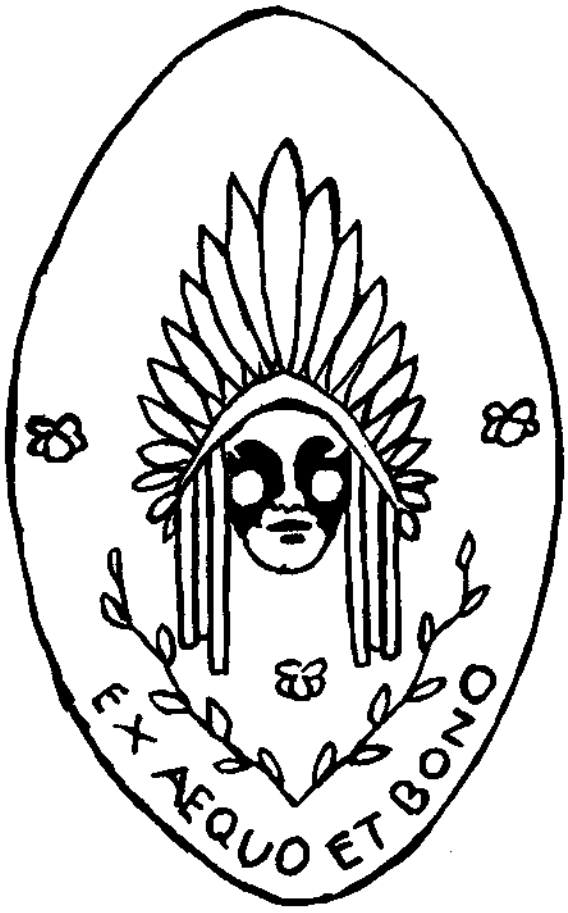
The Story of

MOKENA



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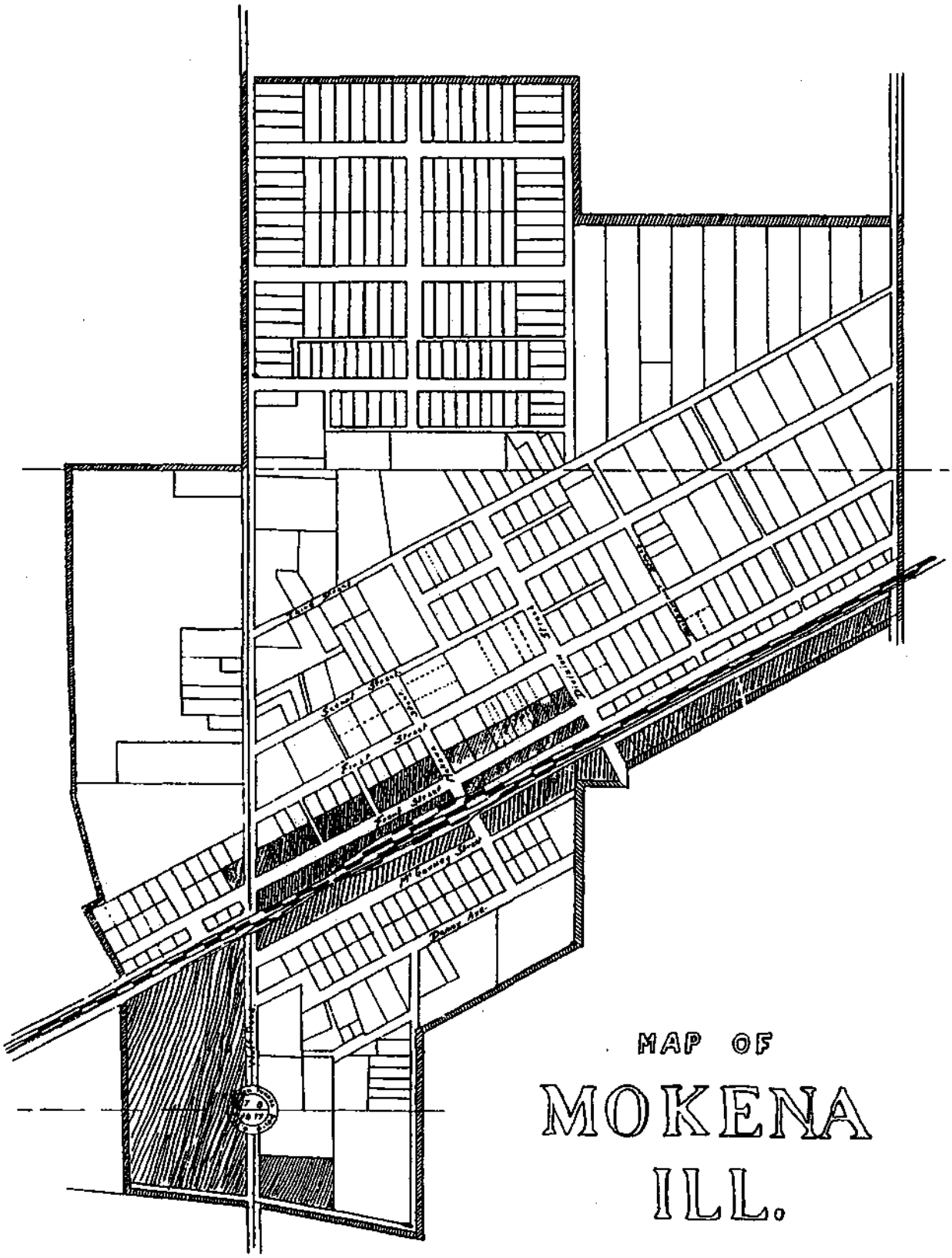
The Story of

MOKENA

Florence Pitman

Sponsored by Mokena Woman's Club

Mokena, Illinois



MAP OF

MOKENA

ILL.

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"Five general stores, two hardware stores, two drug stores, two blacksmith-shops, two wagon-shops, two harness-shops, three hotels, one furniture store, three millinery stores, two butcher-shops, and seven lager beer saloons, grain buyers, etc." Thus was the business of Mokena summarized. When? It was in the year 1878.

The population of the village then was "about six hundred inhabitants." --"Mokena, which is a neat and tasty little town, though it does not present the appearance of a place that is improving and building up very rapidly."

The historian was a true prophet; in 1940, more than 70 years after his prediction, a census showed 657 persons living in the town.

Why were very early settlers attracted to the Hickory Creek area? The woods promised them logs for their cabins, fuel for their fireplaces, and fences for their plots; also, the creek, a full-running stream at that time, was constant enough to provide water power. A sawmill built on the creek in 1834 was changed to a gristmill, for grinding grain, in the next year or two, when a run of stones was added.

To encourage settlement the government allowed persons to locate on any lands not already occupied; they could make a claim, and on building a cabin, and enclosing and cultivating a few acres, they established a pre-emption right, that is, a right to purchase the land in preference to all others at $1.25 an acre whenever the same should come into market.

The Pottawatomies, who roamed the Hickory Creek tract, were friendly to the settlers. This tribe, among the many, signed the "Treaty of Chicago" in 1833 and was moved west to the Missouri; the keen and often unscrupulous wits of the government agents thus cleared the way to put the land on the market.

Allen Denny and John McGovney were among the first to buy their claims. The former platted his addition in 1852, before the railroad was completed, modeling it after his birthplace in Devonshire, England.

Denny's legacy to unborn generations was the village park he dedicated in 1855, "to be reserved for churches and other public buildings", later specifying that the southern half be used for church purposes. Shortly after this John McGovney laid out his addition.

About one hundred years later (in 1953) the land for the Mokena Community Park was bought through the efforts of the Civic Association; the funds were raised by public subscription. This spot of wooded beauty, a part of the McNally estate, is preserved for posterity. A park district was set up in 1959.

The First Family

In 1780, "somewhere east of the mountains in Pennsylvania", James McGovney married Nancy Crockett, of the Davy Crockett clan. One of his sons, John, who married Nancy Graham, settled in the area near Mokena and was the first permanent settler in Frankfort township.

A Blackhawk Indian uprising in 1832 sent the McGovneys hurrying to the safety of Indiana, so quickly, in fact, that they left their bread baking in the oven. Six months later they returned to their cabin, found everything in good order, even their bread in the oven, thanks to the friendly Indian, a self appointed caretaker.

