

## La Salle, Illinois : an historical sketch.

La Salle, Illinois : La Salle Centennial Committee, 1952.

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LaSalle, Illinois  
An Historical Sketch

(1952)





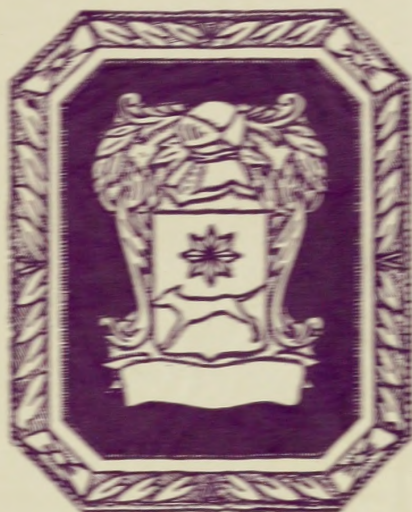


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# LA SALLE, ILLINOIS

## AN HISTORICAL SKETCH



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*The cover bears a reproduction of the coat-of-arms of  
Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle, the French nobleman  
for whom the city of La Salle is named.*



**LA SALLE, ILLINOIS**  
an historical sketch

STUART DUNCAN, *General Chairman*  
La Salle Centennial Committee

WILLIAM J. APLINGTON, *Chairman*  
Historical Committee

FRANCIS H. DOLAN, *Director of Research*

ELIZABETH CUMMINGS, *Editor*

PATRICIA CONNOLLY, *Associate Editor*

**La Salle, Illinois**

**1952**





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## P R E F A C E

No one, in recent years, has written, from a chronological viewpoint, the history of La Salle, Illinois. The observance of the city's one hundredth anniversary inspired this project, which is an attempt to present, year by year, details of the growth and development of La Salle. The story opens with the coming of the white men to the Illinois Valley; it was they who established the first mission, explored the waterways, and learned to know and understand the Indians who had claim to the land. The final chapter describes a city which can be justifiably proud of its spiritual, intellectual, and industrial growth. After 1830, it is distinctly the story of La Salle; only the industrial organizations considered extend beyond the city's boundaries. This seemed appropriate since both Peru and Oglesby provide employment for La Salle residents or employees for her industries. In addition, many local businessmen have found it advantageous to reside in one and work in another of the tri-cities.

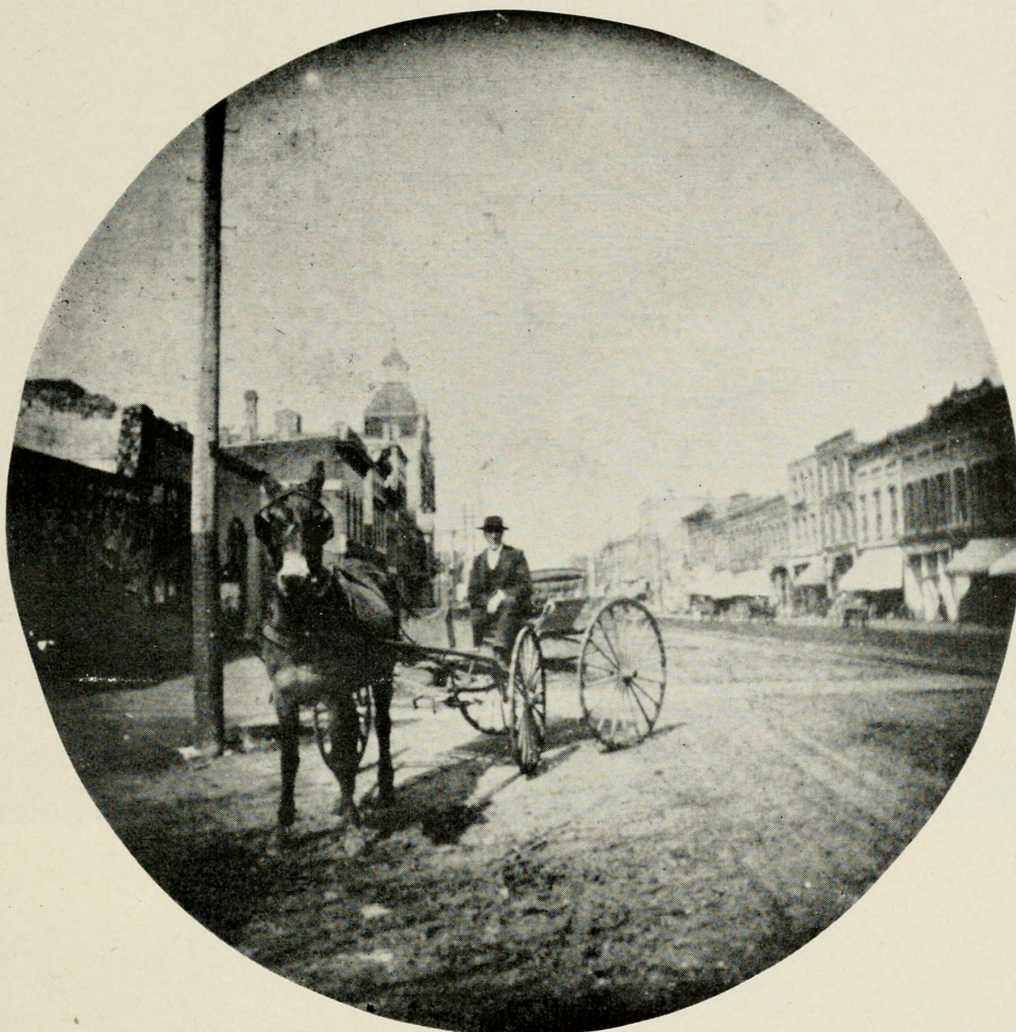
It is advisable to consider the project in its entirety as an historical sketch, for it is admittedly an informal chronicle rather than a scholarly study of a city's progress. Though it may be found wanting in certain aspects, the story should serve to emphasize the fact that courage, ambition, self-sacrifice, and persistence are qualities which are not peculiar to any one century nor confined within stipulated geographical limitations; they are, instead, the qualities which will assure today's La Salle a greater tomorrow.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Carlton J. Corliss of the Association of American Railroads, Washington, D. C., for his kindness in supplying materials and pictures in connection with the Illinois Central Railroad; Mr. W. E. Hayes of the Chicago, Rock Island and Peoria Railroad, Chicago, Ill.; the pastors of the La Salle churches; the managers of the various industries in the three cities; Mr. E. G. Miller, superintendent of the La Salle Elementary Schools; Mr. Edward Duffy, La Salle postmaster; Sister Tharsilla, superior, St. Mary's Hospital; Miss Tessie Yopp, librarian, La Salle Public Library; and Mr. William Confrey of the Illinois Central, La Salle. Without their cooperation in our search for historical data, this sketch could not have been written.









The picture above and the four pictures on the following pages show old Main (First) Street from the Illinois Central on the east to the "Rock Island Hill" on the west.

Above is a typical Main Street conveyance of many years ago—one mule power and no brakes. The driver is John Stuart, pioneer banker and businessman, and an alderman from 1862 to 1888.

