . . . . .	113.25	Drilling of well
1910	Charles M. Baxter . . . . .	22.50	Building toilet and furnishing lumber
1914	Ina M. Baker . . . . .	45.00	One month teaching
1915	Zada Cameron . . . . .	45.00	One month teaching
1916	Zada Cameron Kinson . . . . .	48.00	One month teaching
1917	H. S. Hicks . . . . .	43.75	Tuition for Frances Dresser
1917	R. H. Brown . . . . .	20.00	Tuition for Martha Larson
1917	T. W. Evans . . . . .	70.00	Tuition for Martha Larson 10.00, Wilda Carlson 30.00, Kenneth Kinson 30.00
1918	Armor C. Dresser . . . . .	55.90	Coal
1919	Alice Browman . . . . .	65.00	Teaching
1920	Ruby Pagles . . . . .	70.00	Teaching
1920	Lundstrom & Peterson . . . . .	70.08	Papering
1921	Marjorie Dennison . . . . .	95.00	Teaching
1922	Edith Batty . . . . .	15.00	Cleaning school
1924	Barbara Dennison . . . . .	75.00	Teaching
1928	Ivanetta Cameron . . . . .	15.00	Cleaning school
1930	Fay I. Baxter . . . . .	29.15	Painting school
1838	Central Illinois Elec. . . . .	2.25	Electricity
1943	Dale Baxter . . . . .	8.00	Firing
1945	Richard Baxter . . . . .	30.00	Painting school
1945	Peggy Baxter . . . . .	9.00	Scrubbing

Chamber of Commerce visited Secretary of War Newton B. Baker, and at the 12 June 1917 meeting the site was selected. The rich farming land was selected by the government because of the location and soil conditions. On 1 July 1917 construction was started on the camp by the First Illinois Army Engineers. By September 1917 the first group of 2,000 draftees reached Camp Grant. All construction was practically completed by 15 November 1917 to house 41,160 men and a remount depot for 5,000 animals. During that time George Winkvist of New Milford was in charge of purchasing all of the grain and feed for the cavalry garrisoned at the camp. Mr. Winkvist had only the Camp Commander to report to. George's wife, Ina Baker Winkvist, helped George with the huge amount of paper work and reports required by the government. Mr. Winkvist operated a slaughter house facility on the back of his land in New Milford. The Camp Commander in August 1917 was Major General Thomas H. Barry with an annual salary of \$8,000.00, at that time the highest amount paid an Army officer in the United States.

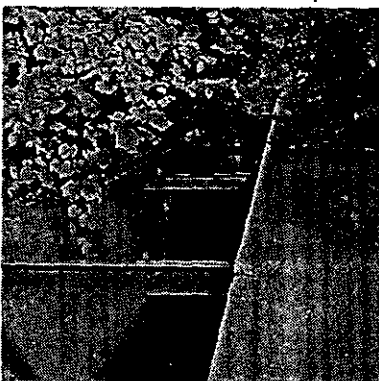
The government bought 3,300 acres of farmland at the cost of \$835,000.00 and spent eleven million dollars for installation of utilities and building construction. Several of the farm houses on the land purchased by the government were left standing for many years. These dwellings were used by the officers as homes for their families. On 14 August 1922 the government bought an additional 160 acres from Harold F. Beard for \$60,000.00 and one half acre from Rosecrance Memorial Home for \$354.00, a sizable amount at that time for such a small plot. When the government was buying and renting land for Camp Grant, \$295.00 per acre was considered a good price for the land which the area farmers sold. The government rented some of the ground at about \$20.00 per acre for protection for the rifle range. Farmers would cultivate their corn fields and the government would put a railroad right through the fields practically forcing the farmers to give up a portion of their crops.

Approximately one million men entered, trained and were demobilized at Camp Grant during the World War I years. On 31 July 1918 there were 16,890 officers and 48,854 enlisted men garrisoned at the camp. Of these, 1,400 people died in the great influenza epidemic in September 1918 when 323 people also died in Rockford. At that time Rockford's population was approximately 60,000 inhabitants.



The military reservation threatened to overrun New Milford. But the community had its cemetery to thank for its continued existence. The federal government was unable to claim the community's cemetery. So the camp grew around New Milford. Federal law did not permit the destruction of the cemetery. That being spared, the community was also passed around.

The rifle range, now a part of the Atwood Park, just to the south of the cemetery, had to often interrupt target practice so funeral services could be held reverently in the cemetery. All traffic stopped in New Milford when soldiers marched through the community enroute to and from the rifle range. Companies of troops took hours to pass by and through the community. At that time the roads in New Milford were not paved.

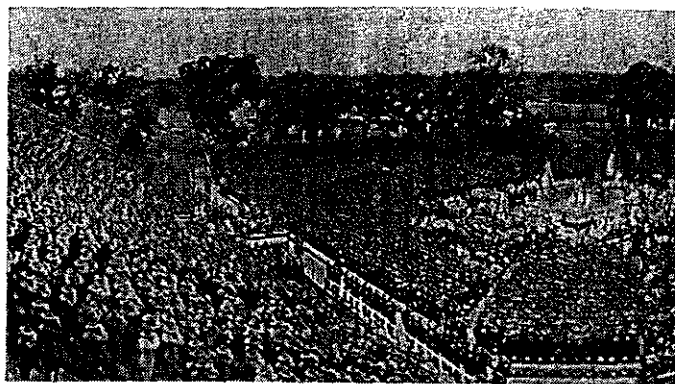


When the weather was inclement it was often difficult for passerbys to get their automobiles out of the mud and continue on their journey. Residents had to join in pushing the vehicles out of the road ruts. The rifle range was located on six hundred acres equipped with twenty-four targets and concrete butts on the north bank of the river.

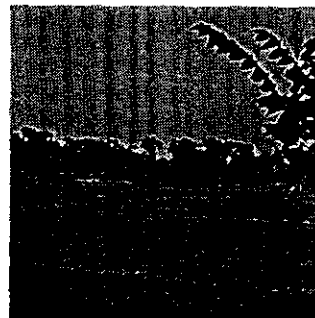
The 200, 300 and 600 yard firing points, pistol range, 1,000 yard machine gun range and 37mm range were located on the river's south bank. A swinging bridge connected these two areas. The concrete foundations of this bridge are still found today upstream of the present day swinging bridge in Atwood Park. Emery Watson recalled recently that when firing at the range was underway the tempo and sound, as heard on the Watson farm approximately three miles southeast, resembled a full skillet of popcorn!

The several businesses in New Milford saw their busiest days in the era when Camp Grant was preparing thousands of men with training for the front during World War I. Mr. Thaddeus W. Evans operated the general store in New Milford from 1906 until 1917. The most hectic days for the community and for Thad Evans were when Camp Grant was under construction. Workmen and their families flooded into New Milford. The store was never empty. Every evening it was so crowded that customers would be let in only as others left at the back door. "It was a crazy house, and you couldn't get help. The whole village was a mob. I never got any rest. We would have fifty men on the floor, and we would lock the store. We let in only six or seven at a time as we let that many out the back doorway," recalled Mr. Evans when he observed his ninety-fourth birthday on 27 May 1966. Huge files of marching troops passed through the community on long

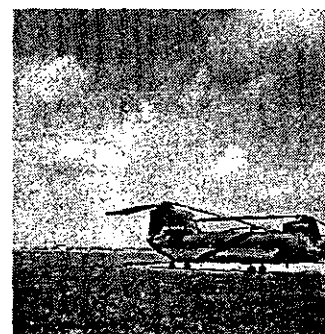
marches throughout the area. Later these men boarded troop trains and passed through Harrisville and the Watson farm on the C M & G Railroad enroute east.



The war time buildings were demolished and sold from 1922 to 1924. With the exception of twelve wooded warehouses and a few other buildings, all Camp Grant buildings were gone by 1925. Hundreds of buildings were rebuilt for the Illinois National Guard in the late 1920's and early 1930's. At that time the camp was the scene of an influx of 6,000 to 9,000 members of the Illinois National Guard for annual two weeks field training. During that period and up to March 1938 more than one million dollars worth of buildings were erected. A 1938 WPA project improved Bell Bowl, a natural outdoor amphitheater which can still be viewed from the present day Beltline Road southwest of the Greater Rockford Airport. The improvements were made to accommodate 8,500 persons on the grass slopes of the amphitheater. This bowl was the site of the 14 July 1918 event when 40,000 soldiers gathered to observe the Bastille Day celebration at which Governor Frank O. Lowden addressed the troops.



Camp Grant was again used during the World War II period. It developed into a major medical training center, including a hospital training center covering forty acres. The center had accommodations for 7,500 men and the facilities to train 30,000 persons annually. When Camp Grant was being rebuilt during the World War II period some families in New Milford took in boarders. The Harry Grahams took in about fifteen carpenters that worked on the rebuilding program. The camp also developed into the largest reception center in the country. The railroad depot was the country's busiest in 1941. In August 1943 the first of the German prisoners-of-war started arriving somewhat secretly. By July 1944 as many as 1,500 prisoners-of-war were working in the fields of DeKalb, Rochelle, Belvidere and other communities. They harvested vegetables for various canning companies. At the close of World War II in 1945 most of the Camp Grant activities were terminated almost immediately.