Three of the couple's eight children are of special interest: John, born in 1834, the first white child to "see the light" in Frankfort township; Elijah, whose farm is still being tilled, and who, when he married picked up some interesting in-laws - his wife's uncle, C. C. Van Horne, the first mayor of Joliet, and her cousin, son of C. C., who was later knighted Sir William Van Horne because he was builder of the Canadian Pacific railroad; Ozias, known as Squire McGovney, who served in turn as judge, lawyer, merchant, and banker.

In 1846 Ozias married Mathilda Jane Elsworth, a cousin of Col. Elmer E. Elsworth,. the first Union officer killed in the Civil War. Their only wedding present was a graceful ironstone sugar bowl full of honey, a gift from her grandmother, Ruth Marshall Weigent.

Mathilda Jane was a girl who hated curly hair and straightened her own with the one cosmetic at hand, butter. In her time Mokena had no doctor, but it did have Mathilda Jane. When she heard of illness, with her basket of home remedies she would set forth to care for the ailing one, unafraid of any disease; diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever - she braved them all and once was credited with saving the life of a small boy, with a physic of goose grease. One of her medicines, made of powdered rhubarb, sugar, water, essence of peppermint, and brandy, is still used by the McGovney family; quote, "It is good for anything!"

Ozias Erwin, son of the squire and Mathilda, had a significant role in the development of the village. Not only was he an insurance agent, postmaster, and merchant, but he served in turn as mayor, village trustee, and member of the school board. His wife, Georgiana Knapp, was the daughter of Christian Knapp, an organist and choir director in Chicago. He directed the first men's chorus of that city and sang at Lincoln's funeral service held there.

Ozias Erwin's eldest son, Ona Elsworth, served in village offices as his father had; in addition, he was village treasurer at the time of his death. His son, Erwin, took over and served until he died, when Erwin's sister, Elmira T., assumed the responsibility. At the present time she is treasurer of the Marshall Cemetery Association. In that burying ground rest six generations of McGovneys and five generations of Elsworths.

Elmira treasures relics of her forebears: the ironstone sugar bowl, a cherry table, and a walnut bed and dresser, brought from the East in a covered wagon.

"What's in a name?"

No less an authority than the Joliet Weekly News, in a 1910 issue, stated that the village was named for a character in Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh", a poem which was very popular when it was published in 1817. Did some romantic traveler name the town for the "Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, Mokanna"? The paper stated that "as far as can be learned no city or town in the country bears a similar name".

A later "authority" said Mokena is an Indian word meaning turtle.

The few Indians who stayed near the village after the great mass of tribes went west, were attracted by a large slough, teeming with fish, that was northeast of the village. They lived in tents and planted a little corn and a few hazelnuts.

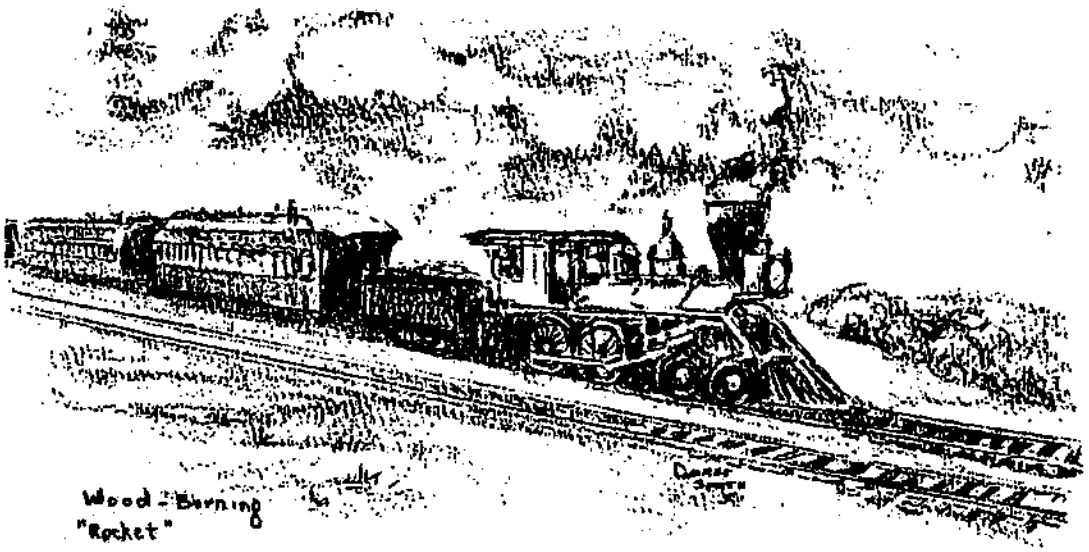
An itinerant preacher exhorted the settlers to treat the peaceful natives kindly and feed them when they were hungry; their favorite food was white man's corn bread.

After a season so dry that the slough water disappeared, the Indians gathered at the west end of Front Street, ceremoniously kissed Mokena ground, which they loved, and departed for Kankakee. They translated their word Mokena, literally, as mudhole.

Transportation

As the basic element in the growth of towns and cities, what implications are contained in the magic word, transportation. The settlers came in covered wagons, also called Hoosier wagons or prairie schooners, drawn by horse or ox teams, covered with canvas, and of remarkable capacity. Later, when the settlers needed staples from the East, caravans of ox-drawn schooners followed the trails over the prairie.

Mokena was never on a stage coach route, and passengers from the village had to depend on catching one that followed what is now Route 7 or take one that traveled Route 30. As late as 1836 residents of Joliet (then called Juliet) had to go to Plainfield to get a stage.



The first run of the Rock Island (wood-burning) Rocket (named for an English engine) was made Sunday, October 10, 1852. "The only station anywhere near ready to open was at Blue Island. The Mokena depot was barely under construction and at Joliet there were no facilities to turn the engine." It was at the insistence of these three towns that arrangements were made for this early trip.

There was "great rejoicing" along the line when that run was made; all marketing before this was done by the ox-team route to Chicago. This first return trip had to be a back-up movement, but the passengers were compensated on their return by a banquet at the Sherman House.

Until 1869 the engines burned wood, and wood yards were maintained every twenty miles. When the train stopped to "wood-up" the tender, some

of the passengers usually went up ahead to help. In Mokena the wood was cut by a straight saw standing in a vertical position and driven by a windmill.

The engines were decorated with brass trimmings, and members of the crew were never permitted to wear overalls; instead, they were dressed up in dark suits, white shirts, and stiff hats, and were "just about as uncomfortable as it was possible to make them".

Coal was used for fuel until 1923 at which time tanks of oil replaced coal in the tenders. The change was a complete one when Diesel motors supplanted the steam locomotive and are in use today.

Two news stories were of great interest to early Rock Island passengers and may be of interest to present patrons:

At the completion of the Rock Island railroad bridge over the Mississippi, a river steamer, the Effie Afton, ran into a span of the structure, setting it afire. Many believed this was maneuvered because of the fear of river freighters that railroads might supersede them as carriers. A lawsuit was started by the river men, claiming that the bridge was a menace to navigation. Abraham Lincoln was hired for the defense and won the case after appealing to the State Supreme Court.

The Rock Island experienced the "first great train robbery"; the leader was no other than Jesse James, assisted by his brother Frank. In 1873 someone suggested that it might be easier to hold up a train than a bank; coupled with that idea Jesse heard that a shipment of thousands was coming through. He picked a spot near Adair, Iowa, where No. 2 would be going up grade where there were many curves. A loosened tie snaked out with a rope caught the engineer's eye. He whistled for brakes and reversed the locomotive, which plunged down a bank and turned over. The engineer was killed and his fireman badly injured. James took about $3,000.00 from the express car and about the same amount in jewels and money from the passengers, but the $75,000.00 he had planned on hadn't been shipped.

Currently, Rock Island officials are taking up the question of combining with the Southern Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads. About three hundred passengers use the road's commutation service locally.

All that remains of an interurban trolley which plied between Joliet and Chicago Heights are a few sections of rusted rail in a field lying north of Route 30. The trolley was a "sometime" convenience for Mokena dwellers. It was put into service in 1908.