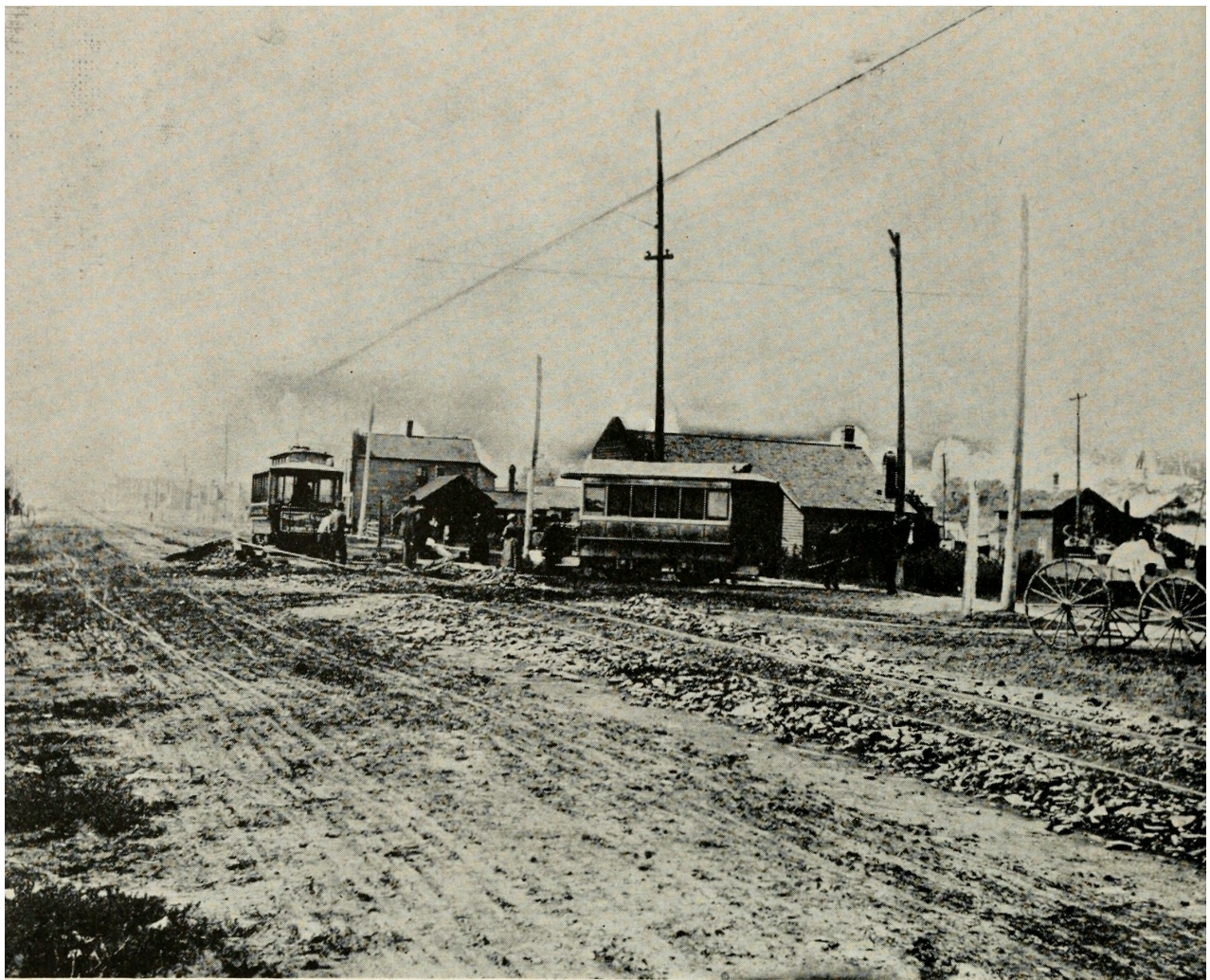
On the following page, the horse-drawn street car (upper left) was La Salle's first public transportation. The scene is Main and Union Streets, near the Illinois Central Station.

The man in the buggy (lower left, same page) is Philip Conlin, mayor of La Salle from 1867 to 1871. While he was mayor, he painted the half block fence around his home red, white, and blue. The scene is Main Street, east of Hennepin.

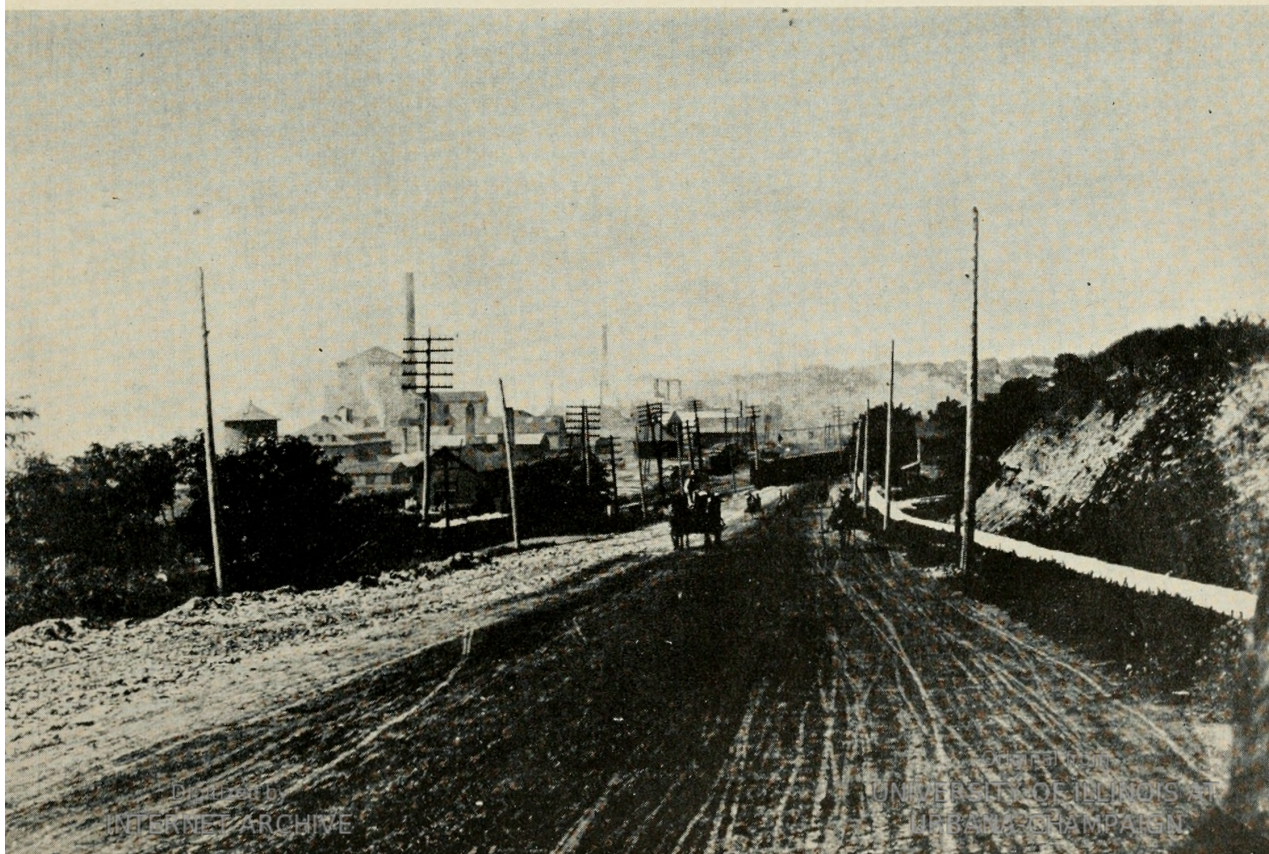
Looking west on Main Street from Hennepin (upper right, second page), one can discern today's First and Joliet Streets, and beyond that point, the dome of the old Zimmerman Opera House.

"Rock Island Hill" (lower right, second page) offered a challenge to any driver and team of horses.











The history of La Salle is of necessity a part of the history of Illinois, and that which concerns any one state contributes to the glorious history of the United States. No story of our great nation is complete without some reference to the courage, foresightedness, and ambition of self-sacrificing European explorers who carried the names of their respective countries into the New World. It would seem, therefore, that the history of La Salle should have its beginning in that era of discovery which brought a new drama to the stage of the then known world.