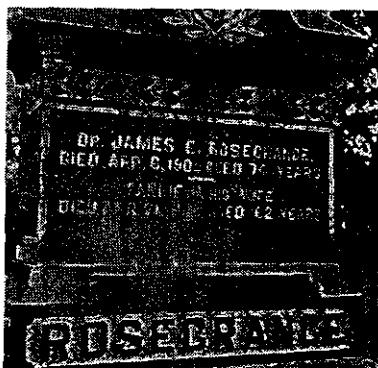


On 26 February 1946 President Harry S. Truman signed the deed which transferred the ownership of Camp Grant property to the Greater Rockford Airport Authority. In 1952

the Officer's Club of the camp was moved and remodeled for use as the present terminal building. Through the years the airport has made continued improvements so that by 1973 the Greater Rockford Airport became the first airport in the FAA Great Lakes Region to meet safety standards and security requirements. The airport property occupies 1,950 acres of the original nearly 3,500 acre Camp Grant site. In 1973 there were 212,642 landings and take-off's recorded by the Air Traffic Control Tower, including four in-and-out daily scheduled commercial flights. For a number of years the annual Fly-In was a national attraction at the airport. In 1975 Ozark Airlines continues to maintain limited in-and-out daily scheduled flights at the airport. Today the modern airport is serving well the Rockford and surrounding communities.

## ROSECRANCE HOME

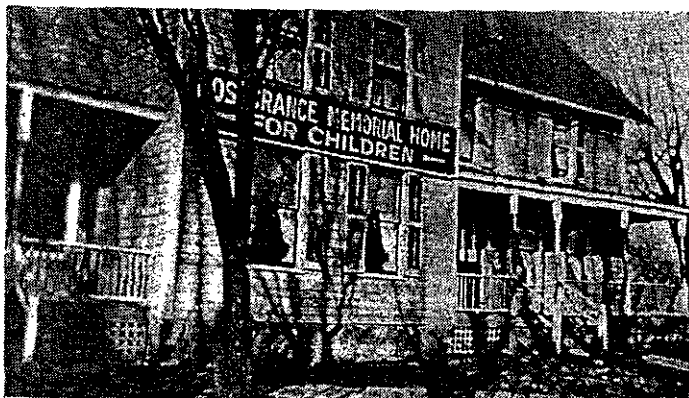
From the same era as the original development of Camp Grant came another milestone for the New Milford community. Mrs. Fannie Rosecrance, widow of Dr. James E. Rosecrance, died 21 April 1912. Dr. Rosecrance died 5 April 1901. Their wills generously provided in detail for The Rosecrance



Memorial Home For Children to be established in their home. They left their residence, a 260 acre farm at South Bend (that is today a camping ground just west of the Kilbuck Bluffs Forest Preserve) and the dwelling (present home of Dennis Carrotts) which was just across the highway from the Rosecrance home to maintain the children's home. The wills also left \$500.00 to the New Milford Cemetery

Association and \$500.00 to the Methodist Episcopal Church of New Milford. The church gift was to be left in trust, the interest to be annually expended toward paying for preaching the gospel to the people of New Milford. The Home was incorporated by an act of the Secretary of State of Illinois on 11 August 1916, Lewis G. Stevenson, Secretary. The first trustees of the Home were Mrs. Laura Robinson, David Case, Martha James, Rev. H. J. Collins and C. H. B. Burlingame, secretary-treasurer. The estate was established at \$4,000.00 personal property and \$18,000.00 real estate.

The Rosecrance family had used one half of their residence for their home. The west half was used for the doctor's medical practice. The dwelling was frequently the home of the lost and orphaned where the Rosecrances offered love and comfort to the neglected children. Dr. James and Fannie Rosecrance did not have any of their own natural children.



Rosecrance Memorial Home For Children, sponsored by the Methodist Church, opened in the early 1920's. It operated in New Milford until 1952. At that time it moved to new, larger and improved quarters on eighteen acres in Rockford. Today the Rockford Alpine Road location of Rosecrance capably serves twenty-four boys in three cottages. Altogether its staff serves over one hundred teen-agers of every race and religion at its Rockford, Dixon and Durand expanded facilities.

The Rosecrance homestead, one of the older dwellings in the community, was remodeled to supply living quarters and play room in a non-institutional atmosphere. Rosecrance became the home of boys of all nationalities and creeds. The boys were referred by the court and social agencies. The boys helped with many household duties, grew vegetables and raised chickens. Supervisors of the home from 1938 until 1941 were Albert and Jenny Pagles. In 1947 the matron of the home was Mrs. Ethel Kimbrell. There were usually from twelve to eighteen boys in residence at the home. Considerable support of the home came from the New Milford community, including that from young people's groups. When the home for boys closed in New Milford there were seventeen boys at Rosecrance under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Curly Lundberg. The pioneer doctor's home still stands today. The Frank Manzullo family bought the home in 1954. It has been open as an Italian restaurant since 1966.



## NEW MILFORD FIFTY YEARS AGO

In 1928 New Milford was a village of two hundred and fifty inhabitants. The neat, quiet homes were snuggled in amongst the trees on either side of the Kishwaukee River. The lawns were large and well kept, adding their beauty to the natural beauty of the community. The north-south main road through the community was lined on both sides with huge shade trees which were later cut down to make way for new highway construction. It seemed that New Milford had stamped itself as a home to all those located there. Most people seldom thought of moving away after having once lived there.

In 1928 there were five residents still living in their own homes in and near New Milford who were in the community in 1854 and earlier. Those long time residents were Mrs. Mary Bauder, Thomas Lawson, George Lawson, Francis Asbury (Frank) Baxter and his brother Charles Merjit Baxter. Charlie Baxter lived on his farm just a mile and a half southeast of New Milford and one half mile from where he was born in a log house in 1848. Frank Baxter had come from New York state in 1843 with his parents, John and Maria (Myra) Horton Baxter, and four other small children. That was approximately eight years after the earliest settlers had arrived along the Kishwaukee River.

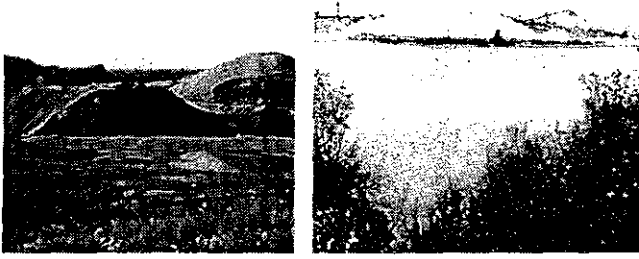
Visitors to the area in 1928 enjoyed a sense of quiet and repose as they tarried in the community. The pleasures of the inhabitants were wholesome. The river was a source of pleasure all the year around for both old and young. It gave boating, bathing, fishing and skating. Much of the social life of the community centered at the church. There was also a nearby Grange, Modern Woodman Lodge and a community hall owned by William Jones. The business center included two stores, a blacksmith shop, two garages, four oil stations, a telephone exchange, a grain elevator and a coal and lumber yard. There was also a volunteer fire department with efficient equipment. A bus stop in New Milford enabled residents to travel to Rockford or over the new Meridian highway to Rochelle and other points.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

450 million years ago this section of the country was covered by the ancient Ordovician Seas. Remnants of ancient marine life was preserved in many of the once limey muds of those seas. From that beginning came the limestone quarries that are worked today in the area, principally Winnebago County Land Reclamation Site (Pagles Pit) and Rockview Stone, both located between Baxter Road and Kilbuck Creek southeast of New Milford. Our blacktop roads are made of bituminous which is composed of crushed limestone chips.

The surface gravel and sand in our area resulted from the Wisconsin and Illinoisian glaciers which occurred up to





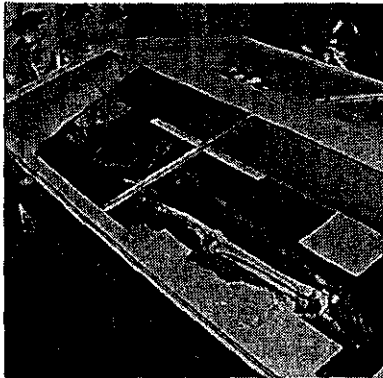
150,000 years ago. In this area it isn't unusual to find lime-stone pieces and small rocks with impressions of extinct sea creatures, some like flowers or sponges, appearing on them. Of interest to geologists in the area is the White Rock Moraine which resulted from the Wisconsin glacier that occurred 50,000 to 70,000 years ago. That glacier deposit of earth and stones is delineated by the course of the Kishwaukee River just north of New Milford and extending east along the river to present day Belvidere. Stone deposits of the moraine are quarried at the Rockford Blacktop airport pit just south of the Belt Line Road.

Of some archaeological significance and community interest was the finding of a mastodon tooth by Kenneth Westlund in the spring of 1949. Kenneth Westlund was digging a cesspool for the home he would soon be constructing on the south bank of the Kishwaukee River. The hole was dug to approximately five feet when he uncovered a pure white molar seven and one half inches long, four inches wide and three inches high with two rows of cone shaped growths. Such a find is considered somewhat common in Northern Illinois as the mastodon, a prehistoric relative of the elephants, roamed much of the United States as recently as ten million years ago. The hole Kenneth Westlund was digging was approximately one hundred and fifty feet from the present river course. The tooth is believed to be the oldest evidence of life in the New Milford community.



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The uncovering of an Indian burial mound on the church property on Memorial Day 1959 was of considerable community interest. The Rev. Ira E. Morgan and Roy Maxwell were attempting to remove two old red cedars and level a mound of ground under the trees. It was there the bones were discovered. Because of the possible archaeological significance Milton Mahlburg, curator of Rockford's Natural History Museum, and J. Joe Bauxer, Rockford College archaeologist, were called in. It was determined the burial site was for a six foot Indian buried at least five hundred years ago. The Woodland Indian was buried with bits of charcoal, clam shells and small animal bones. The general thought in the community was that the mound had been a pile of dirt left when the church was built in 1887. Mr. Thad Evans, then eighty-seven years old, however, recalled his father telling of the mound when he settled in the area in 1843. The finding is now at the Rockford Natural History Museum as a significant exhibit.