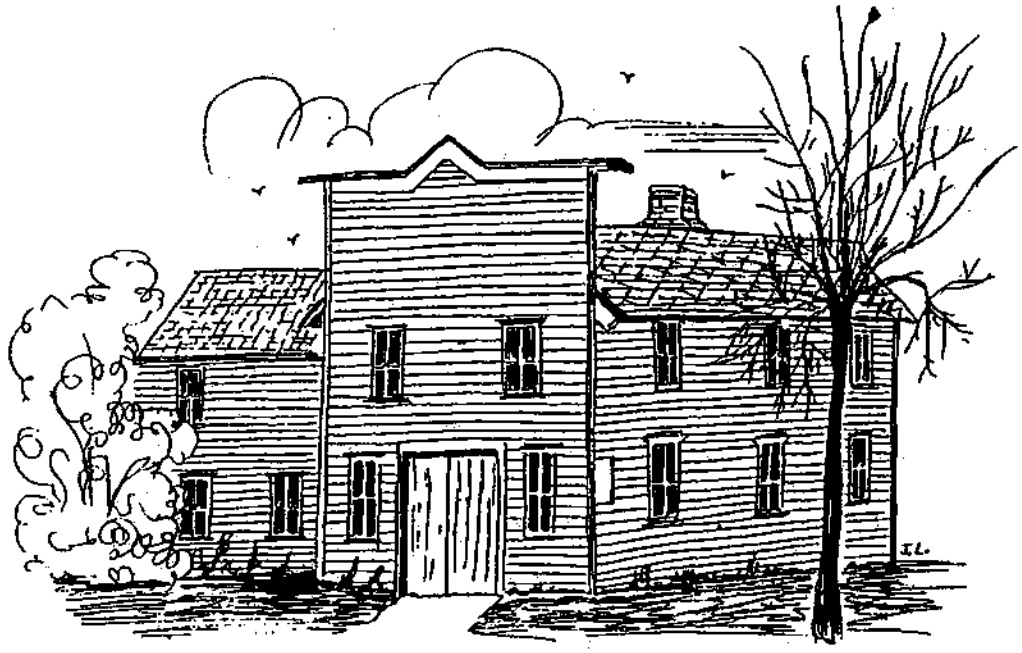
A large structure standing near the Michigan Central tracks in Frankfort was originally the carbarn. Early in the day two cars going in different directions would start from there; the one headed for Joliet pulled a milk car. The tracks to the east followed the Michigan Central route; those going west bisected Kansas Street, then cut over toward Lincoln Highway and ran adjacent to it most of the way to Joliet. A switch west of Wolf Road permitted the cars to pass on the one-track line.

The interurban crews were often neighbors, always friends of the patrons and would wait for them if they saw them coming, often if they did not. One suitor, a conductor on the line who lived in Joliet, when calling on a young lady near Frankfort, would leave a stone on a certain fencepost near the track, a signal to the last crew through at night, to be sure to wait for him.

Competition with automobiles put the interurban trolley venture in the red, and the last trip was made in 1928.

The ox and horse-drawn wagons that brought the settlers to Mokena were soon replaced by lumber and spring wagons. The latter, early equipped with two or three seats for family use, was the forerunner of "the surrey with the fringe on top". Later, the early "convertible" was a shiny top-buggy hitched to a fast driving-horse or team.

In addition to serving as draught animals, the oxen and horses powered stationary machines; big dogs were sometimes used in treadmills to help with lighter chores.



Blacksmith Shop

A livery stable, located for years at the rear of 11104 Front Street, "put you in the driver's seat" and did a brisk business when out-of-town salesmen wanted to make nearby towns. The owner, a harness-maker, kept shop in the front. (Limburger cheese made next door added to the olefactory interest.)

Families and, of course, courting couples enjoyed picnics when they drove to favorite spots, taking lunch for themselves and the horses. Hay-rides, sleigh-rides, and skating parties furnished entertainment. Young and old delighted in charivaris, when they serenaded newly-weds with the din of cowbells, kettles, and tin pans until the flustered "groom" provided a treat for the noisy guests.

The latter part of the 1800's brought the motor car, which rapidly replaced the family horse. Mokena's first auto, a 1911 Ford, was owned by the grain elevator operator. The one permanent garage and gas station was opened in 1916 in a building at the rear of 11020 Front Street, and sold Fords, the first, a new 1916 model for $360. Shortly afterward competitors opened a sales and service firm next door, at the front of the lot, and sold Overlands and Chandlers. Their partnership was soon dis-

solved, and one of the firm went back to his original trade, harness-making.

Tractors soon motorized farm machinery; now riding horses and show teams remind one of the past.

"By thy prairies verdant growing"

The fertile farm land around Mokena had a tremendous effect on the business of the village, which was considered centered in an unusually productive dairy, grain, and stock country. The general stores sold clothing, dry goods, and groceries. Once a visitor in town was amazed to see a man clerk modeling one of the small-waisted, wide-hipped, full-busted corsets of the old days as he tried to assist a customer in making a selection.

The storekeepers bought butter and eggs from the farmers. A farm where few cows were milked meant that their butter was packed into "stone" jars in layers as it accumulated; no doubt the taste of the bottom layer is what led to the early use of butterine.

The first grain sold in the area had to be taken to Chicago by oxteam, a tortuous trip over the rough prairie. After it was possible to ship it by rail, local buyers started in business, but the grain had to be shoveled into the cars by hand until 1878, when a steam-mill was converted into an elevator. By 1910 as much as 100,000 bushels of grain were handled annually.

In 1861 the first can of milk was shipped to the city. It was carted to the Rock Island "Peru accommodation" by a big dog. The business continued to grow until a milk train carried the full cans in in the morning and the empties back at night.

In 1907 a $30,000 Bowman dairy plant was built on Wolf Road, adjacent to the Rock Island tracks, and started with 58 cans of milk; this grew to two carloads by 1910. After the milk was sent to Chicago to be processed and prohibition was repealed, the building was used as a brewery; a wallpaper mill is using it now.

Before 1900 livestock yards with feeding pens were built on the south side of the tracks at the east end of town. Cattle and hogs were driven into town or brought in by wagons; when a carload was made up it would be shipped into the Chicago stockyards.

Livestock was loaded at night. About 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. the engineer of the night freight would summon the cattle buyer by sounding the whistle. The buyer would arrive and run the stock into the cars, then ride the caboose into the city to stay with the animals until they were sold. Many Western cattle were unloaded at the local yards to be fed and watered if they had been in transit longer than the law allowed.

It was the custom of some farmers to give their hogs, ready for market, a last meal of soft coal slack. A mineral lack in the pigs' diet probably accounted for this unusual appetite; the coal not only added to their weight but created a thirst that meant more tonnage.

Now, eighty-five years later than the introduction to this story, which enumerated the artisans, merchants and professional men in Mokena, here is offered a list of more than sixty in the same category: a bakery, a bank, two barbershops, nine building contractors, four beauty shops, two cabinetmakers, a drug store, a notion store, two electric shops, four filling stations, a garage, three grocery stores, a hardware store, an implement

company, three insurance agencies (two handling real estate), a laundromat, two lumber yards, a meat market, a newspaper office, two plumbers, a phosphate service, two restaurants, a shoe repair shop, a tailor shop, three taverns, a trucker and excavator, two TV and radio repair shops, two well-drillers, a wholesale oil company, two industries (a foundry and a wallpaper mill); professions: two doctors, two dentists and a lawyer. Near-by are a dairy, a dry-goods store, a florist and a lawn mower shop.

"Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,"

The old cemetery on Wolf Road, at Denny Avenue, now named for the pioneers, was in use as early as 1839 when Charles Denny, a Revolutionary War veteran, was buried there. One hundred years later the Daughters of the American Revolution, General Henry Dearborn chapter, erected a stone in his memory, replacing the original which was found broken and the pieces scattered.

Pioneer Cemetery was in a sorry state at the time the first Garden Club was functioning; lilac bushes ran rampant, and the grass was knee-high. The gardeners' love of tidiness and order made them forget it was consecrated ground; they ordered a road-grader to go in to level and clear it. The mammoth machine levelled everything in its path; opportunists stole the uprooted gravestones. Public indignation started the recovery of as many stones as possible. Because the grave mounds had been obliterated, the stones were set up in rows which made it easier to mow the grass!

Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery is two and a half miles southeast of Mokena at the site of the original church. One of the first elders of the church, J. G. Geuther, donated a part of its two acres in 1850. It is in current use.

Marshall Cemetery lies about two miles west of Mokena on Regan Road, on land donated over a hundred years ago by A. O. Marshall, a circuit judge of Will County, who lived in Marley. Many pioneer names can be found there, and it is still in use.

Two lads of bygone days are buried there, a Chinese boy, and a Negro, whose family lived in the village. The circumstances of the former's death can no longer be recalled, but the latter died of scarlet fever in spite of the tender care of Mathilda Jane McGovney.