Probably the first Europeans to visit the inland valley were two Spanish explorers, Hernando de Soto and Vasquez Coronado. Though they traveled over land watered by the lower Mississippi and disclosed to the world the extent of the continent, they never reached the prairies of the Illinois. Nor did either England or France present any competition for a hundred years more. In fact, the first French ships that came to the eastern shores of America were in search of codfish. Though they may have had some dealings with the natives, these fisherman-sailors who made annual voyages to the shoals of Newfoundland during the early years of the sixteenth century were neither explorers nor colonists. John Verrazano undertook the first voyage of discovery for France in the name of Francis I, in 1524. He returned to France after having examined the Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Maine; he had not found a route to Asia. Jacques Cartier entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence some ten years later. Confident that exploration of the other end of this gulf would reveal a passage to the East, he hurriedly returned to France to prepare for this project. In 1535, Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River to what is now Quebec; then he moved on to an Indian village which he named Mont Royal (Montreal). The following spring he once more claimed the land for France, and returned to that country to report his experience.

It was not until 1541 that the French government considered again the possibilities of this distant empire. Francis I appointed Jean Francois de la Roche, sieur de Roberval, his viceroy of " . . . 'that part of Asia' with Jacques Cartier as his captain general and master pilot". Roberval neglected to appear at the appointed time, and Cartier sailed alone. He reached Quebec in August, 1541, but, though he built a fort, he abandoned it and returned to France the next spring. Roberval, who arrived later with supplies and liberated French prisoners, remained only a year in Quebec.

In 1562, Admiral Coligny tried in vain to establish a colony for the French Huguenots. Sieur du Pont, Pierre Chauvin, and Sieur de Monte entered into a commercial partnership in the year 1600, but that project failed. Nevertheless, in 1605, both Sieur de Monte and Sieur du Pont joined Champlain in another attempt to establish a settlement, and this time they knew some success. Port Royal, near what is now Annapolis, Nova Scotia, was the scene of their efforts. Champlain, aware of the strategic importance of the eastern peninsula called Acadia, nonetheless emphasized the advantages to be found in Quebec as a stronghold of French power. On July 3, 1608, he, as Governor of New France, landed at the foot of the rock of Quebec, and at once began the construction of a fort. Like many other early explorers, he, too, had hoped to discover a route to the East. Though he was unable to realize this ambition, he had, by 1615, " . . . penetrated by way of the Ottawa River and Lake Nipissing, to the borders of the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, thus pointing the way for the future founders of Louisiana' " .

Reuben Gold Thwaites in his volume *France In America* explains the various motives which contributed to the establishment and maintenance of New France.

*The king very naturally was moved by a passion for territorial expansion, the church was eager to convert the heathen savages of the New World; the fur-trade, although abounding in great risks, was at times so profitable as to stimulate the cupidity of merchants; the hope of finding deposits of precious metals was predominate in the minds of speculators; the army and the navy were ambitious for gallant exploits; and the French people in general were in that eventful period imbued with a generous yearning for adventure in strange lands.*

The expansion of the French into the interior was rapid following the landing of Champlain at Quebec in 1608. There is a simple explanation for this fact. The French had entered the continent by way of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, thus availing themselves of a relatively easy route to the heart of North America. They



established themselves in the northern half of the continent which was rich in fur-bearing animals, and where a few men could engage in a prosperous business. Then, too, when the poverty of the soil in much of Eastern Canada discouraged agriculture and dense settlement, the settlers turned to fur-trading or sought farm land farther west.

The story of the French in the Illinois Valley has its origin in these conditions, but it cannot be adequately told without some reference to the first men of the Illinois country.

\* \* \*

Well authenticated accounts of antiquities found in various parts of our country indicate that a civilized, perhaps even highly cultivated, people occupied the North American continent before it was possessed by the Indians. There is an uncertainty as to the date of their rule, but this pre-historic race is called Mound-Builders. What we know of them has been partially gleaned from internal evidences and the peculiarities of the mounds. It is presumed that they lived in tents, structures of wood or some other perishable material, else the remains would be more numerous. There is evidence that they had villages, altars, temples, idols, cemeteries, monuments, camps, fortifications, and pleasure grounds.

*Our knowledge of the Indians who lived in La Salle County for the centuries of traditional history is very limited. It is said that the Mound Builders were the first inhabitants, but modern scientists' opinion inclines to the belief that the Mound Builders were none other than the Indians found here by the first settlers . . . . In the valley of the Illinois River and its tributaries there is hardly a square mile that does not contain evidences of their work. Within a circuit of three miles of Ottawa there are 3,000 mounds. The major part of these are unquestionably of Indian origin; the remainder may probably be attributed to the Mound Builders. Broken pieces of earthen-ware, composed of shells and a grayish clay, are quite common, some of which indicated a considerable skill in ornamentation. A few perfect specimens have been discovered. A copper ax was dug out of the drift a little west of that city. \**

Francis Parkman says that "the vast tract of wilderness from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, and from the Carolinas to Hudson's Bay was divided between two great families of tribes, distinguished by a radical difference of language". The Iroquoian tribes held sway over Lakes Erie and Ontario, and the Mohawk Valley. The various Algonquin languages and dialects were spoken by tribes living along the shores of the three upper Great Lakes and into the northern territory beyond. These Indians held what is now Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana, and roving bands were to be found in the hunting ground of Kentucky.

So far as is known, the Illinois Indians were the first owners of the Illinois Valley. At one time, they held undisputed sway over all the territory drained by the river which bears their name. When the first white settlers came, the tribe had experienced its greatest strength, but its members were more numerous than any nation in the territory that is now Illinois, and indications are that they had dwelt in the land and near the great lake that was for many years in our early history referred to as the "Lake of the Illinois".

*They were prairie Indians and lived largely by the chase. They are said to have been less susceptible to culture than the Indians of the wooded areas and to have known less of agriculture. \*\**

Animal life was abundant in the vast pastures of prairie grass and the wooded areas along the valleys; therefore these Indians, who could live by hunting, remained unskilled in agriculture. In addition, the prairie sod did not invite cultivation. Thus, dependence on this mode of sustenance forced them to wander widely on hunting trips, as a result of which no permanent homes were built, and any form of social institution within the tribe was very primitive. The Indians did build some "towns" where they gathered at harvest time in the fall, and where they left weaker members of the tribe more or less permanently. Such towns were not much more than clusters of wigwams with a few poorly cultivated patches of maize, beans, and pumpkins about them.

\* (*History of La Salle County*, v. I, 1886, p. 185.)

\*\* (Carl O. Sauer, *Geography of the Upper Illinois Valley* . . . , p. 145.)



*Their great town where they (Illinois) gathered for their annual feast was on the farm of James Clark, Esq., near Utica, a mile or two west of Starved Rock. It was called Kaskaskia. \**

Early French writers speak of Kaskaskia as swarming with thousands of Indians in the late fall although it was almost abandoned during the rest of the year. The only explanation for the selection of this spot was that its sandy soil yielded readily to weak tools and to the intermittent industry of the Indians, and they were able to grow fair crops with little cultivation. Eventually, this site was protected by the French military post across the river at Starved Rock where at times the Illinois Indians took refuge from marauding tribes. The Iroquois tribes of New York played havoc with the Illinois, who, when they were strong enough to do so, retaliated by similar expeditions, some as far as the Mohawk Valley. In 1680, the Iroquois were successful in driving the native Indians from their land, but two years later the Illinois had re-established themselves in the Illinois Valley. Other tribes, namely the Potawatomi, Sauk, and Foxes, plagued by the Iroquois, sought refuge in the Illinois country where they came into conflict with the Illinois. In due time, the strength of the Illinois, a once splendid tribe, was spent. Their last line of defense was the upper Illinois Valley. Because the surrounding prairies offered inadequate refuge, the tribe retreated to sheltered places along the bluffs of the upper Illinois, one of which was Starved Rock, "impregnable by its isolation, and conquered (in 1769) only by a greater foe than man".