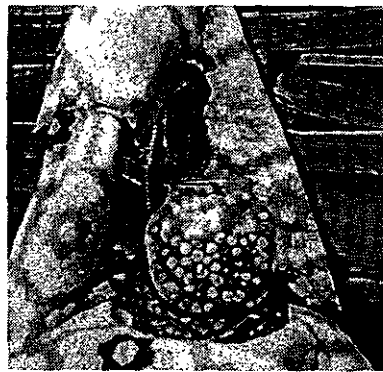


Although there are Indian burial mounds in many parts of Illinois, there have been exceptionally few mounds uncovered in the Rockford area that contained bones. Numerous mounds,

most likely Woodland mounds, have been explored in Rockford, particularly north of Beattie Park off North Main Street. No evidence of burials were noted in the excavations.

There surely must be very few people today, especially children, that are not fascinated with stories of Indians. They have been subjects of stories of adventure, guardians of nature and suffering for six generations of this area's residents. The Indians prevalent in this area prehistorically and up until the mid 1830's were tribes of the Fox, Sauk, Winnebago and Potawatomi. While the regular Indian settlements centered near present day Macktown, Dixon and Freeport, there were a few camps along the Kishwaukee River. Also, there were scattered temporary camps throughout the northern Illinois area known today as Winnebago County. Even after the exile of Chief Black Hawk and his army to the Iowa Territory, there were occasional families of friendly Indians in the area up until nearly the turn of the century. Those Indians frequently crossed the Kishwaukee River near the present day Atwood Park in New Milford.

Among the best of the Indian story tellers in the area was Mrs. Ida E. (Grandma) Baker, grandmother of Ronald Winquist. She was a long time resident of the present day Baxter Road.



Grandma Baker, who died in 1960 at the age of ninety-one years old, is buried in New Milford Cemetery. Her collection of stories, arrowheads, beads, rings and other Indian articles were of constant interest to generations of school age children. Even today it isn't considered rare to uncover an arrowhead while gardening in New Milford or working the farm fields of the area south of New Milford. With such a find comes nostalgic memories and imagination with bygone years.

As pointed out in the first part of this historical study there were exceptionally few trees in the area because it was mostly prairie. Surrounding the wayside inn in New Milford, just north of the Kishwaukee River, were a number of large oak trees. Trees 165 to 185 years old were knocked down in a tornado in the early 1960's on that site. Among the few remaining, one is estimated to be 275 years old. The tree is the oldest living thing in the New Milford community. It had reached about half of its growth when the earliest pioneer arrived in the area more than one hundred and forty years ago.



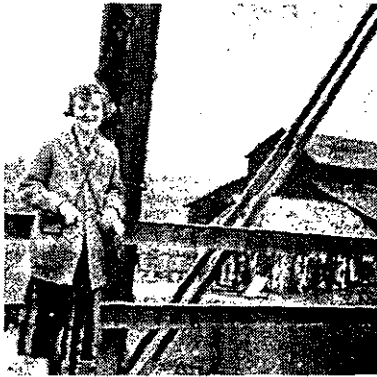
## HISTORY OF BUILDINGS

Old buildings existing in the New Milford community today have a long and interesting history. The following is a brief history of buildings and sites, many of which are at least one hundred years old.

6653 Eleventh Street Road. The former gas station-grocery store-restaurant just north of the bridge on the west side of the highway originally was the site of the New Milford creamery and cheese factory. The building has been owned for many years by Lewis Baxter. The cheese factory had large vats to heat milk which was processed into cheese. There were large wooden tubs used in the making of butter and cheese. On the exterior of the building there were tracks and hooks for milk cans. For many years, about seventy-five years ago, the



creamery and cheese factory was operated by Lyman H. Eastman. It is believed there most probably was a previous owner of the creamery. Mr. Eastman used his team and wagon to deliver butter, cheese and, also, meat throughout the community. Behind the creamery was a large yard, garden area, barn and pasture along the river. In this general area there were



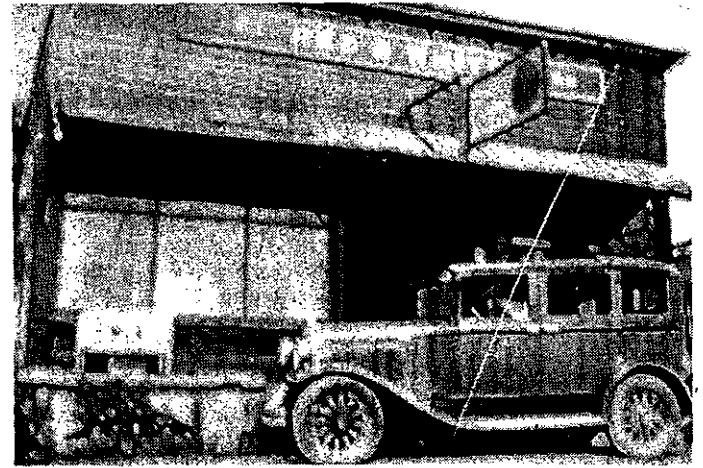
large mule barns which operated for some time. Mr. Fred Molzahn and his family lived above the creamery and operated the nearby confectionery store from 1923 until 1926. The business was sold to Howard Cook about fifty years ago. Mr. Cook sold it to J. R. Brown who added to the building and opened the business site as a garage. Mr. Brown operated the business from 1927 until 1945. From 1945 to 1947 the garage was operated by Ed Carlson.

Mr. Brown's granddaughter, Mrs. Shirley Carlson Kauffhold, Yucaipa, California, is particularly interested in genealogy and New Milford history. She grew up in New Milford during the 1930's and 1940's and remembers well the village thirty years ago. She recalls the story of one winter when there was a whirlpool on the river that was strong enough to keep circling while the water froze making a spinning circle of ice. Some smart alec stuck a log in the whirlpool and held it fast until it froze over. She also recalls running through the woods of the present day Atwood Park where part of an old stone structure always fascinated her.

Her grandfather, Jesse Ranson Brown, was a blacksmith around Leaf River. He had purchased one of the first cars in the area, which he took apart and put back together before he opened the garage in New Milford. His son, Arthur Lamont Brown, was considered one of the "All American Boys"; he had lots of adventures, played on the New Milford award winning basketball team, was usually the first in the river after the spring thaw while ice still floated on the Kishwaukee River. Arthur Brown's sister, Jessie R. Brown, married Edward Carlson, and another sister, Mrs. Bernice B. Brown Johnson, has lived in New Milford many years. In later years Mr. Brown built several small houses behind the building in the former yard and pasture area along the river. Another early operator of the garage was Baldy Van Stone. In later years the former creamery was the business site of a grocery store and a restaurant. The building has been vacant for many years.

6619 Eleventh Street Road. The present Minit Mart building has been a grocery store for at least forty years. But in 1900 it was a confectionery store run by John "Uncle Bob" Cooney. It is believed the building was originally built at least seventy-five years ago. At one time the building was a harness shop. In 1915 Lyman Eastman bought the business. Mr. Eastman, who had a son Logan, frequently helped the neighborhood farmers with their field crops. In 1923 Fred Molzahn took over the confectionery store and operated it until 1926. During those early days it was a gathering spot for story telling of the good old days. Farmers and the New Milford residents would purchase their sweets and tobacco at the store. Ice cream

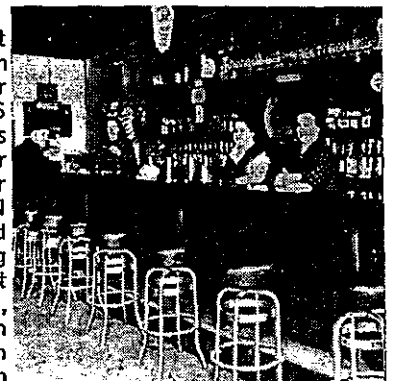
from the confectionery store was a favorite of young and old alike.

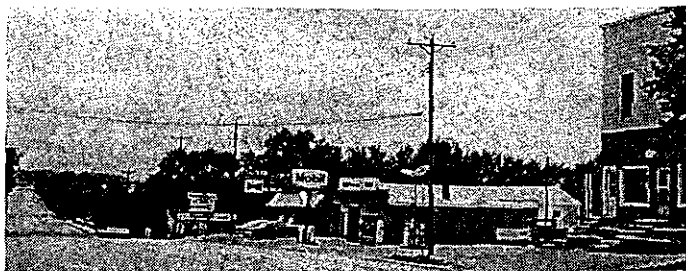


The confectionery store was operated for some time by Beldon Ryckman. The building also served as a tavern run by Pat Johnson and later by Eggie Peterson. In the late 1930's it was opened as a tavern operated by Clarence Nelson. Operators of the store as a grocery in more contemporary times include Orville Holt (1934-1944), Willard Jackson (1944-1955), Earl Johnson (1955-1961), and William Rader (1961-1975). The site, which was originally part of the Evans estate, was owned for many years by Dan Thompson. Owner of the building since 1961 is William Rader, present operator of the Minit Mart.