St. John's Cemetery, south of town on Wolf Road, was started in 1863 for church members only. After additional land was added, in 1925, it was open for public use. It comprises approximately ten acres of land; a small section is maintained by the Veterans of Foreign Wars for deceased comrades.

St. Mary's churchyard, of about two and one-half acres, donated by the Enders family, was given to the church in 1864 with the understanding that the land be used as a cemetery. It is still in use.

"as the music changes,"

Only by conjecture can the music of the first settlers be described; we do know that the early fiddler was welcomed at social gatherings. The families often gathered at the old cottage organ to sing hymns and ballads of the day; later the piano centered the group.

A cornet band formed in 1904, with its twelve members dressed in

red coats and white trousers, was a snappy group. A Boy Scout band organized in 1913 through the efforts of the school principal, and eked out by adults, marched in a Joliet parade to help sell Liberty bonds for World War I.

These performers presented Wednesday night concerts in a bandstand in the village park. Their music was pleasing to their audiences with the exception of one involuntary listener who lived on Third Street and was made furious by "the noise"; thus is the Muse, Euterpe, snubbed.

It was about this time that the "Mokena March and Two-step" was composed by Miss Emma Klose, who had had several other piano selections published.

A school band sponsored by a Band Parents Association in 1936 was successful for several years. Then later the idea caught on again with the Band Boosters backing up their children until in 1957 the School Board voted to maintain it as part of the curriculum. For several years as a band and individually the members have won high honors in competition.

"Church to reverend memories dear,"

The Immanuel Lutheran Church, started in 1850 by a group of German immigrants, was called the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church. Services were held in a frame church three miles northeast of Frankfort for 65 years. In 1915 the present church was built in Mokena.

Plans are under way now to construct a church on LaPorte Road near the new parsonage. The Rev. August Bueltmann has been pastor since 1959.

A record of the Baptist Society of Mokena goes back to 1851. After the Methodist Church was built in 1867 it was used on alternate Sundays by the Baptists; the two sects conducted a union Sabbath school that met every week. After a controversy arose in 1890 as to which group owned the building, a lawsuit was started and in 1900 a court found in favor of the Methodists.

The Parkview Baptist Church was organized in 1954 with cottage prayer meetings. It was later given the use of the V.F.W. Hall, gratis, and met there until 1956 when the present building was erected. The Rev. W. James Johnston is the present pastor.

St. John's United Church of Christ was founded by an assemblage of German immigrants in 1862 under the name, United German Evangelical Church of Mokena.

In this first church the seats were arranged to form a center section and two side sections. Women and children sat on the left-hand side, men on the right, with the overflow from each side in the center. A few hardy individualists escorted their wives to the center section and sat with them, but this didn't happen until the turn of the century; these same brave ones wore the latest in men's fashions, serge outfits of "ice cream" (white) pants with dark blue coats, which caused much comment.

Services were conducted in English for the first time in 1907.

The Frauen Verein (Women's Association) formed in 1904 and worked faithfully for the church. Once, when one member reminded another that it would be her turn to serve at the next meeting, she was startled by the answer she received, "Oh, yes! When one runs with the wolves one must howl with them."

In 1923 the present church was built adjacent to the park, and the old structure was converted into a duplex dwelling which stands at First and Division. A new educational unit was added to St. John's in 1960. The Rev. Theodore C. Wimmler started as pastor the same year.

St. Mary's Catholic Church, founded in 1864 and made up of nine families, commenced their services in a small structure on a wooded country road. The building, so beautiful in its setting, still invites artists to portray it.

Catholic Church

The parishioners were first served by diocesan priests, later by Redemptionists from Chicago and Blue Island. Since 1914 the Franciscans have been in charge.

At the present time masses are offered in the colorful new building on 195th Street, which was erected in 1956. The Rev. Cecil Koop, O.F.M. has been pastor of the church since 1953.

Tentative plans are being considered now for restoring the old church, which could be used as a chapel.

Tradition has it that the sale of a stray horse, owner never identified, provided the funds for the first lumber used in framing the Methodist Church in 1867. Before that the members met in the village school. The first pastor of the church also served Gooding's Grove and the English Settlement Church near Orland. "As the only English speaking minister for miles around", he officiated at marriage ceremonies, funeral rites and baptisms, over a large area.

The Ladies' Aid Society, started in 1904, was instrumental in keeping the church afloat. One member, asked to furnish a cake for a social event, found herself completely out of flavoring; being of an inventive nature she used her best perfume instead of extract. Her mouth-watering three-layer cake was piled high with delicious looking icing, a product to make any cook proud until it was partaken of; then came the verdict, "It tastes exactly like shaving lather!"

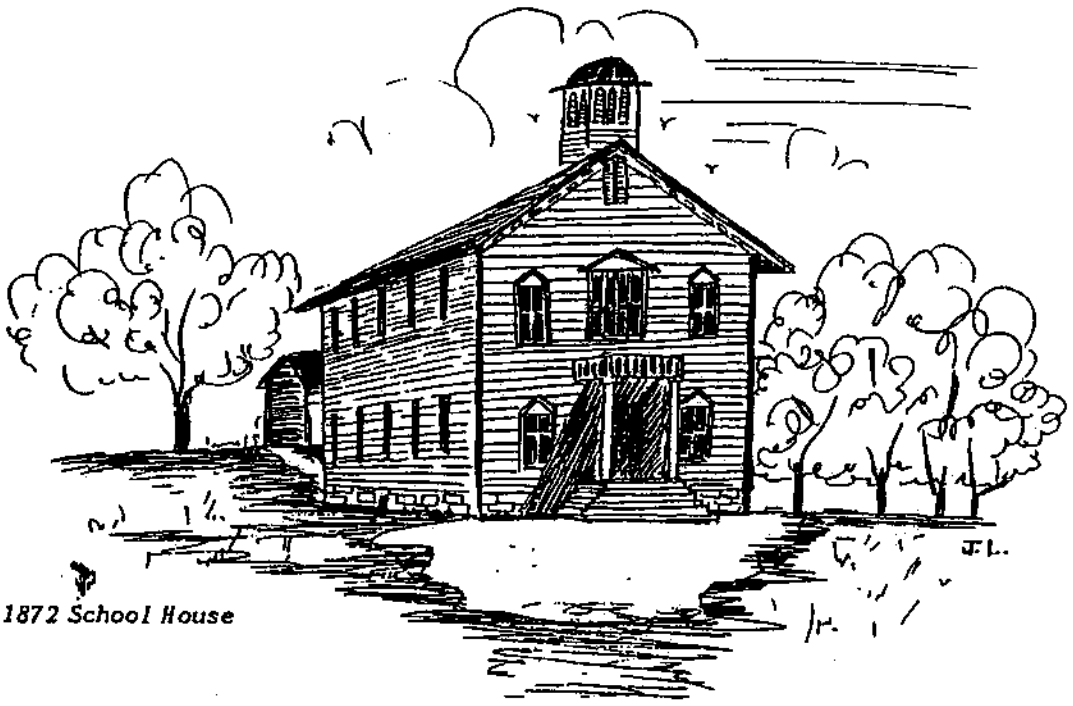
In 1954 the old church building was remodeled and a second floor installed thus creating space for classrooms above and a fellowship hall below. A beautiful chapel was erected to the east. At present, plans are being worked on to buy land for future expansion. The Rev. Robert Watson is the present pastor.

The Post Office

The first post office actually within the village limits was established in 1853. As early as 1837 the settlers were served at Chelsea, a town started in Hickory Creek woods. The Chelsea office received mail once a week by a "horse express fast line" that followed the route between La-Porte, Indiana, and Joliet. When the Rock Island came through, Chelsea, partly laid out as a village, was abandoned, and by the eighties had completely disappeared.

As mail-order business increased and increasing amounts of parcel post were handled, a curious young man watched carefully to learn "who had ordered from the catalog". The postmaster, who considered mail a private transaction, asked for advice from Washington and received the suggestion to line the inside of the cage with cardboard.

Rural free delivery was instituted in 1905. In 1960 the office was moved to the specially designed, handsome brick building it now occupies. Modern equipment, and loading and parking space allow faster mail handling.



1872 School House

"the school-house by the road,"

Mokena's first school house was a small frame building, constructed in 1855 at a cost of $1,000. The next one, built in 1872, was a two-story frame with a stone basement. With the furnishings this building cost about $10,000 and was acclaimed one of the finest in Will County although the plumbing consisted of a pump in the side yard and two privies in the back.

