

*Barrington baseball team of 1883.*

## 8

# *“Snake Oil For Every Ache and Pain”*

## The Medicine Show and Other Good Times

On hot days, there was nothing like the old swimming hole. Some of us walking with shoes on, some barefooted in overalls and knickers buttoned at the knees, we all were heading down North Hawley (later called North Avenue) to Lake Zurich Road to a small clump of woods where Jewel Tea plant later stood, but what was then all farmland.

There, at the edge of the woods, off came the clothes to skinny dip. We carried our clothes high over our heads. We didn't dare leave them on the banks. We were afraid that someone would hide them, and we might have to go home without.

Pushing through McClure's slough with water almost chest high, mud two or three inches deep, and with weeds and cattails for about a block, we walked through this way, hoping not to lose any parts of our clothing. Some of us did, such as shoes, socks, underwear.

There, in front of our vision, was the gravel pit with the most beautiful spring water where most of us learned to swim. After the fun, back through McClure's slough to the edge of the woods to dress and start on our way back to town. — M. S.

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My grandfather, Millius B. McIntosh, was the mayor, the

postmaster, and a carpenter. He was also a great croquet player. When the other men finished their naps at one o'clock, they'd all come to Grandpa's to play croquet. And grandpa didn't have a very good croquet ground. It was just his lawn. And there were lots of trees on the lawn, so you just had to shoot around the trees. That was part of the game, but they were very proficient. They didn't think anything of that.

Grandma said one day that Mac (she called him Mac) would come up out of a well to play croquet. And one time my grandfather had gone down in the well to clean it out. His friend, Fred Frye, after his nap, came to Grandma, and he said, "Where's Mac?" Grandma said, "He's down in the well, cleaning it out." He went down to the well and said, "Mac, do you want to come out of the well to play croquet?" And of course he did, and they did. — J. L.

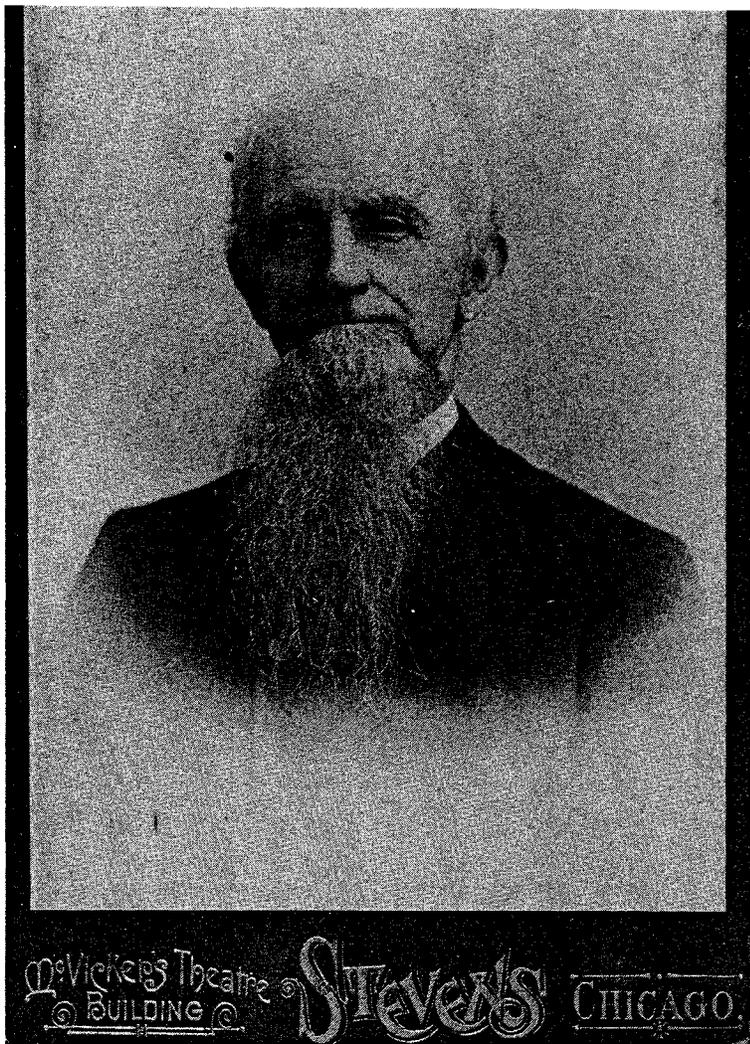
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At about the time I was born in 1904, the telephone company ran a long distance line from Barrington to the small villages of Fox River Grove and Cary. This line ran down Harbor Road past our farm, and naturally, the company wanted all the farmers to install a telephone. Dad was reluctant, at first, as he thought it was a waste of money to have one. However, he finally gave in since all the other farmers along the line had agreed.