Behind and somewhat north of the building was an ice house which for many years provided ice for the confectionery store's ice cream production. In a limited way it served the community's need for ice. The ice would be cut in the winter on the river and hauled up by stone boat. It would be stored in the ice house for use in the hot seasons. Another account puts the site of the ice house, possibly another one, behind the present barber shop building. It is believed that ice house was built by Mr. T. W. Evans in the early 1900's when he operated that building as a general store. That ice house provided for the community's growing need for ice.

6225 Eleventh Street Road. The New Mill Tavern building was built for William Ryckman in 1916 by George Storz. It was first used as a butcher shop operated by Arthur Johnson. From 1926 until 1934 the building was used as the community polling place. In the mid 1930's it was opened as a tavern, operated by William Johnson. The Peterson family operated the tavern from 1935 until 1943. Later tavern operators were Ward Reece and Conrad Burdick. Presently the business is owned by William Rader.





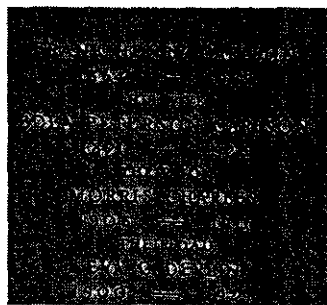
6607 Eleventh Street Road. The present Breit Garage was built sometime between 1915-1917 by Homer Pell. The building was a garage, filling station with hand operated gas pumps and a Reo auto showroom. In 1931 the building was owned by Charlie Carlson. Schwartz and Klewin were the operators. Another early day operator of the business was Howard Cook. Between 1917 and 6 November 1931, when Jack Breit bought the property, there were sixteen owners! Frank Vaughn, now ninety-one years old and the son-in-law of Frank Carlson, the last blacksmith in New Milford, recalled in 1974 an interest meeting. Frank Vaughn recalled meeting one of the Swedish partners of the garage business after he had sold the business to a new owner. Frank Vaughn asked why he had sold the business. The Swede said, "The business wasn't doing so well, and his partner was a little bit crooked!" Sometime later Frank Vaughn met the other partner on 14th Avenue. He asked him why he had sold his share of the business. That Swede said, "My partner was a little bit crooked!" Frank Vaughn died in September 1975.

A rather humorous event took place in front of the garage about forty years ago. One Halloween several of the area's young people parked their cars in front of the garage and then went out in the community to upset some toilets. When they finally got back to the garage to return home they found their cars stacked up on top of each other. The story is remembered that four cars were stacked in the mysterious pile!

Early day helpers of the Breits at the garage were Ray Funk, Arthur Jensen and Louis Johnson. The original thirty feet by sixty feet building built by Homer Pell was added to in 1963 by the Breits because of expanding business.

Just north of the garage was the village blacksmith shop. The shop building, owned by the Breits since 1931, was used, as many people will still recall, for a variety of businesses from the early 1930's until the 1960's. In the remodeled building the Breits operated a hardware store, restaurant and a used car salesroom.

Frank Carlson was the last blacksmith in New Milford. His shop was that which is indicated on a map of New Milford, dated 1871. Frank Carlson came to America from Sweden in 1891 when his daughter Mary was six to nine months old. He settled in Rockford where he lived for about ten years before



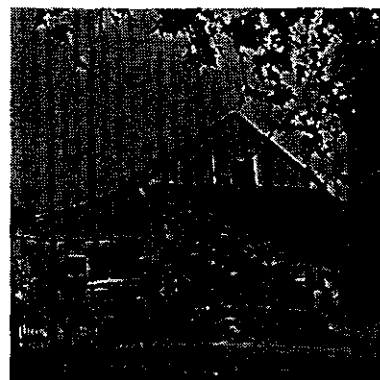
he moved to New Milford in 1901. Prior to moving to New Milford he rode a bicycle to New Milford every day to conduct his business at the blacksmith shop. It was not an easy trip. The byway was often muddy and the sandy area near the present day Sandy Hollow Road was difficult to maneuver through. At that time no road existed in the area. The principal road between Rockford and New Milford was Kishwaukee Street to the present day Samuelson Road, then east to what we know today as Eleventh Street Road. After several years he moved his family to New Milford and lived for some time at the far east end of the present New Milford Church Road.

Some people still remember his labors on the horses of the farming and New Milford community. Mr. Carlson was a wagon maker and blacksmith. In the spring time business was

very busy. He would shoe horses all day long. His family would bring him his breakfast, lunch and supper so he would not waste time. Frank Vaughn, who married Frank Carlson's daughter Mary, recalled in 1974, "He was a small man, but very strong and a working fool." After serving the New Milford community for thirty years, Frank Carlson retired to Rockford where he died in October 1953 at the age of eighty-nine years old. Frank Carlson, who fathered five daughters and one son, is buried in New Milford Cemetery.

6583 Eleventh Street Road. The present barber shop, the only two story business building on the west side of the principal road in New Milford, is one of the oldest business sites in the community. The building is shown on an 1871 map of New Milford as the only building besides the blacksmith shop on the west side of the road in the business area. On the east side of the road, of the 1871 map of New Milford, the business places included the F. H. Maxwell house and two small shops near the river. On the race of the river were the mill, the James Fountain reaper factory and another small shop.

The two story building was a long time general store of the community. It is recorded the building was built from the original nail factory. The factory was first built on what is now the John Evans farm. This farm is between the present day highway and the railroad to the west of the community. Today the Evans farm covers approximately 140 acres. The nail factory operated in that location for several years before it was moved by Lovejoy Hall. It was pulled to the present day Eleventh Street Road site by teams of horses.



Lovejoy C. Hall operated a general merchandising business in the building from 1889 to 1901. He bought the business from W. H. Gardner. Mr. Hall opened the business with Charles C. Chase. Included in the merchandise they sold were groceries, kerosene lamps and other household goods, sewing supplies, tools and farm implements. Twenty McCormick harvesters and ten movers were sold at the store in 1891.

Lovejoy C. Hall was born in New Milford Township on 28 October 1852, the son of Thomas and Anna Hunter Hall. The Halls came from Ireland to Illinois in 1842. Lovejoy Hall married Emma Ann Seek on 20 March 1874; she was the daughter of John and Eliza Montgomery Seek. Emma Ann Seek was born 4 September 1854. The Seek family farmed in Section 29, New Milford Township, after coming from the east in 1857. Their 235 acre farm is the farm identified today as the Carlson farm on Rotary Road. Lovejoy Hall had farmed 160 acres on the present day Baxter Road where he was a stock raiser before he opened the merchandise business in New Milford. There were four children in the family, Maud A., born 25 November 1876, Inez, born 22 October 1879, Eugene, born 1 April 1889, and Emory Hall, born in 1895, today a Rockford printer. Inez, who married 1 January 1899 to James S. Ritchie, celebrates her ninety-sixth birthday in Rockford in 1975. James Ritchie was born 16 February 1872 in Canada; he died 20 May 1959. Lovejoy Hall died 13 September 1941; Emma Ann Seek Hall died 21 February 1938. They are buried in Rockford.

Inez Hall Ritchie recalled the busy childhood years when her family lived next door to her father's store. The family had

moved to New Milford in 1889 when Inez Hall was ten years old. She lived in New Milford with her parents for ten years before she married at the age of twenty years old. She married James S. Ritchie who had been a miller at the South Bend Flouring Mill in 1899. They lived on a farm just south of New Milford for many years before they moved to Rockford in 1945.



About 1851 Mr. A. B. Wilmarth and his wife Hannah A. Hagaman Wilmarth lived above the store with their family. "The Leaf", a New Milford school hand written newspaper printed on 15 March 1861 advertised, "Wilcox and St. John having just returned from Chicago with a new supply would respectfully call the attention of the people of New Milford and vicinity to their splendid stock of goods comprising everything from cellar to garret. Ladies give them a call." That store burned and was replaced at once with a more imposing front and more commodious rooms above. The general store was an important shopping place for the community. The building was also a harness shop at one time. The Lace family operated the store in early times.

In 1906 Mr. Thaddeus W. Evans took over operation of the store and experienced exceptionally busy times, particularly during the period when Camp Grant was under construction in 1917. About 1920 the upper level of the store was used as a dance floor. The Modern Woodmen Lodge met above the store for a spell. Oyster suppers were held in the lodge rooms over the store. Pat Johnson's father, Ernest Johnson, operated the general store from 1923 until 1927. Pat Johnson married Ila Main; they lived in New Milford many years. A previous operator of the general store to Ernest Johnson was Mr. S. J. Davey. Mr. Davey again took over the operation in 1927. The Tom Lawson family operated the store in 1928.

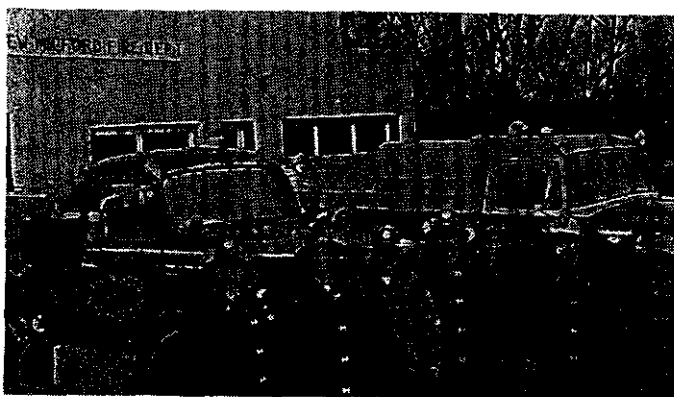
Outside the store, just south of the building and near the road, were located large scales where wagons loaded with grain, coal, lumber or stone could be weighed. These were the only large scales in the area until new ones were established at the lumber yard site. In more recent times the grocery store was operated by Mr. S. J. Davey until 1945, and later by William Gowan. It was also a TV repair shop. In 1968 it became the community barber shop operated by Elmer Johnson. Owner of the building since 1966 is Jack Breit, who purchased it from Al Zullo. The building includes three apartments today.