The Carpenter Street School, opened in 1929, housed grades one to eight and a two-year high school. The original building cost $29,000, and an addition made to it in 1951 cost $52,000.

Willow Crest School, with six rooms, was built in 1956 at a cost of $90,000; six additional rooms constructed in 1959 were $84,000.

In the nineties it was the universal policy of parents to start their children to school with the admonishment, "If you get a whipping at school, you will get another when you get home." One man recalls his own disappointment when his family moved near enough to the school to hear when he was taken to the woodshed.

At the Carpenter Street School the boys' shower solved one delicate problem. Boys, who wanted a few hides to sell, set traps and would check on them on the way to school. The fortunate (?) ones who found a skunk trapped could be sent to the shower until deodorized!

The boys who were tempted to play hooky in the fall to go nutting learned that there was no stain so persistent as that from black walnut husks which invariably proclaimed their guilt.

From the formation of the Parent-Teachers Association in 1925 its benefits were recognized. Despite the '29 depression the group raised funds for a beautiful velvet curtain for the stage and later bought playground equipment, had Christmas parties and field trips.

Today the P.T.A. still functions well and continues to serve its principal purpose, promoting a harmonious relationship between parents and teachers for the benefit of the children, furthered by the short, quiet conferences made possible by the meetings.

"Wherefore men fight"

In Mokena and neighborhood, in the period before the Civil War, there were definite feelings for and against helping runaway slaves. In fairness one must say that the feeling against helping them seems, from this later period, to have stemmed more from respect for the law than from hostility toward the Negro. Several homes served as stations for the "Underground railroad" to spirit the fugitives toward Canada.

When the Civil War broke loose 34 Mokena men joined the ranks of the 100th of Illinois, the Will County regiment; four were killed in action; three died because of wounds or sickness, and eight were knocked out of the fighting.

In World War I four men went into service from Mokena. All four returned home safely although they had suffered from wounds or gas attacks.

About 125 men whose post office address was Mokena, entered the service in World War II. Killed in action were Second Lieutenants Berle Needham and Oliver P. Lauffer.

In 1936 WW I veterans formed a Veterans of Foreign Wars post at Lincoln Estates; known as William Martin Post 725, it was later brought to Mokena and met in Hatch Hall, now 19711 Mokena Street. The V.F.W. Hall on Wolf Road was built in 1948 by the veterans, with donations and other help from local firms.

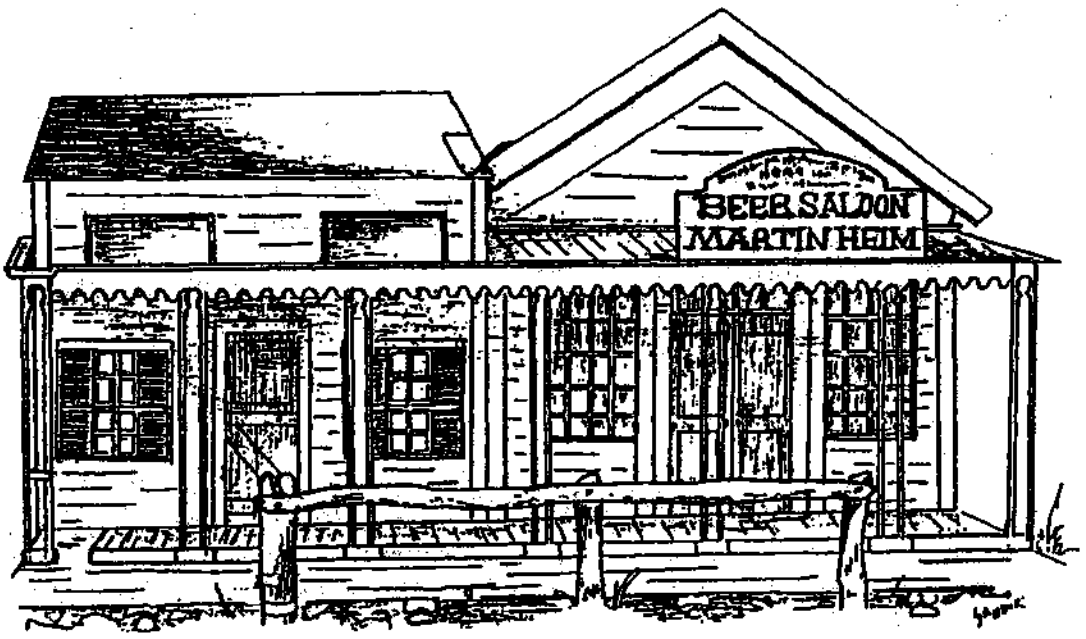
Red Cross chapters were formed during both wars and were active while their help was needed. The Woman's Service Club was started in 1942 by the mothers, wives and sisters of the men in the Armed Forces;

their purpose was to remember the men on special days with cards and gifts.

In considering the veterans' organizations one is impressed by the idealism of their aims which include services to hospitalized veterans, promoting the veneration of the flag in youngsters, benefits to veterans' children, and even reaching toward world peace.

The Amvets Post 183, organized in 1951, meets in their commander's home. Locally, they care for Pioneer Cemetery, assist needy comrades and contribute to benefits.

The Women's Auxiliaries to both posts are active in work for disabled veterans and both back up the national programs.



"The Beer Saloon" - later home of News-Bulletin.

The News

The Mokena Advertiser, "a spicy little newspaper", was started in 1874 by C. A. Jones and served the community until his death in 1877.

In 1919 William Semmler printed the first News-Bulletin. It was circulated in six neighboring towns, starting in 1925 as the Tinley Park Times, in '26 as the Orland Park Herald, and in '52 as the New Lenox Press. All were put out under the caption, Semmler Newspapers. The family worked on the staff.

Following the tradition of the fourth estate, the editor used his papers to work for public good and community improvement; for example, with other civic-minded citizens, he worked for ten years to get Wolf Road paved from Rt. 30 north to the Cook County line. After his death in '46 his family carried on for 12 years, then sold the paper, which is today a part of the Graphic Newspapers of Lemont.

The News-Bulletin office merits attention; built in 1949 it was used as a store by Semmler's grandfather; laborers laying the first railroad tracks were among its patrons. The black walnut and oak timbers which frame it stand staunchly erect as do the ones in many of the town's "oldest houses".

The first homes of the settlers were log cabins, but a carpenter who came to town in 1855 built most of the frame houses of the era, many extant and in use, a tribute to the old-time workmen and the native materials they used.

The Village

When was the Village of Mokena incorporated? Frankfort Township was organized in 1850 and a supervisor elected; until the village was incorporated its affairs were handled by the township.

An 1887 history states the village was not incorporated at that time. Another "authority" says incorporation was forced on it in 1854, for the purpose of licensing the saloons "which were run wide open all the time so that things got into a deplorable state" but evidently that action didn't "take".

On May 24, 1880, an election was held to vote for or against incorporating; the votes were canvassed by a county judge, 50 votes for and 22 against. The incorporation is recorded as of June 16, 1880.

The first election to vote for officials included a constable, who was bonded at $2,000 but whose salary was $30 a year. To make it possible for him to perform his duties the board contracted for a calaboose to be built for $125; this was approved and accepted January 5, 1881.

At a meeting of the board held in May, '81, the members voted that all men, of ages 21 to 50, should work two ten-hour days at $1.25 a day, as a poll tax for the improvement of roads in the village, and a street commissioner was appointed. In the same year a board of health was named, which included a doctor who vaccinated all the village children against smallpox.

In 1911, because the wooden sidewalks were deemed unsafe, the council ordered property owners to have cement sidewalks laid, with the village sharing the expense. Young roller-skaters appreciated this sign of progress. Other signs of progress are noted elsewhere.