*The allies of Pontiac during his conspiracy, after the assassination of the chieftain by the hand of an Illinois, nearly exterminated the confederation. According to tradition, a part of them took refuge on the sandstone bluff nearly opposite their town, and were there starved to death by their determined foes; hence the name 'Starved Rock'. \*\**

The surface of their land may be said to have determined the fate of the Illinois Indians. The territory was open to attack, neighboring tribes contested their rights to their hunting grounds, and marauding tribes moved unhampered down the lands to the east which lay open for almost a thousand miles. The massacre at Starved Rock marks the end of the supremacy of the Illinois tribe in the Illinois Valley. The Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Winnebago, and Kickapoo Indians who wandered into the territory were mere "sojourners for the day"; they never established themselves in the region, nor did they make an impression upon it.

\* (*History of La Salle County*, v. I, p. 186.)

\*\* (*Ibid.*)



II

1610-1749

Samuel de Champlain, who was appointed governor of New France in 1612, was very much interested in the exploration of the country over which he exercised authority, and used his personal influence to encourage the first westward movement of the French.

*He himself led an expedition in 1615 as far west as Lake Huron; and to aid further discovery, he placed young Frenchmen in various Indian villages to learn the languages of the natives. Among his proteges was Jean Nicolet . . . . \**

It is said Jean Nicolet equipped his small canoe squadron at Quebec to travel farther into the interior. He skirted the edges of the Great Lakes, and, arriving at Lake Michigan, he portaged across country to the headwaters of the Illinois. He spent some time with the Indians while he explored the river, and then he began his return trip to Quebec. At Three Rivers, his canoe overturned and Nicolet was drowned. However, meager reports of his findings spread to outpost settlements in New France, and served as inspiration to some of his successors, notably Louis Jolliet and Father Marquette, who sought to extend the project Nicolet had only begun. They were the first white men to visit La Salle country. On May 17, 1673, a small band of Europeans and Canadians left the city of Quebec to explore further the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

*'The band had two leaders, Father Marquette . . . . and Jolliet . . . . the prototypes of two great sources of power, religion and commerce, which, in the course of time were destined to exercise such influence on the civilization of the western territory traversed by the mighty river which they had discovered. They could not be ordinary men, those adventurers, who in those days undertook to expose themselves to the fatigues and perils of a journey through unknown solitudes, from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi.' \*\**

They entered the Mississippi on June 17. On the west bank of that river, they are said to have met Illinois Indians, driven to seek refuge there by the repeated blows of the Sioux and Iroquois tribes. The leader of the Illinois invited the travelers to visit his village (Peoria) for a council, and Father Marquette promised that he would return the following year to spend some time among these Indians. He had been impressed by these natives.

*'When one speaks the word "Illinois" it is as if one said in their language, "the men",—As if the other Savages were looked upon by them merely as animals. It must also be admitted that they have an air of humanity which we have not observed in the other nations that we have seen upon our route.' \*\*\**

Jolliet and Marquette departed from the Illinois toward the end of June. They sailed in clear, calm water until they reached that spot at which the Missouri flows into the Mississippi. Marquette refers to it as the Pekitanoui—muddy water—and indicates that the adventurers hoped by its means to discover the vermilion or California Sea. The explorers pressed steadily southward until, realizing they were not far from the Gulf of Mexico, and being convinced that the Mississippi flowed into the Gulf, they decided it was foolish to allow themselves to fall into the hands of the Spaniards who would have at least held them captive. They did not want to risk losing the benefits of their journey, and felt they had obtained all the information that could be desired in regard to this discovery, so the party made ready for a return voyage.

Traveling upstream had its disadvantages; therefore, they chose to pursue a new route that lay up the Illinois and Kankakee Rivers, across the Portage, down the Chicago River, and up the shore of Lake Michigan, at that time called the Lake of the Illinois. Speaking of the Illinois, Father Marquette said:

\* (Clarence W. Alvord, *The Illinois Country*, 1673-1818, p. 56.)

\*\* (Charles Gayarre, *Colonial History and Romance*, p. 27, as quoted in Joseph H. Schlarman, *From Quebec to New Orleans*, p. 55.)

\*\*\* (*The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, LVIII, as quoted in Schlarman, *op. cit.*, p. 65.)



*'We have seen nothing like this river that we enter, as regards its fertility of soil, its prairies and woods; its cattle, elk, deer, wildcats, bustards, swans, parroquets, and even beaver. There are many small lakes and rivers. That on which we sailed is wide, deep, and still, for 65 leagues . . . We found on it a village of Illinois called Kaskaskia, consisting of 74 cabins. They received us very well and obliged me to promise that I would return to instruct them. One of the chiefs of this nation, with his young men, escorted us to the Lake of the Illinois, whence at last, at the end of September, we reached the bay des puantz (St. Francis Xavier Mission, Green Bay, Wisconsin) from which we had started at the beginning of June.'* \*

It is interesting to note that on this voyage of exploration the first discovery of coal on the North American Continent was made. Jolliet and Marquette discovered coal seams in the bluffs along the Illinois River near Ottawa and Utica.

Jolliet had accomplished his mission; that is, he had ascertained whether the Mississippi provided a passage to the East by flowing into the Gulf of California. Now it was necessary that he return to Canada to report to the Governor, Count Frontenac. The details were accumulated from notes and maps prepared individually by Jolliet and Marquette. It is possible that Jolliet followed a route which took him to the newly erected Fort Frontenac where La Salle was in command. He may have shown his map of the Mississippi Valley to him who was to be the future discoverer of the mouth of the Great River. La Salle, frequently called the "prince of French explorers", had abandoned a religious vocation in favor of adventure, and had sailed for New France in 1667. He traveled much and explored many lakes and rivers; he must have realized the value of the findings of the Jolliet-Marquette expedition, for France now possessed a continuous water route, with only a few breaks and portages, all the way from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico.

Count Frontenac did not, however, have the pleasure of reading Jolliet's report. Jolliet's party was within sight of the first houses of Montreal when his canoe was plunged into the roaring current of the Lachine Rapids. The strong box which contained the story of the Jolliet-Marquette expedition was lost. He sent Count Frontenac a message regarding the mishap, and added, " 'Nothing is left me but my life, and the will to employ it for whatever may please you' ". To this accident is due the fact that Marquette's report to the Jesuits became the history of this expedition.

Father Marquette was compelled by ill health to remain at St. Francis Xavier Mission in Green Bay until the following September, at which time he received orders to establish a mission among the Illinois. He departed with two companions on October 25, 1674, but was forced by a return of his malady to spend the winter at an encampment on the Chicago River. It was not until the following March 29th that he was able to resume his journey. Eleven days later, he arrived at Kaskaskia, near the present Utica, Illinois, where, says Father Dablon, " 'he was received as an angel from heaven' ".