Across the road from the general store, near the southeast corner of the present day New Milford Church Road and Eleventh Street Road, stood the old Frederic H. Maxwell house. It was used for many years as a halfway house for travelers between Davis Junction and Rockford. The house, one of the oldest dwellings in New Milford, was torn down in the early 1960's. Some people recall the house's delicious meals and coffee. A story suggests that the name Maxwell coffee originated there! Surrounding the house were a number of large, very old oak trees. Behind the Maxwell house was a barn and stables which was used by guests of the house for their horses and carriages. Under both the barn and stable were cellars for supplies and storage. It is believed that a tunnel connected these basements with an opening at the river. The story is told that the cellars were used briefly as a station on the underground railroad. The underground railroad operated in a very limited way in northern Illinois from 1840 until 1860.

Another wayside inn in the community was the old Wilson-James house which stands today behind the present New Mill Motel. That house was used as a stop-over for the stage coaches and buggies traveling north and south through the community. The dwelling also housed a harness shop and a tavern.

6638 Eleventh Street Road: To the south of the Maxwell house site now stands the New Milford Fire Department building. This sixty feet by one hundred sixty-four feet lot was given to the community by George Winkist as a fire department building site in 1948. On 9 December 1970 the department purchased from George and Ronald Winkist additional land for fire station expansion. Today the plot is one hundred feet by three hundred sixty feet. The land was originally part of the large land holding of Maxwell and Company. The Maxwell and Company owned more than 1,300 acres on both the north and south banks of the Kishwaukee River east of the main north-south road. That was prior to 1871.

In 1928 there was a volunteer fire department in the community operating with efficient equipment. For twenty years the fire department was active in protecting the community. However, it was not particularly well organized and the equipment did not keep up with needs until 1947. During that twenty year period a most exciting day occurred in New Milford. On 21 January 1936 the school burned to the ground in a disastrous fire. The community's fire fighters were helpless against the mighty blaze. Firemen from Rockford estimated that if two hundred gallons of water had been available when they arrived the fire could have been extinguished without difficulty.



The New Milford Fire Association was formed for the community in 1947 when the town population was approximately one hundred people. In January 1947 a committee met at Breit's Garage to consider plans for forming organized fire protection for the community. The committee members were Jack Breit, Donald Moore, Willard Jackson, Harold Heivilin, George Storz, Dean Rothwell, Arthur Jensen and Matthew Lewis. The committee decided to ask for \$125.00 from each property owner within a radius of five miles to buy the first truck. The first fire truck, an old Diamond T tanker, bought used for \$1,000.00 from the Rock River Fire Department, was purchased in 1947. The committee made calls on all property owners asking for a donation for the truck. The response was overwhelming; within twenty-four hours the needed money had been raised. The old Diamond T tanker had a capacity of 1,000 gallons. It was brought to New Milford on a Saturday night and stored in Breit's Garage. On Sunday morning the men met to practice running the truck and pumper. Each man took the job where he could do the most good. Willard Jackson, with some knowledge of hydraulics, endeavored to coax the pumper into action.

The men had hardly become familiar with the equipment when a man in Camp Elmwood called Lulu Woodman, the local telephone operator, to ask what he should do to report a fire. Lulu Woodman called Jack Breit and the untrained fire fighters rushed to the scene in their truck practically familiarizing themselves with the equipment enroute. Al Nordman, a truck driver, drove the truck. Jack Breit, the chief, rode next to the driver. The assistant chief, Donald Moore, rode outside with the others; Willard Jackson rode the pumper, which was a separate trailer pulled by the truck. Tom Miller handled the nozzles. Each man seemed to fall into his position. The fire was successfully extinguished, mainly because of the enthusiastic interest of the crew. Another benefit was the location of the nearby river to which the crew pushed the pumper to keep the water running when the 1,000 gallon truck supply was exhausted.

That experience brought another problem. All fires weren't going to be so convenient to water. There was a need for another tanker to carry water to the big truck. For \$500.00 the association purchased a truck from Rochelle to which welders and sheet metal men came forward and donated their services in building a tank for the little truck. The crew called their equipment "Old Bertha" and "Cookie". Carrying 1,000 gallons of water "Old Bertha" was slow; fortunately, "Cookie" was fast. Sometimes the little truck made the fire and had it extinguished before "Old Bertha" could reach the scene. At other times, the little truck had used most of its water when "Old Bertha" lumbered in with another 1,000 gallons of water. Then the big truck took over and fought the fire while "Cookie" carried water to continue the fight. The pair never had a failure.

The association was incorporated on 21 January 1948 by the state of Illinois with Certificate No. 5350; incorporators were Jack Breit, Willard Jackson, George Storz, Orville Waddell and Hugh Wise. The first fire chief was Jack Breit, who faithfully served the department for sixteen years. The fire station was constructed in 1949. Until that time the trucks were kept at Breit's Garage. Among those who built the fire station were Cliff Stout, George Storz and John Baxter; those three older men of the community had a combined age total of more than two hundred years.

In the good old days the fire crew was really less than a skeleton. Most of the men worked in Rockford during the day. Farmers came to fires bringing their hired men, but in the village there often was little help. In case of a big fire, factories would release men for fire fighting. But for a grass fire, help was often down to the women and big boys. Fortunately, few fires developed. Everyone knew the danger and was quite careful. Rockford never refused help. Once a small boy set part of the old rifle range on fire. If the fire wasn't put out fast it could become serious. Chief Jack Breit was alone. Some of the women on the north side of the village appeared with brooms, rakes and shovels. The hose of the little truck wasn't too heavy, so Harriet Jensen and a big boy manfully took the hose and watered down the fire. Jack Breit ran the pump. The fire was successfully extinguished.

The New Milford Fire District was formed on 11 January 1955. The first trustees of the district were Burton Dorn, Donald Moore and Marcus Baxter. In 1957, the fire department had its own radio base at the station. The first radio communication system between the fire fighters homes and the station was introduced in 1963. Today that system connects to thirty-five homes. Trustees of the New Milford Fire Protection District today are Orrin Thorvalson, Wilbur Strohmman and John (Jack) Evans.

Chief Wayne Swanson of the Rockford Fire Department gave a great amount of time training the first New Milford crew. The department loaned New Milford hose, nozzles and other equipment in the early development months. Deputy Chief Thomas Hofey of Rockford worked with the New Milford Fire Department training program until 1967. Leo J. Keeman also instructed in arson, types of fires and life saving. Lewis "Lucky" Luckabaugh, a retired Chicago fireman instructor, was hired at Greater Rockford Airport for fire security. New Milford provided back-up protection at the airport. During the 1950's Mr Luckabaugh came to New Milford and trained crews. The University of Illinois put in a firemen's course which sent instructors for one month each year to New Milford during the 1960's.

By 1958 the fire department had progressed from a small learn-by-doing group with a second hand truck to a fifteen man crew with an A-Plus rating, three trucks and auxiliary equipment. At that time the fire department became a tax supported organization. For more than eight years the fire department was supported by private donations and fund raising projects. Today only about 4% of the total real estate taxes paid by residents supports the department. In 1975 the department has excellent equipment, including four trucks and a new ambulance. All men on the ambulance are qualified emergency medical technicians (EMT's). The chief is Edwin Glerup. There are thirty-two men in the volunteer fire fighting force ready

for nearly any kind of emergency or disastrous fire. The community holds in high honor the dedication of all men who have unselfishly served the department through its colorful history.

Just south of the fire department building, near the river bank, was the site of the old meat market and butcher shop. The meat man would travel about the rural community with his meat wagon in the late 1800's. Occasionally the meat man would have a sale on round steak three pounds for a quarter. Very often the farmers would pay with two bushels of oats and a few pennies. In that same location was a blacksmith shop which was operated by William Delos Kewish. His shop was located on the north bank of the river just east of the covered bridge. Mr. Kewish became a blacksmith in New Milford about 1865. He continued to serve the community for many years.



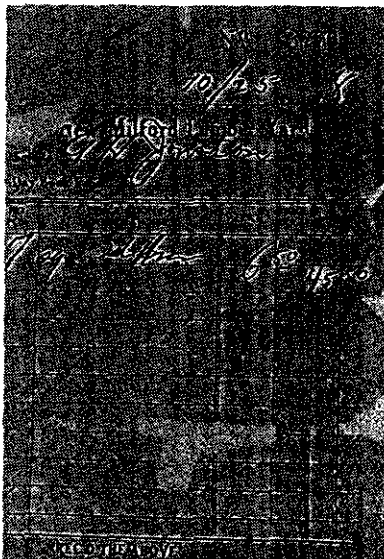
Other earlier businesses active after 1900 included those which can still be recalled by long time residents of the community. Just at the southeast end of the bridge, where today's Rydberg Road joins the highway, there was a small tavern for a few years. Later the site was remodeled and became a small dwelling. Where South Bend Road dead ends today at the highway there was one of the area's first filling stations. Steady customers drove Fords, Dodges and Reos. Occasionally a Pierce Arrow would pull in for a fill up. Between the present Mini Mart and the old creamery there was a small building which was used for some time as an ice cream parlor. Later, from about 1938 until 1949, Harley Knapp operated a Saturday only barber shop in a small building on that same site. The building was owned by Matt Lewis. Rent was \$5.00 a month and the electric bill was 90¢ a month! Haircuts were 50¢ each!