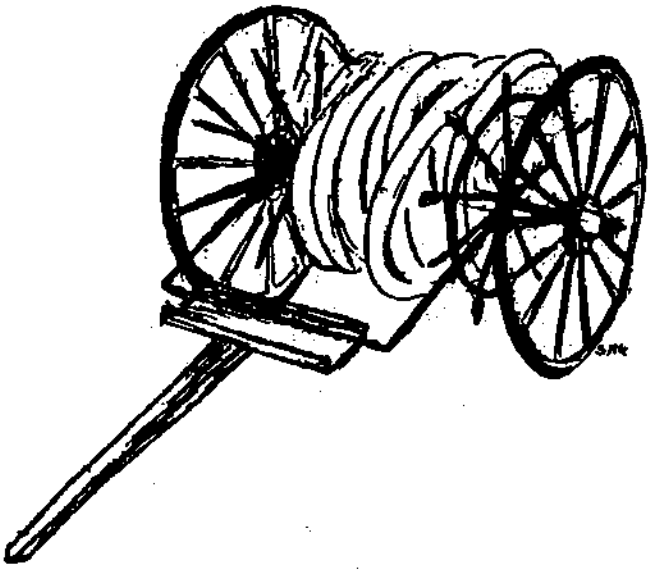
This chronicle, with its record of changes, confirms the opinion that the early village fathers were forward looking and conscious of growing needs. Until recent years it was their custom to don overalls and take tools in hand to clean out blocked tile and correct similar situations for the purpose of saving the village money. Such dedication!

The Fire Department

A dilapidated hand-drawn hose cart is the relic left to picture the fire-fighting of early days. We can imagine the bucket brigades that formed when a fire started and the despair felt when they thought of only a horse tank of water to work with. The fire fighters must have appreciated this hose that could be pushed into a well for more water.

The old hose cart was still in use when the Mokena Volunteer Fire Department was organized in 1917, with 29 members, which included the fire marshal and his assistant. The department was reorganized in '32, and the first truck-engine was bought in '33 for $283.85. A part of the members' duties then was to inspect every chimney in the village.

Again reorganized in '45, the group was called the Community Volunteer Fire Department and reached out some distance from town to take in members and appoint directors.



A truck purchased in '46 cost $4,967, and an inhalator obtained in '56 was $493. In '57 a tank truck was added to the equipment at a price of $2,448.95; a used Civil Defense fire truck was obtained in '60.

The funds for a new fire house built in 1960 and for the equipment they now have, were raised by the men having picnics, parties, dances, carnivals, and even donkey games; recently the voters made the area a fire district, and need for the extra duties will be eliminated.

"With lantern and with ladder"

Street lights! A sign of progress in any small town and the first in Mokena were kerosene lamps, installed about 1885. The lamplighters were paid $100 a year for doing this chore which involved carrying a ladder and cleaning equipment. One man who remembers doing this job as a boy also tells of pumping the organ in church.

In 1898, after trying a sample gasoline light, the board decided to change to this type of lamp; the lamplighter then had to carry a tin bucket with a blow torch in it to generate the burners. The gasoline lamps proved satisfactory and were not replaced until electricity was brought to town in 1913.

When the electricity was first turned on, it happened that an automatic switch did not function properly, and the street lights stayed on all day. Two days later a news column of a neighboring town ran the following item, "Our neighbor, Mokena, is getting quite chesty over their new electric lights; in fact they feel so proud of them that so far they have kept them burning all the time, days as well as nights. Well, we all know they have them now, so they might as well shut them off, and save the electricity."

A string of 21 ornamental lights installed in 1948 has turned Front Street into a "great white way".

Gas was made available in 1927 and was installed at the company's expense for those who signed up at once.

"with Casey at the bat."

In the nineties baseball was very popular when the local team played neighboring towns. By 1900 the home teams were organized and in 1910 were reorganized when they moved from their first field, on Wolf Road near 190th, to a new diamond laid out east of the village. In 1915 they won 17 out of 22 games. Their shortest game played with their greatest rival lasted 45 minutes, no run until the ninth, and then Mokena lost 1 to 0.

Feelings and bets ran high when the local team played Frankfort in a series of three games, and at least 1,000 spectators crowded the bleachers. A barbed wire fence crossing left field gave the home team an advantage; the left fielder had practice in hurdling that fence, and his uniform showed it.

As a result of the baseball rivalry a feud started between Frankfort and Mokena; some old-timers recollect it yet.

One incident (just one of many) occurred when a Frankfort lad became interested in a Mokena lass but found that a local swain had the same idea. He learned that his Frankfort rival and his friends planned to come en masse so the local boys prepared for the visitors. When the local suitor rapped at his young lady's door, the enemy rushed to attach him, but Mokena's heroes waiting in ambush, put them to rout. Only sticks and clods were used by both sides, but the Mokena valiant won the fair lady's hand, no serious injuries were sustained, and (apparently) "a good time was had by all".

Through the years the interest in baseball kept up until after WW II, when it turned to softball. When the Community Park was opened, Little League ball got started and fortunately for the small fry they have faithful sponsors backing them, the Mokena Baseball Association.

"took my girl to a fancy ball;"

The first dance hall was probably an open-air building on LaPorte Road near the entrance to the park, with dancing to the music of piano, cornet, violin, bass fiddle, and drums. Another gathering place was Liess Hall, on the second floor of a store building on Front Street; it was used by fraternal orders until it was levelled by fire. It was rebuilt to provide a one-story hall which was used for dancing, roller-skating, oyster suppers, and medicine shows, among other "social events". The building now houses the garage.

Fraternal groups which were started in town were the Modern Woodmen of America, Camp No. 3180 in 1895, the Court of Honor, Court No. 991, 1899, the White Cross Council, No. 8, 1900, and the only one extant now, the Royal Neighbors, Sunbeam Camp No. 6054, of 1909.

In June of 1907 business men of the village organized the Men's Club with "pleasure as the object". Five acres of Cappel's Grove, now Woodland Circle, were leased and a pavilion, with a floor 50 by 100 feet, was erected in time for its first 4th of July dance. Shares in the venture were sold, and the shareholders helped with the work of putting on the dances and selling refreshments; they were pleased with the dividends it paid.

A contemporary news reporter commenting on the crowds attracted by the moonlight dances put on there, called the pavilion one of the finest in Will County. The patrons who came there to dance were an orderly

group; no liquor was sold, and a marshal was in attendance. Gasoline lights illuminated the refreshment stand and the grounds as well as the dance floor.

For several years one couple attended all the masquerades given in Mokena and neighboring towns. Invariably they walked off with the first prize of those offered for the best-costumed dancers; others, resplendent in satins and silks, had to give way. What was the gimmick? The first prize winners were dressed as national figures, George and Martha Washington, Betsy Ross and Patrick Henry, and the like; the judges seemed to think if they didn't give prizes for such costumes their own patriotism might be questioned.

Church picnics and other outings were given at the dance pavilion and it was in use for many years, but the advent of cars brought competition from further amusements and the building was dismantled.

Water and sewer systems

The village water system was inaugurated in 1898 with a 160-foot well on Front Street east of Niethammer Avenue. A windmill pumped the water into the tank, still in use, and later a 365-foot well was drilled nearby. The tank holds 60,000 gallons of water, and was installed, tower and all, for $5,000. Before 1910 a gasoline engine replaced the windmill, and since 1913 the pump has been powered by electricity.

Common clay or field tile was used for the town's first sewer, put in only for low spot drainage and storm water. For private homes it was usually a two- or at the most a three-holer, according to Chic Sales, located at the end of a long walk on the back lot-line. In later years furnished with a Sears catalog, it was appreciated only by Halloween pranksters, who considered it hilarious fun to move the small building to the most conspicuous place in town.

After running water was made available for the village homes, plumbing could be moved inside, if used with septic tanks or drainage fields. As more homes were built, the tile could not handle storm water and other sewage and, in 1958, a sanitary sewer with complementary treatment plant, was installed; "with an eye to the future" the first was built large and the latter capable of expansion.

"Little drops of water,"

In 1900 D. T. Jones had a well drilled on property south of Denny Avenue. After Chicago chemists analyzed the water they reported that it had medicinal properties. A bottling plant was erected, and the water was sold through Chicago and Joliet agents. After Jones sold the land and business to a wealthy Chicago woman, a pipeline was laid to a standpipe near the Rock Island tracks, and with a gasoline engine the mineral water was pumped into 4,000-gallon tank cars.

The water was shipped to Englewood and bottled in a plant adjacent to the Rock Island there. It has been estimated that millions of gallons of this water, recommended as being "good for various kinds of human ailments such as stomach trouble, rheumatism, etc." were sold.

This mineral water was a laxative and certainly more palatable than castor oil, then in general use. Because of the water's sulphur content who can say it was not a good substitute for the loathsome sulphur and

molasses mixture administered to the children then as a "spring tonic and blood purifier"?