*After he had at various times assembled the Chiefs of the nation, with all the old men . . . and after having given Instructions in the Cabins, which were always filled with a great crowd of people, he resolved to address all in public, in a general assembly which he called together in the open Air . . . It was a beautiful prairie, close to a village, which was selected for the great Council; this was adorned, after the fashion of the country, by Covering it with mats and bearskins. Then the father, having directed them to stretch out upon Lines several pieces of Chinese taffeta, attached to these, four large Pictures of the Blessed Virgin, which were visible on all sides. The audience was Composed of 500 chiefs and elders, seated in a circle around the father, and of all the Young men, who remained standing. They numbered 1,500 men, without counting the women and children, who are always numerous . . . Above all, he preached to them Jesus Christ, on the very eve of the great day (Thursday of Holy Week, 1675) on which he had died upon the Cross for them, as well as for the rest of mankind; then he said holy mass . . . on the third Day after, which was easter sunday, things being prepared in the same manner as on Thursday, he celebrated the holy mysteries for the 2nd time; And by these two, the only sacrifices ever offered there to God, he took possession of that land in the name of Jesus Christ, and gave to that mission the name of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed virgin. He was listened to by all these peoples with universal Joy; and they prayed him with most earnest Entreaty to*

\* (Ibid., p. 72.)



come back to them as soon as possible, since his sickness obliged him to return. The father . . . pledged them his word that he, or some other fathers would return to carry on that mission so happily Inaugurated. \*

Thus did the first mission of its kind come into existence in the state of Illinois, and the first definite settlement of whites develop in the Illinois country. It has been said that the "savages followed the waterways, and the traders followed the savages"; French traders grouped about the mission of the Immaculate Conception, which was, toward the close of the 17th century, "the southernmost outpost of Christianity and civilization in the Mississippi Valley".

A few days after the Easter celebration, Father Marquette, then very ill, decided to return to the mission St. Ignace at Michillimackinac (Mackinac). However, the journey was much too strenuous for him; he died enroute on May 18 or 19, 1675. "So in the savage heart of the wilderness where he had labored so long, and not for earthly reward, passed away this discoverer of the Illinois country, this truly heroic soldier of the Cross, Pere Jacques Marquette, in his thirty-ninth year."

A memorial marking Father Marquette's founding of the first Christian mission in the Illinois Valley was dedicated during ceremonies held at St. Mary's Rectory at Utica on October 14, 1951. His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago, unveiled and blessed the granite and bronze memorial which stands at the northwest corner of St. Mary's Rectory property. The memorial is made of twenty-five tons of Vermont granite, and bears a bronze plate on the front and one on the back. The front plate was cast in France from the same mold as that used for a memorial near Soissons gate in Father Marquette's home town, Laon, France. Present for the dedication were the following prominent persons in addition to Cardinal Stritch: Adlai Stevenson, governor of Illinois, Senator Everett M. Dirksen, Congressman Noah M. Mason, Francois Briere, French Consul General of Chicago, and the late Most Reverend Archbishop Joseph H. Schlarman, D. D., bishop of Peoria. Archbishop Schlarman spoke at length concerning the life and work of Father Marquette. "With supreme reverence," he said, "we bow to the memory of Father Marquette near the spot where he explained the mysteries of our holy faith . . . and offered the first Holy Mass on the banks of the Illinois."

When he bade farewell to the Illinois Indians in 1675, Father Marquette promised them that he or some other fathers would return to carry on the work at the Mission of the Immaculate Conception. This pledge was kept on April 27, 1677, when Father Claude Allouez arrived. He reported that he found about 11,000 Illinois Indians. " 'They live in 351 cabins which are easy to count because they are ranged along the river front.' " However, the wars between the Iroquois and the Illinois hampered his work to such an extent that he left Kaskaskia. In 1689, Father Jacques Gravier, considered the real founder of the mission among the Illinois, came to minister to them. "It was he who first made clear the principles of their language, and who reduced them to the rules of grammar . . ." He is described as "one of those outstanding, active, wiry men of the early days in the Illinois country, who helped mould the religious and civil life there in the second half of the 17th century . . ." He spent ten years of trying missionary work among the Illinois in the Mission of the Immaculate Conception. Father Rasle succeeded Father Gravier when the latter became Vicar-General of the Bishop for the Illinois Country, and Fathers Julien Binneteau and Gabriel Marest took up the missionary work among the Kaskaskias when Father Rasle was transferred to another mission.

In 1700, news of d'Iberville's colony at Mobile reached the French and Indians on the upper Illinois. Because there had been some friction between the Kaskaskias and the neighboring tribes, it seemed advisable to the former to move. The Kaskaskias had the largest number of Christians and were best disposed to Christianity, facts which probably prompted Father Marest to go with them, leaving the other Indians without a missionary. Father Gravier said he arrived too late to prevent the transmigration of the village of the Kaskaskias, and he feared their departure would jeopardize communication with the upper country, so necessary for the welfare of the colony and the mission. However, he was able to influence them to postpone the journey to Mobile. Both he and Father Marest started out with the Indians, and Father Gravier wrote that he marched four days with them. "In the Seminary Archives of Quebec there is an original

\* (*Ibid.*, p. 77.)



map of the Seigniorship of the Mission of the Holy Family at Cahokia. On the Missouri side, on the north bank of the River des Peres, it shows the notation: *Ancien Village des Kaskaskias—Former Village of the Kaskaskias.*" The map was drawn in April, 1735. It would seem that the Kaskaskias—some traveling by canoes, others by land—came to the Mission of the Holy Family. There were already three tribes of savages on the east bank of the Mississippi, and that may have been the reason the Kaskaskias did not remain there, but selected a spot across the river, where the River des Peres flows into the Mississippi.

*Even the first Kaskaskia on the Illinois River had become quite a center of French life, but the Kaskaskia planted on the triangular tongue of land between the Mississippi and the Kaskaskia Rivers, very quickly developed into the most flourishing colony between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico. \**

Interestingly enough, when the mission, under Father Marest, was established on the Kaskaskia River, it retained the title Father Marquette had given it in 1675, and to this day the church on Kaskaskia Island, in the Diocese of Belleville, venerates the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as its patron.

The history of French discoverers in the New World is continued in the story of Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle, whom Thwaites called "one of the greatest pathfinders in history". He was in search of adventure and possibly a route to China when he made his first voyage to New France in 1667. Eventually, he was named commandant of Fort Frontenac, established to facilitate the purchase of furs; and in the course of time, he was chosen by Count Frontenac, then governor of New France, to present to the French Court a plan by which La Salle and Frontenac would "effect a military occupation of the whole Mississippi Valley . . . by means of military posts which should control the communication and sway the policy of the Indian tribes, as well as present an impassable barrier to the English colonies". In September, 1675, La Salle returned to Quebec from France where he had been graciously received by Louis XIV, and with him he brought royal approval for the proposed project.

La Salle crossed the ocean in the company of several men who were to play prominent parts in the early history of France in America. Outstanding among them was Louis Hennepin, a Recollect Father, whose romantic temperament, love for travel, and desire for adventure were to be satisfied in his eventual association with La Salle, during his expedition to the Illinois country. Hennepin had been sent to Fort Frontenac in 1676, and while there he became interested in La Salle's plan to go down to the mouth of the Mississippi. He returned to Quebec in 1678, in order to make necessary preparations to accompany La Salle.

In the meantime, La Salle had again returned to France, and upon this occasion he met Henri de Tonti, regarded as one of the greatest of the "dauntless men who made possible the exploration and settlement of the Mississippi basin". He is frequently referred to as the "forgotten man", because he was overshadowed by his brilliant chief, La Salle. Tonti, an Italian by birth, had become an officer in the French army. He was a soldier of fortune, and had risen to the rank of captain in command of marines on warships. He lost his right hand—it was blown off by a grenade—in a battle at Libisso, Sicily. He substituted for it an iron hook which was so feared by the Indians as "big medicine" that he became known among them as "the man with the iron hand". Fascinated by stories of life on the frontier, he became La Salle's lieutenant, and sailed to New France with him in 1678.