Just north of the Maxwell house, on the present day New Milford Church Road-Eleventh Street Road corner, was a small chalet style building constructed in 1930 and operated as a filling station and small store by Claude Winquist in 1933. Previous operators were Walt Hare and Clarence Nelson. As the business grew the chalet was enlarged to a two story building which Mr. Winquist operated until 1957. The site was a favorite gathering place for the men of the community for card playing and friendly conversation. There were sometimes disputes as to who played which cards. But more often the disagreements centered on the stories the players and kibitzers told of earlier times in New Milford. At those times someone would consult Carl Main's book of historical facts, which settled all disputes! In more recent years the building has been a cafe owned by John Stannard. Mr. Stannard started business in New Milford in 1950; he operates the used car lot in New Milford on the site of the original Maxwell house.



For many years, up until at least the late 1930's, there was a large hall on the southwest bank of the Kishwaukee River. It was built close to the bridge crossing. That hall was used for community dances, roller skating and basketball games before the school gymnasium was built in 1937. The hall burned down about thirty-five years ago.



The New Milford Lumber Company site is directly east across the railroad tracks of the original railroad depot. The lumber yard was built on the site of the old railroad grain elevator that was active as a grain market before the turn of the century. The elevator, which was razed in the late 1940's, was built in 1878. The lumber yard was in operation since very early times, when it dealt mainly in grain and coal. The contemporary buildings of the present day lumber company replaced all buildings of the earlier lumber yard. Since 1944, the New Milford Lumber Company has

been owned by Mr. M. C. Kohlhaugen who purchased the business from George Wilson.

In the last twenty-five years several newer businesses have been added to the community's commerce, including Jackson Screw Company, trucking terminals, telephone company shop, restaurants, motel, construction companies, gas stations and numerous in-the-home businesses.

## HISTORY OF DWELLINGS

In 1871 there were thirty principal dwellings in New Milford. Today there are nearly four hundred homes in the New Milford community. They are located on Leonard Road, Eleventh Street Road, New Milford Church Road, New Milford School Road, Rydberg Road, Will James Road, South Bend Road as well as several newer small sub-division roads.

Dwellings still in use today that were built seventy-five to more than one hundred years ago include many that lined the east and west sides of the present four lane highway from the river north to the top of the high highway hill. Most of the dwellings are indicated on the 1871 map of New Milford as it appeared more than one hundred years ago. Special note is made of the following dwellings.

5915 Eleventh Street Road. The Shumway House. This dwelling was built by the pioneer Shumway family. Dr. Alonzo James Edson owned the house at the turn of the century. Dr. Edson maintained medical practice in Rockford across from the Illinois Hotel on State Street in 1902 on Thursdays and Saturdays. He maintained practice in New Milford the remainder of the week at his home where he had a community office.



Dr. Edson was a well known and respected doctor in the community. Dr. Edson's son, George, lived for many years on a farm on the county line. Dr. Alonzo James Edson's grandson, Dr. Hobert Edson, was also a well known doctor in the community. Asa and Loreen Kinson, son of Daniel Kinson, lived in the house in 1919. Mrs. Jenny Pagles owned the house from the early 1920's until her death in 1963. The present owner of the dwelling is Daniel Crain; residents are the Richards Scotts, Mr. Crain's parents.

2252 New Milford School Road. The Rosecrance House. This dwelling was built by Dr. James Rosecrance. It is considered one of the older houses in the community. The house was the family home of the Rosecrance couple. The wills of the Rosecrances left the home to be used for a home for unfortunate children. The Rosecrance home operated in New Milford until 1952. The Frank Manzullo family bought the home in 1954 and since 1966 the dwelling has been open as an Italian restaurant.



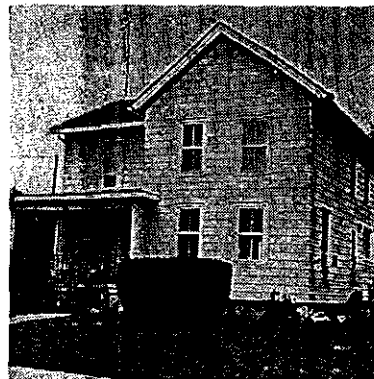
6486 Eleventh Street Road. The Lawson House. Across the road from the Rosecrance dwelling is the old Tom Lawson house. In 1903 the dwelling was opened by Bessie Lawson as a



telephone office which was located in a lean to. The house was owned by Dr. Hobert Edson's family, including Mr. Lewis Edson, whose grandfather, Dr. Alonzo J. Edson, was the community doctor for many years. Next to the house is a service station which was operated by Swelyn Corlett for several years. The station has been operated by the David Breit family for more than

twenty-five years. For the past eight years the property has been owned by the Forest City Oil Company.

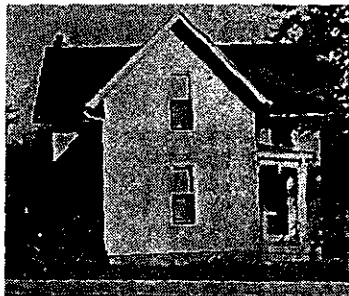
6574 Eleventh Street Road. The C. B. Johnson House. In 1871 this site was the dwelling of C. B. Johnson and the lot was three acres extending from the main road to the church. The area, between the present day New Milford Church Road and New Milford School Road, was at that time a good size pasture. Originally located on a tree shaded half block lot, this house, it is believed, was built prior to



1858 by George E. Grant. The house was built of wood; the area between the studdings was lined with brick. The dwelling has been occupied by the Claude Winkist family since 1940. The home has been considerably improved and updated through the years. Today it is one of the most attractive older homes in New Milford with lovely flowers and attractive shrubs for summer time enjoyment. The house was moved to the east to make way for a modern service station in 1962 at

which time many of the large shade trees of the lot were removed because of Dutch Elm disease.

6450 Eleventh Street Road. The Thomas Ratcliff House. It is believed this dwelling was built by Thomas Ratcliff in 1875. The property was originally part of the eighty acres settled by Samuel Brown and his wife Angelina. Early owners of the property included John Tinker who purchased the west half forty acres from Samuel Brown for \$575.00 in 1849. That action was recorded by James S. Gunsolus, Justice of Peace for the New Milford Township. John B. and Mary E. Tinker sold two acres of their land to William Upstone on 22 January 1853



with the allowance for a thirty foot street strip along the south end of the property. Descendents of Upstone sold the property to Thomas Garrett Jr. on 28 September 1863 for \$100.00. On an 1871 map of New Milford T. Garrett's name appeared possessing three acres. Thomas and Mary Garrett sold their three acres on 15 August 1874 to Thomas N. Ratcliff

for \$735.00. Radcliff sold to Thomas Foley on 2 January 1883 for \$1750.00. He sold to Agnes Seek on 10 May 1890. She sold to Clara S. French on 2 February 1893. On 7 October 1897 Clara French sold to Dr. J. E. Rosecrance and his wife Fanny H. for \$1535.00. Dr. Rosecrance used the west wing as a medical office; at that time there were two doors from the front porch. The north door entered the doctor's office and the east door entered the family living area. It is not generally remembered that this was Dr. Rosecrance's first home in New Milford; they lived in the dwelling while their larger home across the street served as the church parsonage. On 16 October 1903 the two acre plot to the north was sold to Alexander Cameron for \$3500.00. The remaining one acre plot was left to the Rosecrance Memorial Home for Children in 1912 at the death of Fanny Rosecrance. In 1938 there had been considerable controversy regarding the thirty foot roadway which was outlined in the 1853 sale of the property. On 23 March 1948 the property was sold to Charles H. Layng. Charles H. and Ida Layng owned the property until 29 August 1958 when it was purchased by Dennis Carratt, the present owner. Considerable improvements, including the front addition, were added to enlarge and up date the house by the Dennis Carratts.

6302 Eleventh Street Road. The Main House. This house, believed to have been built by Abel Beard in 1856, is considered to be one of the oldest dwellings in New Milford. The site, originally part of the eighty acres settled by Samuel Brown in 1836, was sold by John Tinker to Abel Beard in 1856 when he purchased six acres for \$200.00. Following the death of

Abel Beard on 16 December 1862 at Gattatin, Tennessee the property was sold to Edward N. Kitchell for \$750.00. In 1901 the property was obtained by Lyman H. Eastman who sold it to Carl T. Main. For many years the dwelling was the Robert and Emily Main home. The Robert Mains came from Canada in 1860 where he found work building bridges.



Their son, Carlton T. Main, was born in 1872 on the present day Wayne Allen farm on Rotary Road. Robert Main built the barn on that farm. Carlton Main was the Kinson School teacher in 1902-1903. When teaching at Kinson School he boarded with the Charles Merrit Baxter family which was a common practice in those early days. Mr. Main later taught at South Bend and New Milford schools. Carlton's daughter, Mrs. Ila Main Johnson, lives just north of the family home. The front room of the old Main house was believed to have been a harness and boot shop. "The Leaf", a New Milford School hand written newspaper printed on 15 March 1861 advertised, "A. Beard would inform the citizens of New Milford that he was now ready to supply them with the best of Boots and Shoes at the best of prices." The harness shop may have been,



however, in a small building in the back yard. The road, when it was at the high point of the hill before the hill was cut down for the new road in 1919, was very close to the front door of the dwelling. It was possible, in earlier times, to step out of a buggy on to the front door step. The original Lyman H. Eastman property, which included a sizable orchard, was valued at more than \$750.00 in 1901. The Roy Layng family have owned the dwelling and its nearly one and a half acres since 1945. Of interest on the property is an old grist mill stone from the New Milford Mills and several large stones which line the driveway, some of which are believed to have been of meteorite origin. The stones have lined the driveway for more than seventy-five years after they were gathered in the nearby area.