Barely recalled, and with no details available, there were several other enterprises, which existed for short or long periods: a horse-powered sawmill on Tinley Park Road, a brickyard on Francis Road, a pottery in the Mineral Springs area, and a grist-mill on Front Street, which proved that some of the villagers were, at least, versatile.

"Hello Central"

Telephones were brought into town about 1903 by the Northwestern Company; you could crank long and short rings for the neighbors on your six- to eight-party line, or signal "Central" to connect you with more distant 'phones.

Until the board was moved to Joliet the local operator gave you personal service, and most obligingly. If you told her your plans, when you were going visiting, she would ring you there; she would put you in touch with your party even if she had just happened to see him going down Front Street. "Rubbernecks" were common on the party lines, but, remember, radio and TV were not available then for entertainment.

The Bank

Before the State Bank was established in 1909, a few local merchants served the community as bankers. A bank started in Frankfort failed; Mokena school funds had been deposited there. The local school directors felt responsible for this and signed to make good on the transaction, a gesture which could have resulted in their own bankruptcy.

The business of the State Bank started with capital stock of $25,000, in the brick and Bedford stone building which, with its furnishings, cost $5,000. Four robberies dot its history. The first, about 1912, failed when an attempt to blow open the vault door resulted in jamming the door.

The second robbery occurred in October of 1924 after the bank was thoroughly "cased" by a Vernon Touzen who for several days boarded in a private home, squired a few local belles around and posed as a prohibition officer, assigned to watch the old cheese factory, in the woods on Route 45, where beer had been discovered in the making. The criminal's brother, George Touzen, was also in town some time before the robbery; the two made friends with the local police officer and traded guns with him. He was accused of aiding in the crime, but later his innocence was established.

When the appointed hour for the holdup came, shortly after noon one day five men entered the bank, forced two customers into a rear room and with a "big 45 Colt automatic" persuaded the cashier to get money ($4,000) from the vault; they drove away in "a big touring car". The telephone exchange manager notified police authorities in the neighboring towns. The village fathers stated that thereafter all strangers coming into town would be questioned as to their business and asked to move on if distrusted.

In 1933, during the bank moratorium, the bank was closed for a week but reopened before the Joliet banks.

A third holdup attempt, in 1934, was thwarted by the assistant cashier who jerked a safety lock lever, thereby dropping a shield of bulletproof glass over the window and barring a door to the inner sanctum.

A week-end break-in in 1956 yielded no loot.

"All the world's a stage,"

Unique in the annals of Mokena was a couple who made the town their home for almost thirty years, Colonel and Mrs. Don C. Hall. Before coming to the village in 1923 they had barnstormed, not only playing medicine shows but in a repertoire of Shakespearean plays and other classics, impressively presented.

They were born in Wisconsin, where he was once a member of the State Legislature, but had travelled so far afield that he witnessed the shooting of Wild Bill Hickok in Deadwood, South Dakota, and his wife became a personal friend of Calamity Jane.

At first they used two railroad cars for their troupe and equipment, but owing to conditions during WWI these had to be replaced by trucks. As years passed, members of their family, including their granddaughters, worked with them, even forming an orchestra in addition to their histrionics.

When the Colonel (title, honorary) first came to town, his appearance attracted attention because of his long white hair, his mustache and goatee, emphasized by his ten-gallon hat and Prince Albert coat, for street wear. In comparison, Mrs. Hall was a tiny brunette, with glossy chestnut (natural) hair, which kept its color through the years. In manner he was a courtly gentleman and always showed his wife the deference due a gentlewoman.

During the Chicago World's Fair the Halls had a concession called the "Days of Forty-nine". Before hitch-hiking became illegal they took it up as a hobby and by 1945 had covered 40,000 miles. By this means they visited both San Francisco and New York Fairs where they were publicly recognized by officials.

It can be said that this couple devoted their lives to others' entertainment, believed strongly in temperance, and never became static. They lived active lives until her death at 85, in 1951, and his, two years later, at 86. Their ashes rest at Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

"E Pluribus Unum"

The Mokena Camp Fire Girls started in 1911. In 1916 they led the observance of Memorial Day in the village and sponsored a 4th of July parade with the Men's Club of that era. The group was active until 1920.

A Boy Scout troop was formed in 1912, but later a dearth of leaders cost them several inactive years. Many times they carried on activities themselves, always ready to accept leadership when it was available. Fortunately during the 1930's they were able to interest men to head their group, and today under dedicated guidance have worked through the Scouting program to top honors for Eagle Scout.

The formation of Girl Scout groups, about 1925, which followed the Camp Fire Girls, provided years of benefit to the members. They, also, have profited by devoted leaders, as the need for their programs increases year by year.

In 1915 the first Mokena Woman's Club was formed, with a purpose, "to promote culture". It became a member of the State Federation and seemed to be headed toward success when the members decided that music should be taught in the public school and that they (the club) would offer to furnish a singing teacher with no expense to the school board.

When the club president appeared at a school board session to make this magnanimous offer, the board members, it seemed, took offense not only because of the implied criticism of their management but also because the petitioner was a woman.

The club president resented the manner in which the youngest board member vehemently expressed his opinion of the whole issue. She reported back to the club members that at least she had the last word when she admonished him, "Don't talk back to me, young man. I changed your diapers when you were a baby." It had seemed a worthy cause but outside opinions ran rife and were varied, so that was the beginning of the end for the first woman's club.

The second Mokena Woman's Club, started in 1960, is a member of the State Federation. Its purpose is service; among its projects is the promotion of worthy causes, sponsoring a non-profit kindergarten and helping in the activities of groups who pay regular visits to the Tinley Park Hospital patients.

The first Garden Club formed in 1929 and soon joined the Garden Club of Illinois. The members created many beauty spots in the village and won several awards at the annual flower shows in Chicago. The club flourished for several years, and trees at Carpenter Street School as well as those along several parkways still attest to its work.

The new Garden Club was formed in January, '62 and held the first meeting the next month. They have made plantings at the post office and gives promise of being a real asset to the village.

The 4H boys of the Mokena area belong to the Frankfort-New Lenox unit which started in 1933 and has a history of success.

The girls' 4H group were known as the Jolly Troopers and were formed in 1943. They disbanded in '54, but a successful "Busy Hour" club is now carrying on under the same leader.

The Civic Association organized in 1938 with the motive implied by the name. The never-to-be-forgotten project, the Community Park, was told of heretofore. The successful Homecomings they sponsored will be remembered by hundreds; they also sponsored the Boy Scouts.

The Frankfort-Mokena Home Bureau was started in 1938 for home and community improvement. It is still functioning auspiciously but under a new name, Homemakers' Extension Service.

The Book Club, which was begun in 1939, bought recommended books which formed a nucleus for the Mokena Library now in operation.

At first kept in the home of a member, who acted as librarian, the collection soon outgrew the available space and was moved to the Village Hall, thence to a room in a building on Front at Mokena Street, Its present location is just east of the post office.

In the meantime the practice of borrowing State books was started; club members share the librarian duties. The vision of the Book Club members has not only provided reading for all ages but with foresightedness they are systematically encouraging the love of reading in children. The library with 2,000 volumes and 400 State books is open Wednesdays from 3 to 5 and 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

A Woman's Athletic Club lined up in 1939 but was of short duration although the gals seemed to enjoy their softball and archery while it lasted.

The Wayfarers, in 1949, as members of a Masonic order, with their

families, gathered as a group "strictly for fun" and drew many out-of-towners, some from a distance.

With serious aims, the Businessmen's Association was started in 1950; in 1957 the name was changed to Chamber of Commerce and it was chartered by the State C. of C. Its primary purpose is to promote a better understanding between the businessmen and the townspeople. This year it will hold its second fiesta on July 4th, which will feature a parade and end with fireworks.

The Village Players, beginning in 1951, staged several successful plays. Later they combined their talent with a New Lenox group and still later the group called themselves the Lincoln-Way Players. They have not disbanded but are inactive at present.

The Lions Club, organized in '52 and chartered in '53, is concerned with helping the blind and with community needs. A few of its numerous projects are glasses for needy children, eye tests for all grade school pupils, playground equipment, support for institutions for the blind and Trinity Retarded Children's School, rent for the Library, Christmas baskets, Easter egg hunts, and support of school activities. House numbering was changed in 1961 and now conforms to Chicago's system. The Lions donated a large sum toward the cost of street signs and made it possible to have uniform house number panels.

Civil Defense duties were brought to the attention of Mokena officials in 1954. Several men have been interested in trying to carry out the prescribed program, but the community has been slow in taking it up as seems to be the case nation-wide.