La Salle, shortly after their arrival here, organized a party, which included both Tonti and Father Hennepin, to proceed to what is now Niagara Falls, where he planned to build a fort and construct a ship. This vessel was to ply the Great Lakes and secure from agents, sent out in advance, furs which had been bought from the Indians. On August 7, 1679, La Salle and his companions set sail in the *Griffon*, going to Green Bay by way of Mackinac. When the ship was loaded with her valuable cargo, La Salle sent her back to Niagara, despite the fact that the Indians had advised him to wait until after the storms on Lake Michigan had subsided. La Salle did not hear until several months later that the ship, her crew, and the merchandise she was carrying suffered disaster.

La Salle set out for the Illinois country on September 19, 1679, the day after the *Griffon* sailed for Niagara. Parrish says, "His was a motley company of fourteen men,

\* (Schlarman, *op. cit.*, p. 158.)



crowded within the narrow confines of four canoes deeply laden with tools, merchandise, and arms." La Salle chose a route different from that followed by Jolliet and Marquette; he paddled along the shore of Lake Michigan to the mouth of the St. Joseph, and built there Fort Miami. He moved up the St. Joseph to the present South Bend, and portaged to the Kankakee River, the southern tributary of the Illinois.

*Finally they came to a dark, lazy current, across which a tall man might easily step, and which ran twisting like a snake among the rushes. Here they set their light canoes afloat . . . . As they thus crept into what is now Illinois territory, the scene about them began rapidly to change. Ranges of higher and densely wooded hills appeared close beside the bank . . . . With anxious eyes forever scanning the banks on either side, they turned the prows of their canoes into the Illinois River, floated slowly past the present beautiful site of the city of Ottawa, pointing out to each other Buffalo Rock, which rose majestically upon the right . . . . suddenly just before them, in front of where Utica now stands, appeared a vast assemblage of Indian lodges covering the entire northern shore, each fitted to shelter several families. But they were silent and deserted of inhabitants, a lonely sight enough in the heart of such drear desolation. The tribes were absent on their winter hunt. \**

In his report of this journey, Father Hennepin reiterated Jolliet's statement concerning the discovery of coal on the Illinois River near what is now the city of Ottawa, Illinois.

*In many respects the Illinois Coal Field is a notable one. It was in Illinois that the first recorded discovery of coal was made on the North American continent. Joliet and Father Marquette in their voyage of exploration in 1673 by way of the Illinois Valley and Chicago River made the original discovery, some place between the present cities of Utica and Ottawa. Only the approximate site is marked by the words 'Charbon de terre' (coal) on Joliet's map of 1674 . . . . The same 'Charbon de terre' appears on Marquette's map of 1681, and on Hennepin's map of 1689 a 'cole mine' is shown on Illinois River above Fort Creve Coeur, now Peoria. \*\**

Moving on down the river, La Salle neared the site of the present city of Peoria, where a number of Indians awaited him. They were not too enthusiastic about his plan to build Fort Creve Coeur on an eminence near Peoria, but La Salle was not to be deterred. Shortly thereafter, he went to Fort Frontenac to secure materials and supplies to equip another ship in which he hoped to reach the Gulf. In order that additional information concerning the Mississippi might be gathered in his absence, he dispatched Father Hennepin with several others on an expedition to explore the upper reaches of the river. Tonti was left at Fort Creve Coeur.

Hennepin and his men began their assignment on February 29, 1680. They paddled down the Illinois River, arriving within two leagues of its mouth on March 7th. Five days later the party entered the Mississippi, and turned their canoes northward. Shortly after they had reached the falls which they named "St. Anthony of Padua" (in what is now Minnesota), Hennepin and his companions were captured by a band of Indians. Several months later, Greysolon Du Luth, a cousin of Tonti, and five French soldiers secured the release of Hennepin and his associates. Father Hennepin went back to Quebec, and in 1681 or 1682 returned to France, never to journey again in Canada.

La Salle, meanwhile, was experiencing disappointments and privations on his trip to Fort Frontenac. At Niagara, on Easter Monday, 1680, he was advised of the loss of the *Griffon*. Disturbing news awaited him at Frontenac: his men at Creve Coeur had revolted; they had pillaged the fort, destroying everything they could not carry away. La Salle, undaunted, started at once for the scene of the disturbance.

*. . . . he hastened up the St. Joseph and across to the Kankakee and was soon coursing down the Big Vermillion; but there was no sign of Tonti, no message on the trail to tell where he had gone. He met herds of buffalo but saw no human being; the great Indian town near what is now Starved Rock was deserted; he went through the empty lodges only to find the corrupting corpses of men, women and children, strewn around or still fixed to the stakes where they had been burned; even the graves in the*

\* (Randall Parrish, *Historic Illinois*, p. 57.)

\*\* (Alburto Bement, *Illinois Coal* . . . . , p. 13.)



burial ground had been desecrated. He groped here and there among the slain to see if perchance any white men might be among them, but they were all Indians. \*

Conditions at Fort Creve Coeur were not much more promising, so leaving on a tree a message for Tonti, La Salle moved on to Fort Miami.

Today we can account for Tonti's absence from Fort Creve Coeur, and his failure to receive the message La Salle left for him there. Tonti had received from La Salle instructions to inspect Starved Rock with a view to building a permanent fort there.

*In his trips along the Illinois Valley, La Salle came to recognize the advantages of Starved Rock, especially its capacity for defense and its control of one of the largest Indian villages in the north. . . . Starved Rock, known to the French as Le Rocher, presents an admirable site for a fortification. At its northern base flows the Illinois River, above which the sheer rock walls rise 130 feet. Its landward side is almost inaccessible except at one place which affords a convenient, yet easily defended approach to the natural fortress. A level area of less than an acre provided room on top for the French to build a small stockade. As long as food lasted, the fort was impregnable. It controlled the Illinois River and was accessible by this water route to other French posts. La Salle had planned to establish here a great French colony and to develop the country round about. In 1687 Joutel writes enthusiastically of the beauty and fertility of the country and its mineral wealth. In his journal he gives what is probably the first account of the mineral resources of the region in a statement concerning its limestone, its fire clay, and particularly its coal. He says, 'On the sides of the hills is found a gravelly sort of stone, very fit to make lime for building. There are also many clay pits, fit for making earthenware, bricks and tiles and along the river are coal pits, the coal whereof has been try'd and found good'. \*\**

Upon his return to Creve Coeur, Tonti found the conditions already described. Therefore, he went to the Illinois village between Starved Rock and the Aramoni (Big Vermillion) on the right bank of the Illinois to convince these Indians that La Salle's activities in the Illinois country were most friendly. During his visit, the Iroquois, desirous for furs to trade with the English at Albany, arrived in the village to force the Illinois to trade through them or abandon the territory in favor of the Iroquois. The Illinois suspected Tonti of betraying them; therefore, Tonti volunteered to lead an attack against the aggressors. The battle took place on the prairie behind the bluff, between Starved Rock and the Big Vermillion. Because the Illinois were largely outnumbered, Tonti, at the risk of his own life, went forward alone to attempt mediation. He finally convinced the enemy that the Illinois tribes were twelve hundred strong, and that they would have the assistance of sixty Frenchmen. The Illinois returned to their village, but the Iroquois continued to annoy them. Finally, the Illinois set fire to their lodges, and hurried down the river to join the women and children who had been sent out ahead. This left Tonti and his little band of Frenchmen at the mercy of the invaders, who were moving into the Illinois village. They presented him with beaver skins, and urged him to go back to France. He spurned their presents, but realizing that to remain among the Iroquois was useless, he and his followers set out for Green Bay.