2390 New Milford School Road. The Fountain Farm House. As early as 1871 this dwelling was part of a small farm bordering on the road that is now known as New Milford School Road. At that time the farm was sixteen and one-fourth acres owned by James L. Fountain. Just east of the farm house was the community school house which occupied an acre plot at that time. The Fountain family also owned eighteen acres south of the Kishwaukee River along the east side of the road.



A. Fountain lived on a two and one half acre plot on which there were two dwellings across the road from the community church. On that plot James L. Fountain operated the reaper factory. The factory was located on the race just east of the Maxwell and Johnson flouring mill. Fountain was the developer of the sickle cutting bar, superior sectional knives

and a tying device which were very important, according to most reports, in the development of the mechanical reaper. A descendent of James L. Fountain is Mrs. Joane Marie Troxell, Schabacker, Stillman Valley; her father, Maynard Wellington Troxell, who died 16 September 1975, was the grandson of James L. Fountain's daughter. In 1908 William Elwood moved to New Milford from his farm on what is now Rotary Road. He maintained his dairy cattle which were pastured in the area between the two east-west roads from the main north-south road to the church. His daughter, Harriett Elwood Jensen, who still occupies the dwelling, recalled recently about her helping her father deliver milk to the families of the New Milford community during those earlier years more than sixty years ago.

6567 Eleventh Street Road. The Hall House. It is unclear who built this dwelling, but it is believed it was constructed nearly one hundred years ago. An early family to live in the house was the Lovejoy Hall family who lived there prior to 1890. Fifteen years ago it was owned by Otto Wilson. The dwelling has been owned by the Earl Lindsey family since 1960.





6539 Eleventh Street Road. The Bauder House. This dwelling is one of the best preserved examples of Victorian architecture in the area. The house was built by Mary Bauder who had lived earlier on a farm in the present day Will James subdivision area. The old Bauder farm house was situated just north of the present day South Bend Road. In 1928, nearly fifty years ago, Mary Bauder was one of the five residents of

New Milford who had lived in the community since at least 1854. The house was occupied by the Curly Lundbergs from 1947 to 1973. Present owner of the dwelling is Roger Tennesen; residents are Teddy and Donna Wickenberg.

2170 New Milford School Road. The Kewish House. The William Delos Kewish dwelling is believed to be one of the oldest in the community. Mr. Kewish was born 18 August



1832 at Paynesville, Ohio and came to Winnebago County in 1850 when he was eighteen years old. He was married 5 December 1865 to Louisa G. Pease and they had four children. He had served in Company A, Seventy-Fourth Infantry during the Civil War. It is generally believed he moved into the small two story house which was built by Dr. W. Jones. Dr. Jones also had a dwelling next door to the east which was razed many years ago. In March 1875 Charles Delos Kewish was born in the dwelling. The homestead was valued at \$500.00 in 1877 at which time William Kewish was a blacksmith in New Milford. He served the community as a blacksmith for many years. His shop was located on the north bank of the Kishwaukee River just east of the covered bridge. Charles Kewish grew up in the house. He married and fathered his family in the same house. Charles Kewish is still remembered by a few older residents as an outstanding community baseball player. He also played on the Cherry Valley team. A third generation Kewish descendant to raise her family in the dwelling is Mrs. Eldora Kewis Mumma. Eldora Mumma and her family lived in the house until 1965. Charles Kewish had made an addition to the dwelling. When John and Eldora Mumma were remodeling and made an addition to the dwelling, considerable effort had to be made to remove the many square nails holding the dwelling securely together. The present owner of the old dwelling is Frank Manzullo. Frank and Mary Ann Manzullo, who have lived in the house for seven years, have made improvements to the dwelling.



2141 New Milford School Road. The Evans House. Although this house is considerably less than one hundred years old, it is the last home of Mr. Thaddeus W. Evans. Mr. Evans is remembered by long time residents of the New Milford community as one who expended himself in service to his community from the late 1800's until he died in 1966 at the age of ninety-four years old. In 1907 and until 1910 it was the telephone central office and home of Mrs. Hannah Jane Thompson Robinson and her daughter Bessie. They operated the telephone service from the dwelling. Present owner of the home is John (Jack) Evans; residents are the Carl McNight family.

*Where is the heart that doth not keep,  
Within its inmost cove,  
Some fond remembrance hidden deep  
Of days that are no more?*

- Ellen Clementine Howarth

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

During the early 1830's people from New York state learned that there was lead and silver in the hills around where Galena is now located. So pioneers came west and settled in the hilly area in the northwest corner of the state. They had come west through Chicago where the population had reached 350 inhabitants. Chicago had been a trading post and fort site for about eighty years.

Among the new settlers in the Galena area was a man named Germanicus Kent who came from the south with a Negro slave boy. In those days the government owned all the territory and anyone who would stake out a section of land and stay on it a year could own it. As Kent and another pioneer named Thatcher Blake were not satisfied with the Galena area, they decided to travel to a beautiful valley with fertile soil that had been described to them by some soldiers who had been fighting Indians east of Galena.

Black Hawk and his Indian army were chased north along the Rock River; he surrendered 27 August 1832. From then until the turn of the century only occasional families of Indians would be seen in what is today known as Winnebago County. The removal of Indians from the area was perhaps more important than anything else to the rapid settlement of Northern Illinois. The exceptionally cheap land was, of course, another important reason for early development.

In 1829, Stephen Mack was the first white man to make permanent settlement in the area that became known as Winnebago County. At the junction of the Pecatonica and Rock Rivers the site became known as Macktown.

Kent and Blake got a wagon and a horse in June 1834 and drove overland until they arrived at the Pecatonica River where they secured a canoe. That took them to the Rock River. On 24 August 1834 they stopped at the foot of what is now called Kent Creek and decided that the location was best suited to them. Blake wanted to stake out a claim for his farm and Kent decided to build a sawmill as there was good timber about where Campus Towers now stands on the bluff overlooking the Rock River. Also, there was a good place to ford the river where there was a rock bottom. They called the place Rock Ford.

During the autumn of 1834 they built a log house, a dam across Kent Creek and started working on the Kent sawmill. That following spring two more families had arrived. By the winter of 1835 twenty-seven people were living in the community, including Daniel Shaw Haight who arrived 9 April 1835 to become the first settler on the east side of the river. His wife arrived in May 1835; she was the first white woman in the settlement. Because the settlement was approximately midway between the Galena lead hills and the growing town of Chicago, the community along the Rock River was called Midway at that time.

On 16 January 1836 Winnebago County was created by an act of the Illinois legislature. The legislature created a commission to locate a road from Meecham's Grove in the Chicago area to Galena by way of Midway at the ford on the Rock River. Kent was authorized to establish a ferry across the Rock River. The Midway community became known as Rockford in 1836. On 15 September 1837, the first mail arrived from Chicago and Haight was named the village's first postmaster. The first stage coach pulled into the village from Chicago on 1 January 1838.

The two settlements on each side of the river incorporated on 1 April 1839 into one village with the combined population of 235 inhabitants. By that time two religious centers had been established. The first Methodist class was organized on 2 September 1836 in the house of Samuel Gregory and on 22 December 1838 the first Baptist church organized.

During the summer of 1837, in a log house standing on what is today the southeast corner of the intersection of East State and Second Streets, the history of the Rockford schools began. Miss Eunice Brown, who conducted classes for six pupils that year, served as the settlement's first teacher. At that time education in the community had progressed beyond the era of the itinerant tutor, but had not yet matured to the point of underwriting a permanent system of tax supported public education. The influx of immigrant families settling on the community's west side soon prompted Miss Brown to offer additional classroom instruction in a log house located on what is today the Courthouse block. It was here that Miss Frances Bradford, the settlement's second teacher, kept a class room for a small student body that included the children of city pioneers James Haight, Eleazer Potter and Asa Sanford.

In the 1840's the community grew considerably in commercial activities. The first newspaper, "Rock River Express", was issued on 5 May 1840. The village held its first agricultural fair on 13 October 1841. The Rockford Hydraulic and Manufacturing Company was formed on 28 February 1842 to build the first dam across the Rock River; this work was completed two years later to provide plentiful power to the ambitious owners of new industries in the community. The first building to be built on the Courthouse square, a jail, was opened 1 January 1844. The first Courthouse was erected the same year. Also in 1844 the contract to build the first bridge at State Street across the Rock River was awarded to Derastes Harper. The wooden bridge was open for traffic on 4 July 1845 during a village wide celebration.

The population increased ten times in eleven years, so by 1850 there were 2,563 people in the growing town. By that time there had been a meeting held on 3 November 1845 to consider establishment of a woman's college; the charter for the Rockford Seminary was issued 25 February 1847. On 7 January 1846 delegates from Chicago to Galena gathered in convention and agreed to build a railroad as quickly as possible. The first train of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, pulled by the Pioneer engine, arrived in Rockford six years later on 2 August 1852.