Father had two hired men, August Felgenhauer and Charlie Hacker. The latter was a trapper and augmented his living trapping animals. Dad gave him his food and lodging for helping milk the cows and other farm chores. Charlie could play a fiddle, and August was able to play the concertina, a type of accordion.

I was a child when I first remember the telephone ringing in the evening, and Dad answered. The caller was the night man on the switchboard in Barrington, and since it must have been pretty dull sitting there at the board some evenings, he suggested a concert over the line by Dad's two hired men.

"Central" said he would call all party lines around Barrington and, also, long distance to Palatine, notifying the patrons to tune in on the concert. The two musicians sat on chairs next to the telephone, but they



*Millius B. McIntosh, first  
elected mayor of Barrington.*

had to improvise something to be used as a drum. I remember Dad taking mother's wooden washtub, turning it upside down and using a wooden potato-masher for a drumstick. — W. H. K.

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I went to Kelsey School on what is now Route 22, and they had basket socials. And if the boys found out who one boy's girl was, and found out what kind of a basket lunch she had, why heaven forbid, the boy would have to pay a good price for the basket of his choice. He didn't get it for \$1.50 or \$2. They'd run him up so high that sometimes they'd get up as high as \$10 for the lunch in there. Those were always great times. We'd have a program before the basket social. — E. K. K.

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A farmer, living down the road from us, purchased a brand new Victor talking-machine in 1909 and invited the farmers for a distance around for a concert. The farmer living the farthest away would hitch his team to a bobsleigh with a hayrack on it, and put in some straw to sit on. Then he would pick up everyone along the way including our family.

If it was a moonlit night, some of the young folks who owned skates used them on a small lake near the farmer's house. The concert was a treat for us. It was the first time that I had heard a talking-machine. —  
W. H. K.

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When I was about fifteen years old, we used to go dancing at a pavilion over in Algonquin in a woods there. Sometimes I would go with a boyfriend, and sometimes with my brother.

I learned to dance in our kitchen. My mother taught me how to dance there. And we used to go down to what was called the Bohemian Hall. And my father, he was a great dancer and pivoted a lot. And my mother always said you could play checkers on my father's coattail because of how he would go round and round and round, and the coat-tails would fly straight out like a table.

And the smoke would be so thick in there, you could cut it with an ax. Then next day, I'll tell you, your head hurt you so, from all that smoke. —  
E. K. K.

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We had feather-stripping and tying quilts for entertainment. The women would come to your home when you had some ready, and they would stay all day. They would have their dinner and supper with you, and the men would come after milking. They'd play cards, and my mother said many times, "It cost me more to feed all them than if I'd gone out and bought the quilt".

She'd stretch out the kitchen table and put on the salmon and

sausage and cheese and all that for the men. When the women were there at noontime, we had a hot meal. — E. K. K.

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When my father, who built barns, would be ready for the barn-raising, he would tell the farmer, "Now, you get plenty of help here, because I need it." They would use pike poles and stick in those two by four beams, and then they would have this barn-raising. My father had some kind of apparatus that he would make these pins. They would pin these beams together up there.

And then the women would all bring sandwiches and cake and pie. There would be a washtub full of food. And of course, beer — not hard drinks, but beer. And then they'd dance that night, for fair. They'd have a grand and glorious time.

That meant when they had the barn-raising, it was up to the farmer who had the barn to pay half of what the barn was costing in labor. My father and his carpenters got ten cents an hour for raising the beams. But for the barn-raising, the farmers would come to help because they needed a lot of help. The carpenters would be up there and pinning while the farmers were raising the next one.

Everyone did things together in those days. You didn't go out every night of the week. You stayed home. And when you were told to be home at nine o'clock, you were home at nine o'clock. — E. K. K.

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Before the summer season ended each year the Barrington merchants and the different organizations would always sponsor the coming of the Lincoln Chatauqua to Barrington for a week. The program included lectures and concerts in the evenings and afternoons.

Ladies sat on folding chairs with fancy, folding, hand fans. Some were large cardboard fans on a stick with a picture on one side and a store advertisement on the other side. They were given out free by the merchants on hot days. The Chatauqua would have a program in the morning for the children to participate in different kinds of games. — M. S.



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The second floor of the city hall building was used once a week in the evening as our first cinema where Grace of Crystal Lake, Illinois, would come to Barrington to show motion pictures. The screen was on the east wall, and the pianist sat on a stool at the piano to the left of the screen trying to put some life to the silent pictures.