*While Tonti's party labored northward, followed by the savage curses of the Iroquois, these latter, now cabined in the former village of the Illinois, gave free rein to every vulgar, inhuman, fiendish, diabolical instinct of their depraved savage natures: they violated the burial place of the Illinois, they burnt some of the dead bodies, others they threw to the dogs and, it is related, they even ate of the flesh of the human bodies recently exposed on scaffolds, after the manner of burial among the Illinois. Then they recrossed the Illinois River and followed the Illinois Indians in their migration southward, always on the opposite shore, until they arrived somewhere near the mouth of the Illinois, where they threw off the hypocritical mask of peace and inhumanly assailed the dis-united Illinois tribes . . . Those were the scenes of horror, traces of which La Salle had witnessed on his search for Tonti. \*\*\**

Tonti went from Green Bay to Mackinac where messengers in search of news of him

\* (Thomas J. Campbell, *Pioneer Laymen of America*, v. I, as quoted in Schlarman, *op. cit.*, p. 90.)

\*\* (Sauer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.)

\*\*\* (Schlarman, *op. cit.*, p. 94.)



arrived from Fort Miami. La Salle, advised as to his whereabouts, hurried there to meet his faithful companion, and to plan with him a voyage by which he hoped to reach the mouth of the Mississippi.

In the fall of 1681, La Salle with twenty-three Frenchmen set sail for Fort Miami. Tonti with a small group of men had departed a few days in advance. It was December before the group left Fort Miami, and weather conditions made travel difficult. Early in February, 1682, the canoes of La Salle's party entered the Mississippi at the mouth of the Illinois, and on April 7, 1682, reached the Gulf of Mexico. Two days later he took possession of the Valley of the Mississippi for His Majesty, the King of France.

*No one at the time realized the extent of La Salle's discovery. He had given an empire over to France, an empire so immense that the northwest boundary was unknown,—extending into the unplatted regions of the Northwest. \**

Their task accomplished, this band of brave men turned their canoes northward, and began the hard struggle against the strong current of the Mississippi. La Salle was stricken with fever, and for a time his companions feared for his life. He rested at Fort Prudhomme at the mouth of the Arkansas while Tonti hurried to Mackinac to report the results of their journey, after which he was to return to the Illinois where La Salle had hoped to establish a permanent settlement. Arriving in Mackinac, Tonti delivered his message to M. de La Barre, newly appointed governor of New France. Unlike Frontenac, who had been La Salle's friend and admirer, de La Barre had no appreciation for the importance of La Salle's discovery; therefore, he did not accord the great adventurer the hero's welcome he so deserved when he eventually arrived at Mackinac. This situation probably explains why La Salle chose to return to the Illinois country with Tonti, where work was begun on Fort St. Louis.

*The point selected was the summit of that great natural curiosity now known as 'Starved Rock'. . . . Rising directly from the water, a sheer wall of stone for one hundred and twenty-five feet jutting far out over the wide stream, its western brow reared high above the tops of great forest trees below, its eastern side impregnable because of a wide, deep gorge, no more perfect natural fortification could have been found. The cliff was accessible only from the rear, where, with extreme difficulty, a man might succeed in climbing up along a steep and narrow passage. Here, laboring all Winter, now joined by La Salle, Tonti built his entrenchments—cut away the forest surmounting the rocky summit, erected store-houses, and log-huts in which to quarter his men, and finally dragged timber up the difficult pathway, from the plain below, encircling all with a log palisade. While he was thus at work La Salle held council here and there with the scattered Indian tribes throughout that country, gathering them together in one vast confederation of Algonquins on the site of the old-time town of the Illinois. \*\**

Twenty thousand Indians, including four thousand warriors, lived in the villages on the neighboring bottom land.

De La Barre's unsympathetic conduct continued to annoy La Salle, who finally decided to go to Montreal to discuss with him his project on the Illinois, and the fairly profitable fur trade which had been developed there. Tonti was left in command of Fort St. Louis. On his way, La Salle met Chevalier de Baugis who was being sent by de La Barre to relieve La Salle of his command of Fort St. Louis. Realizing he could probably gain nothing even by a personal interview with the Governor of New France, La Salle sailed for France in the fall of 1683. He was well received in the Court of Versailles, where he proposed a plan to build a fort sixty leagues above the mouth of the Mississippi. Louis XIV ordered restored to La Salle the three forts which had been removed from his command: Fort Frontenac, Fort Miami, and Fort St. Louis. In addition, the explorer was granted the privilege of developing colonies in Louisiana and governing the territory between Lake Michigan and the Gulf of Mexico. Four vessels fitted out with men and tools set sail in July, 1684. Two months later, they landed at Santo Domingo, where La Salle, who was ill to the point of death, was advised that one of the ships had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards. In November, 1684, La Salle was able to resume his search for the mouth of the Mississippi. However, because of miscalculations on his part, he passed the mouth of the great river without realizing he was near it, and reached

\* (Schlarman, *op. cit.*, p. 97.)

\*\* (Parrish, *op. cit.*, p. 81.)



Matagorda Bay on January 19, 1685. He and his party were set ashore in what is now Texas, where La Salle constructed a fort. It was not a successful venture. Once again, La Salle determined to go to France. On January 12, 1687, he and some of his followers set out for Fort St. Louis on the Illinois. It was not an easy journey, and the morale of the men was low. In the wilds of Texas, La Salle was assassinated by members of his own group.

Tonti, whom La Salle had left in command of Fort St. Louis on the Illinois, had surrendered this post to de Baugis, upon orders from de La Barre. The two men spent the winter together, not entirely in harmony except when the Iroquois swept suddenly upon them and attempted in vain to take the Fort. For six days the ferocious savages had assailed the Rock. In May, Tonti departed for Canada. In the meantime, the King of France, advised by La Salle of de La Barre's unsympathetic attitude toward the development of the Mississippi Valley, ordered Tonti reinstated at Fort St. Louis on the Illinois.

In the fall of 1685, Tonti went to Mackinac for news of La Salle, and upon being advised that the great explorer was seeking the mouth of the Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico, Tonti resolved to go in search of him. It was a fruitless journey, and finally Tonti hurried back to Fort St. Louis, intending to go to Montreal to discuss with the French authorities there the possibility of war with the Iroquois. When Tonti was informed of the death of La Salle, he journeyed to the mouth of the Red River in the hope that he might bring relief to La Salle's colony at Matagorda Bay, but when savages refused to furnish guides, he had to retrace his steps; he returned to Fort St. Louis in September, 1689.

Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, was selected by Louis XIV to take up the work interrupted by the death of La Salle. In 1698, he set sail from France to find the mouth of the Mississippi, and to establish a colony there. On March 2, 1699, d'Iberville found what La Salle had searched for in vain—the mouth of the Mississippi. Tonti gave him invaluable assistance by his intimate acquaintance with the Indian languages and the tribes living along the river.

*With this expedition to assist M. d'Iberville, Tonti's name disappears from authentic history. One account states that he was forcibly displaced from the command of Fort St. Louis in 1702, for some irregularity, after which he wandered into southern wilds until 1718, when, in shattered health, he returned to the scene of his former glory, and dying in the fort, was buried at the west side of the Rock. Another rumor speaks of him as remaining in Illinois a number of years, and finally returning to France. \**

\* (History of La Salle County, v. I, p. 190.)



### III

1750-1819

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the French missions to the Illinois Indians together with the chief French posts had been moved to the rich bottom lands on the east side of the Mississippi in the area of the Missouri River. By 1750, there were six French settlements in the territory now known as Illinois: Cahokia, Kaskaskia, St. Philip, Fort Chartes, Prairie du Rocher, and St. Genevieve. The Illinois country remained under French rule until 1763 when France, defeated in the Seven Years' War, ceded her North American possessions east of the Mississippi to Great Britain.