By vote of the residents Rockford became a city on 3 January 1852; Willard Wheeler was elected the first mayor on 19 April of that year. The new permanent dam was considered at a meeting held 15 July 1851 at which the Rockford Water Power Company was formed. The dam was completed two years later in 1853 to provide Rockford enterprises with plentiful water power.

One of the first important industrialists in Rockford was an industrious young man named John H. Manny. He arrived from New York state and started to manufacture a combined mower and reaper which he had invented. As the first reaper did not work properly, he was forced into bankruptcy. But soon his cousin, John F. Manny, found out what was wrong with the sickle. By the spring of 1853 Clark and Utter, Rockford, had manufactured one hundred and fifty of the Manny reapers. Abraham Lincoln visited Rockford during the summer of 1855 as an attorney for Manny. On 16 January 1856 Manny was upheld in a court battle against Cyrus H. McCormick for patent rights to the Manny reaper. Rockford became known as The Reaper City and Manny became very wealthy. His reaper won many metals in competitions.

When John Manny died at the early age of thirty years old, his wife Mary Dorr Manny fell heir to great wealth and she had the royalties to his patents. Meanwhile a lawyer named Holland interested a young man named Robert H. Tinker in coming to Rockford from Westfield, New York where he worked in a bank. Mr. Tinker arrived in Rockford in 1856 at the age of nineteen years old. He soon showed that he was a real industrialist. He went into partnership with Mr. Knowlton, the business agent of Mrs. Manny. They retailed farm implements from the Manny Company.

Robert Tinker married Mary Manny and lived with her thirty-one years. He was elected mayor of Rockford in 1875. Robert H. Tinker became head of many industrial activities in the city and worked for many years as a member of the Park Board. Three years after the death of Mary Manny Tinker, Mr. Tinker married her niece Jessie Dorr and lived with her at the Tinker Cottage until he died in 1924 at the age of eighty-eight years old. Today the Tinker Swiss Cottage is considered an unusual place of interest in the city.

By the late autumn of 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was elected President on 6 November, the 1860 U. S. census indicated the city's population stood at 8,117 inhabitants. By this time many of the city's churches had been formed. Emmanuel Episcopal Church and Second Congregational Church were organized in 1849. The site for the first Catholic Church, St. James, was acquired on 15 February 1851. Court Street Methodist Church was formed 1 January 1852. In August 1852 the first Swedish settlers arrived by train to make their permanent homes in Rockford. Rev. Gustaf Unonius, the first Swedish pastor, visited Rockford. On 15 January 1854 First Lutheran Church was organized as the city's first Swedish congregation and first Lutheran church in Rockford.

During the 1870's the city's population rose to 11,049 people. A third bridge was constructed to span Rock River at State Street and was opened in April 1872. Contracts were awarded for the new Courthouse. The Courthouse cornerstone was laid 23 June 1876. On 11 May 1877 the dome collapsed killing seven workmen outright and injuring several. On 23 July 1870 the first socks were made on an automatic machine designed by John Nelson and William Worth Burson which started a new revolution in the city. Soon Rockford made socks were being shipped all over the country. Amos W. Woodward was issued his first patent on 31 May 1870 which became the basis for the Woodward Governor Company.

Andrew C. Johnson organized the city's first furniture factory, Forest City Furniture Company, in 1875. A year later Swedish workmen pooled their resources to organize the Union Furniture Company. From beginnings like this in ten years more than twenty furniture factories were formed to make Rockford one of the nation's leading furniture manufacturing centers. The city's population increased to 13,129 people at the time of the 1880 U. S. census.

Telephone service was introduced to the city on 9 April 1880. The Rockford Street Railway Company was organized 27 June 1881 to provide the city with horse drawn streetcars. The Grand Opera House was opened, Rockford Hospital Association, the city's waterworks and Rockford's W.C.T.U. were formed in this decade. Rockford Electric and Power Company provided for the first time the city with electric service on 16 April 1883. In the mid 1880's the city provided its residents

with a reorganized school system, sewer system and wooden block paving for State Street east of the bridge, the city's first paved street.

By the turn of the century the city had grown considerably in size and importance. Rockford's population rose to 31,051 people; within a decade 45,401 inhabitants lived in the city. In that ten years National Lock Company was organized, the North Wyman Street Rockford Public Library had opened and Sinnissippi Park was acquired by the Rockford Park District, the city's first principal park. By the end of the World War I years Rockford's population had increased to 65,651 people. The city had experienced the construction of nearby Camp Grant where approximately one million men entered, trained and were demobilized in 1917.

The period 1920 to 1950 the city experienced unusual growth and success. Fred E. Machesney opened his airfield in 1927; when it closed in 1974 it was the country's oldest privately owned airfield. Prince Bertil of Sweden visited the city on 15 July 1938. In the early 1940's Rockford became a leading war workshop of the midwest. By 1950 the city was one of the outstanding communities of the state.

Today Rockford is the metal fastener capital of the world. It is the second largest center in machine tool manufacturing in the country. The 275,000 productive people, in the metro area, manufacture more than 6,000 diversified products. But Rockford people are never more than fifteen minutes from the green land loved and lost by the Winnebago and other Indian tribes somewhat more than one hundred forty years ago. Visitors to the city today are impressed by the more than 3,000 acres of Rockford's one hundred park properties and the 992 acre Rock Cut State Park that offers beautiful Pierce Lake.

Places of interest to visit include Tinker Swiss Cottage, the Sinnissippi Park Sunken Gardens, Children's Farm, Burpee Art and Museum Center. The city is well known for its many beautiful churches, schools and colleges, commercial areas and lovely residential sections. Remarkable Rockford is today the second largest city in the state; its city population now nears 150,000 inhabitants, a mighty climb from twenty-seven people in one hundred forty years. Rockford's people are an important part of the state's more than ten million inhabitants.

## INTERESTING EVENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OCCURRING IN ROCKFORD 1900 - 1975

- 1900 Rockford Country Club organized.
- 1903 National Lock Company organized.
- 1905 Children's Home of Rockford formed.
- 1908 Rockford outlawed saloons, city voted dry.
- 1909 Rockford Park District created.
- 1910 Census figure at 45,401, Chamber of Commerce organized.
- 1915 First Sundstrand adding machine made in Rockford.
- 1916 Rockford Municipal Sanatorium opened.
- 1917 Camp Grant opened.
- 1918 Swedish-American Hospital opened. Midway Theater opened.
- 1920 Census figure at 76,761.
- 1926 Jefferson Street Bridge completed and Lincoln Junior High opened.
- 1927 Coronado Theater completed.
- 1928 Greater Rockford airplane left for Sweden; crashed in corn field.
- 1929 Faust Hotel opened.
- 1930 Census figure at 85,828.
- 1932 Gas and Electric Building completed.
- 1933 Rockford's new post office building dedicated.
- 1936 Buses replaced electric streetcars.
- 1938 Auburn Street Bridge replaced High Bridge.
- 1940 Census figure at 84,637.
- 1940 East and West Senior High Schools opened.
- 1941 National Guard units federalized, sent to Camp Forrest.
- 1942 Illinois Bell Telephone Company completed new building.
- 1943 Rockford Civic Symphony gave its first concert.
- 1945 Rockford stricken with its worst polio epidemic.
- 1947 Greater Rockford Airport opened.
- 1948 New State Street bridge opened.
- 1950 Census figure at 92,927.

- 1952 Prime Minister Tage Erlander of Sweden visited Rockford. Rockford observed Centennial as a city.
- 1952 Worst flood in Rockford's history.
- 1952 New YMCA dedicated.
- 1953 Dutch elm disease recognized.
- 1953 First area TV station, WTVO, begun operation, WREX-TV followed 2 months later.
- 1954 Rockford Memorial Hospital opened on North Rockton Avenue.
- 1954 Greater Rockford Airport dedicated.
- 1955 Record 4,552 babies born in city.
- 1956 Tollway started.
- 1957 Jefferson Junior High School dedicated.
- 1958 Tollway opened.
- 1960 Rockford population 126,706, 2nd largest in state.
- 1961 Colonial Village opened.
- 1962 Rockford Public Library addition started, Guilford High School opened.
- 1962 Rockford College new campus opened.
- 1963 Whitman Street Bridge opened.
- 1964 Singer Center ground breaking.
- 1965 Chrysler Plant dedicated.
- 1965 Rock Valley College bought Spring Brook Road site.
- 1966 Rockford water fluoridated.
- 1967 Tornado strikes Belvidere, 125 homes totally destroyed.
- 1967 New Courthouse underway.
- 1967 Camelot Towers construction started.
- 1970 Montgomery Ward State Street store under construction.
- 1971 K-Mart opened two stores.
- 1972 NI Gas broke ground.
- 1973 Last Straw broke ground.
- 1974 Goldblatt's expanded.
- 1975 Bicentennial year.

*"All have a future to look forward to, and how eager we are to become acquainted with its mysteries . . . the past with its many lessons of experience, and the present with its duties and delights, are alike forgotten in the great anxiety for the future. The past is gone, and whatever was done amiss cannot now be rectified, but the present is ours in which to act, and we might as well content ourselves with the duties of today, for tomorrow may not be ours . . ."*

— quotation from "The Leaf" - hand written New Milford Seminary (school) newspaper, dated 13 March 1861.

The above quotation is as profound today as when it was written more than one hundred years ago. Needless to say, there are mistakes and undocumented information in this study. In some cases there was conflicting information, in others there was not sufficient time to research and document understandings and facts. And, of course, there is surely information that should have been included that was not known or researched. However, this study covers my twenty year research of the New Milford community. It is hoped all readers will inform me of corrections and significant omissions.



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