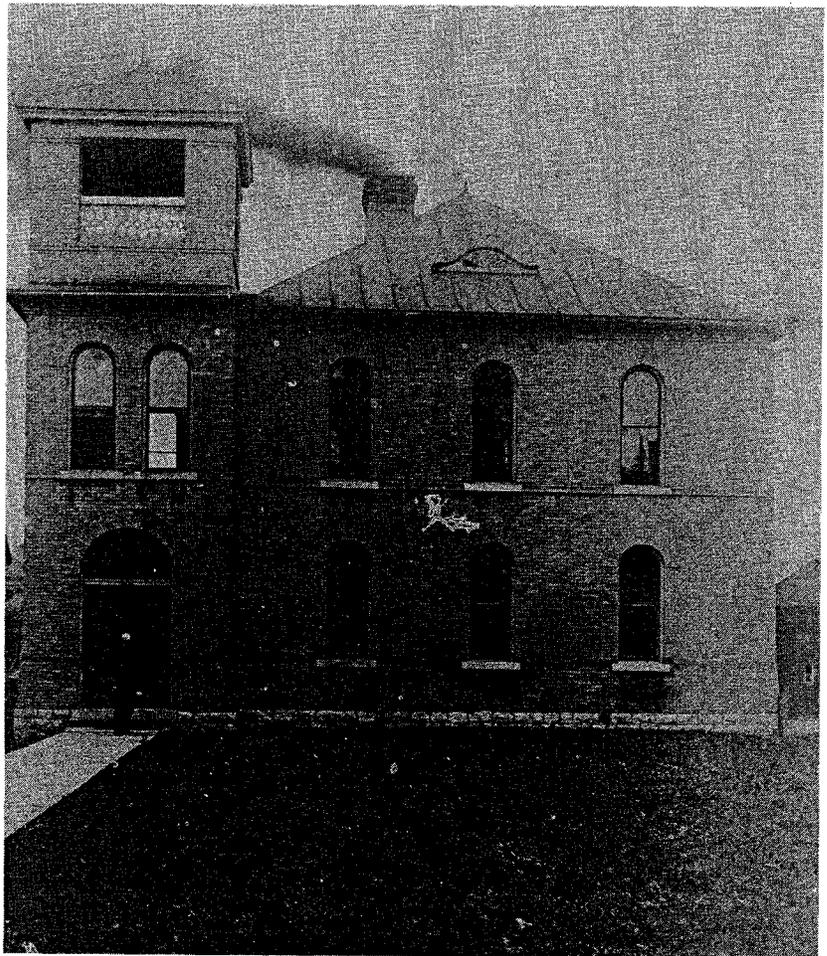
There were folding, wooden chairs for the patrons to sit on. There was a large village safe in the southwest corner of the hall where teenagers perched on top to watch a three-reel western thriller with William S. Hart as the star and a two-reel comedy with Fatty Arbuckle or the Keystone Cops.

During the showing of the movie, the man operating the projector



*The Ladies' Cadet Band when they played for the Wheeling Bridge dedication in 1903.*

*The Village Hall in 1899, soon after it was built. The bell in the tower was added later. In the 1900's motion pictures were shown on the second floor.*





had to crank it by hand. If there happened to be a horserace on, he would turn the crank very rapidly to make the horses run faster. A lady would play the piano during the movie.

Once in awhile a film would break because of the poorly made projectors of the era. How the people would howl, and the kids would clap their hands or stamp their feet on the floor to hurry the projectionist to get that film splice cemented together so we could proceed with the show. — M.S.

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Spinner Park, on the north side of town where the Adco Storage and Transfer is now, was the gathering place where the young and elderly met.

Medicine shows would come and set up their tent for a week's stay. They would have different plays each night such as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and other three-act skits. Between the acts the hustlers inside the tent would walk up and down the aisles of chairs and through the bleachers along the sides of the tent selling boxes of candy, popcorn, and crackerjack with miniature toy prizes inside, snake oils to cure every ache and pain, cough syrups, and horse linament. With every purchase you got a card to fill out for the most popular girl in Barrington. At the end of the week the girl with the most votes received a prize. — M. S.

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Let's take a walk tomorrow night to see what Scotty's up to over on the north side of the tracks in front of his father-in-law's saloon on East Main. As we are crossing the tracks at about 7:30 p.m., a crowd is forming out in front. Men in straw hats, derbies, caps, and felt hats, men with large pocket watches, ladies in lovely dresses — all gathered around this colorful retired circus performer to see his show of strength.

Scotty is just stepping up on two small blue-painted stools and is ready to bend over a large barrel painted white with red hoops around it and filled with water. There is a black leather strap fastened to the top center of the barrel. He is now biting on the strap with his teeth with the help of his powerful jaws. He starts to straighten his back and raises the



*Barrington High School band in 1911. Taken in auditorium of old Hough Street School.*

barrel about three or four inches off the gravel road.

Scotty then takes a bow and asks four men from the audience to step up. He puts an iron bar between his teeth and has two men on each side of him pull down on this bar till the bar bends. There is applause and cheers and amazement on faces. —M. S.