The Mokena Plan Commission was created by an ordinance passed in July, '57, which was approved by the mayor. It provided for twelve members to be appointed by the mayor or the trustees with the approval of the board. A program was adopted to cooperate with Frankfort and New Lenox but the latter withdrew later. The plan provides for the orderly growth of the village and contiguous area within one and one-half miles of the village limits, also provides for subdivision and building codes. The Commission recently published a brochure to attract commerce and industry to Mokena and adjacent area.

The urban move to suburbia is the first factor in Mokena's growth and change at present; the charm of the countryside and natural woods is enticing, not to mention Will County's lower taxes. One subdivision which was started failed; the successful ones are Woodland Acres, '42, Sunny Acres, '46, Kohlwood, Brightwood and Duncan's '54, Glennell Heights, '55, and Arbury Hills, '56.

Mokena is still a "neat and tasty" little town, but now it presents the appearance of a "place that is improving and building up very rapidly".

Dedication

To the civic-minded townsfolk of Mokena, who, individually or in groups, have worked for community betterment through the years.

History Committee

Elizabeth K. Cappel
Lydia Kohl
Mabel Welsch
Louise McGann
Frances Richards
Elizabeth Rumbley
Jeanette Vredenburgh

Artists

Sandra McGann
Alice Lauffer
Jane Lorenz
Corinne Smith

ADA WESTLUND

Cover design adapted from
Mokena Civic Association
emblem by Alice Lauffer.

THE STORY CONTINUED.....

This "Story of Mokena" was updated and reprinted as a special 1976 Bi-Centennial project by the Mokena Women's Club.

Note: The Indian Head used in the opening was adopted in 1975 as the official emblem for the Village of Mokena. It was designed by Neil Tuttle, a Lincoln-Way High School student and Mokena resident.

As predicted, the exodus from the cities has brought substantial growth to the Mokena area over the past 13 years. It's evident just about everywhere you look. At Apartment complexes, Shopping centers, Schools, Businesses.

In 1976, Mokena is a thriving residential community whose residents have easy access to almost all modern conveniences. But unlike many small towns of the '50's and '60's, Mokena has managed to progress without losing that unhurried, unpretentious quality for which many people came here. That, too, is evident.

Yes, growth has been good and many facets of it worth noting.

Population growth is one. While Mokena is 98 years old, half the population is a result of the past 13 years' growth. Since the original "Story of Mokena" was published in 1963, the population of the town proper has increased from 1100 to 2210. The unincorporated areas outside of town have grown as much or more.

One of the most visible signs of this influx of people is new housing. Today, Mokena has 22 multiple family dwelling units. Most are apartment complexes--an uncommon sight in town even in the late 60's.

Two new subdivisions are underway in town--Tomahawk Trails at the north end and Platner at the south. Several more, like Rolling Heights continue to build up outside of town. At least three or four more housing developments have been proposed

Some of the old unincorporated areas like Brightwood have doubled in size and been annexed to the village of Mokena.

Schools, too, have expanded. New ones, appeared.

In 1968, the Mokena Elementary School was built for $250,000.00 A $642,000 addition was completed in 1974. In 1975, the Mokena School District passed a $477,000 bond issue to build a junior high school.

Lincoln Way High has at least doubled in size since 1963, adding a new Freshman building at a cost of $1,600,000. A Lincolnway East campus is soon to be built between Mokena and Frankfort at a cost of $5,900,000 and will be ready for classes in 1977.

Lincoln Way Cooperative Educational Center for Trainable Mentally Handicap opened their doors in September of 1974 at a cost of $214,000. It is equipped with completely new and specially-equipped special education facilities.

St. Mary's Elementary School added substantial classroom space and a gymnasium over the past years.

In the business sector, banking most obviously reflects the town's growth. More people! More money!

The Mokena State Bank was expanded and remodeled in 1973 and now offers its customers a convenient drive-up teller window and longer business hours. In 1975, Lincolnway Savings and Loan came to town.

The two bank buildings, Tuttle's Electric, the Mokena Pharmacy and Liquor Store complex, and Cooper Show Ford have helped to modernize the look of Front Street. So have Mokena Garden Club members by planting flowers and shrubs around the Rock Island Railroad Station.

Certainly another sign of urbanity is the new municipal parking lot adjacent to the railroad station. A park mall has been proposed for Front Street, and the Chamber of Commerce has already installed a walkway and bench.

Still, there are times when one can almost visualize the old hitchin' posts outside Wilbur's Grocery that still occupies a spot on Front Street. Or down the road apiece where Dunham's Hardware Store stood for better than thirty years until it burned in 1974.

This curious blend of past and present is apparent throughout the town. Like on Wolf Road at the south end of Mokena. That's where Ordman's supermarket first located.

The store was partially gutted by fire. So, Ordman's moved down the road a couple paces and built a new and larger store. Since then, it has been expanded to almost twice the original size and now includes a deli, large liquor department and a general merchandise, clothing and appliance department.

But the first Ordman's building still stands. It was rebuilt after the fire and most recently, housed a bakery. On one side of it, the old New Lenox Lumber building houses a furniture store. On the other side are plumbing and paint and decorating businesses. They occupy what used to be the Swanberg Farm Implement outlet--gone along with most local farming.

On the fringes of town are the all-new, completely modern commercial areas built since 1963, such as boutiques and small shopping centers. Welch's Big Buck Lumber Company, a drywall factory and Gas City on east 191st Street. The new Illinois Bell Telephone building on north Wolf Road.

Back in town, one of the new industries, Formax, is located in the old Welch Lumber complex. The firm manufactures hamburger-making equipment. Together with the longtime resident foundry and the wallpaper mill, Formax contributes to the town's tax base.

Several new restaurants and an ice cream parlor have also appeared since 1963. Older commercial enterprises still in town include building contractors, plumbers, truckers, excavators, and insurance agencies.

Changes in "city" services are also loud and clear signals of Mokena's growth.

Police protection was much improved in 1971 when Mokena, Frankfort, and New Lenox joined together to establish the Lincolnway Police Communication Center. Prior to that, the only form of police communication was through CB radio.

That same year, a 24-hour police patrol was put into effect.

Today, four full-time officers, six part-time officers, 10 auxiliary and three squad cars comprise the force that helps assure the safety of Mokena citizens.

In the past ten years, the Mokena Volunteer Fire Department expanded the fire house, purchased several new pieces of equipment and instituted a variety of fire fighting and first-aid-training programs. Its communication system was also improved through the use of home-alert radios and remote base stations.

Most notable was the purchase in 1974 of a rescue vehicle and formation of a specially-trained rescue squad in 1975. The firemen themselves raised the funds for the vehicle and sponsored two firemen to the Emergency Medical Technician Training Program. By the end of 1975, 12 of Mokena's firemen had completed the 80-hour classroom and practical schooling.

In 1964, the Mokena Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary was formed and since, has donated a major item of equipment almost every year.

In between, the Department managed to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 1967.

The Post Office hopped on the bandwagon of progress in 1974 and initiated motorized mail delivery in town. It had previously provided only rural delivery.

To accomodate the burgeoning population, the town dug a new well in 1965 and improved the sewage system.

In 1964, a town zoning code was adopted and Zoning Board members have meen busy since insuring orderly growth.

A staffed library opened in 1967 when Mokena Joined the Burr Oak Library System. Borrowers have access not only to the books on the Mokena shelves, but also to volumes on the shelves of any other library in the system. It represents a major improvement over the little old cubby-hole Front Street Library staffed by dedicated volunteers.

The new library and a civic center are now housed in the old Lutheran church.

Recreational and educational opportunities have been expanded by the Mokena Park District. Adult education and special interest classes are also offered regularly by Lincolnway High, and on a satellite basis, by Joliet Junior College.

Reflective of a nationwide concern, a Senior Citizen's Club was formed in 1973 to meet the needs of Mokena's older residents. Established organizations such as the Garden Club, Women's Club, Lions, and 4-H, have lengthened membership rosters and become heavily oriented toward community service.

Just as Mokena has grown over the past decade, so have surrounding towns and villages. And with the completion of Interstate #55, downtown Chicago is only 40 minutes away. For Mokena residents, it means more services, more business, more job opportunities, and leisure time activities.

In this Bicentennial year, Mokena does have good reason to celebrate progress. And to preserve a past. Hence, the reprinting of this book---- "The Story of Mokena" to 1976.