During the troubled thirteen years of British authority, Illinois was under military rule. Many influential French settlers, rather than submit to the British, left Illinois for St. Louis and New Orleans. Pioneers made little or no effort to settle the territory. In the vast wilderness known as the Illinois country, the only evidences of British possession were the few soldiers stationed at Fort Chartres and later at Fort Gage, and a few fur traders along the rivers. The Quebec Act of 1774 finally annexed the territory to the province of Quebec, but because of the outbreak of the American Revolution, the provisions for civil government contained in the act were not put into effect.

In 1778, the Indians, encouraged and aroused by the British, made frequent attacks on the white settlements in Kentucky. George Rogers Clark, a twenty-six year-old major of militia, gained the approval of the Virginia authorities to defend the Kentucky settlements by seizure of the British-controlled Illinois villages. With a company of 175 men, he set out for Kaskaskia. On the 4th of July, 1778, he surrounded the village, and in the name of the Commonwealth of Virginia, took it without bloodshed. Cahokia and Vincennes also capitulated.

The Virginia Assembly then organized all the territory lying northwest of the Ohio River and called it the Illinois County of Virginia. Illinois continued as a county of the State of Virginia until January 5, 1782, when the act which created it a county expired. In 1784, Virginia ceded to the United States government possession of Illinois. It was then that under the Ordinance of 1787, Illinois became a part of the Northwest Territory. At this period, with the exception of the remaining French villages beside the Mississippi and the few pioneer settlements scattered along the banks of the Illinois and the Wabash Rivers, the region within the present boundaries of the state was the abode of Indians.

White emigration was slow until 1779 and 1780, and the first arrivals in the Illinois country, traveling along the natural passage afforded by the Ohio River, were originally residents of Virginia and Pennsylvania.

In May, 1800, Congress created the Indiana Territory comprising the present states of Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and a part of Michigan. Nine years later, by an act of Congress, February 3, 1809, Illinois was separated from Indiana, and formed the Territory of Illinois. The population was estimated at 9,000, and the territory included the present state of Wisconsin.

Northern Illinois was virtually an untrodden wilderness. In 1812, there were possibly a dozen settlers around old Fort Dearborn, the present site of Chicago, but no colonists from the northern states advanced toward the interior of Illinois until after the War of 1812. At the close of the second war with Great Britain, emigrants began to arrive by way of the Great Lakes, and, scattering from Chicago, spread out through the territory.

Congress, in 1813, by passing a law granting the right to settle by preemption in the public domain, contributed greatly to the influx of settlers. Previous to this act, most settlers had merely "squatted" on the land, and had acquired no right or title to it. After 1815, the population increased rapidly as settlers came from the north by way of the Lakes, and from the east and south by way of the Ohio River.

On December 3, 1818, the Illinois Territory, exclusive of Wisconsin, was admitted to the Union as the twenty-first State. Kaskaskia became the first capital, and Shadrach Bond the first governor. The new state had fifteen organized counties embracing only about one-fourth of the actual territory, and a population estimated between 30,000 and 35,000. The settled portions of the State were at that time almost entirely south of Alton and Palestine, or in the southern third of the State, and even within this area there were large tracts of wilderness.

The census of 1820 credited Illinois with a population of 55,000. By 1830, this figure had nearly trebled, and settlements had extended northward into the upper third of the area.



When Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818, settlements even within the organized counties were scattered along the borders of the principal rivers. It was not until the late 1820's that pioneers entered the present boundaries of La Salle County. In 1828 there were several families on the bluff south of Ottawa, one settler at Dayton, one at Rutland, and one at Bailey's Grove. At the beginning of the Black Hawk War, in 1832, fifty persons were reported on the lower Fox River near Ottawa, four or five families at Indian Creek, approximately five families at La Salle and at Bailey's Grove, and three in Vermillion and in Deer Park Townships. A few southern settlers had come into this area, but, after 1831, emigrants from the northern states predominated.

On January 15, 1831, Governor John Reynolds signed the bill which established La Salle County, a territory forty-eight miles east and west by 108 miles north and south, extending to the north line of the State. Eventually several counties were created from this area. La Salle County, in 1831, embraced 144 townships, and was believed to contain between 500 and 700 inhabitants. Ottawa was named the county seat.

When the Township Organization Law was passed on February 12, 1849, the La Salle County Court appointed a commission to divide the county into election precincts. The naming of these precincts was given to the oldest resident settlers. Township 33, Range 1, except a part east of the Little Vermillion River, was named Salisbury. The townships set up at that time were later changed slightly and often subdivided. Salisbury eventually became La Salle and Peru.



#### IV

1820-1838

One of the first regions west of Lake Michigan to be penetrated by northern emigration was the Illinois Valley. Most of northeastern Illinois was prairie, at first avoided by the pioneers who preferred the timbered belts along the valley.

The earliest white settlement close to the site of the present city of La Salle was Fort Horn, constructed between 1825 and 1828 and located on the north side of the Illinois River near the mouth of the Little Vermillion. The Fort was built by a contracting partnership, Horn and Wilbur, two men engaged in furnishing supplies to the newly-formed government of the State of Illinois. This firm operated from St. Louis into Wisconsin, a vast distance necessitating the establishment of several storage and trading posts. The tiny Fort Horn, known also as Illinois Town, soon became a stopping-off place for those who journeyed through the area.

As the Sauk and the Fox Indians still used the territory for hunting, there were few white travelers. However, among those who ventured into the wilderness were Daniel Dimmick and his son, Elijah, who, in the 1820's, were tenanting a tract of land in the neighborhood of the present city of Princeton. In the autumn of 1828, they made a trip of 364 miles by land and water, and in the course of their journey stopped at the Fort to secure a winter's supply of corn. They described Fort Horn as a settlement consisting of "several small frame buildings".

Simon Crozier, an old Indian trader, is considered to be the first white settler in this locality. Doubtless, he had been on this part of the Illinois River when only the Indians occupied the territory. In about 1830, he built a little cabin on the south bank of the Illinois River opposite the future site of the city of La Salle, near what was later called Shippingsport. Crozier had charge of a post office at Shippingsport, the first in La Salle County.

The fertile soil in this section of Illinois soon attracted the attention of pioneers. In the spring of 1830, Samuel Lapsley, a Pennsylvanian, came here by way of St. Louis. He built a small log cabin on a tract of land which subsequently became east Fourth Street in Peru. He was an energetic worker; he established a farm on the present site of La Salle, placing under cultivation a piece of land extending south to the top of the north bluff, west to the ravine between La Salle and Peru, and east to a point later to become Joliet Street. On property which now comprises in part the business area of La Salle, he raised corn, wheat, and other cereals. In addition, he built a sawmill on the Little Vermillion near the present east Fifth Street, La Salle, but as his claim proved to be on property owned by the Illinois and Michigan Canal Commission, he lost his improvements, a common experience in the early nineteenth century.

Next to settle in the La Salle area in 1830 were Burton Ayres (Ayers) and his wife Orilla (Langworthy) of Ohio. Ayres built a cabin and set up a blacksmith shop at the foot of the bluff near the Little Vermillion; he also engaged in farming. Later, he made plows for the early farmers and did a good business as may be judged from the fact that when he died in 1870 his estate was valued at \$40,000.

Mrs. Swanson, a widow, and her two sons and two daughters, came from Ohio and settled near the mouth of the Little Vermillion. John Myers had also settled at the mouth of the Little Vermillion.

In the spring of 1830, two agents were sent out from Northampton, Massachusetts, to explore the West for the purpose of choosing a site for a colony. Because of the fertility of the soil, the reported existence of great coal beds, and the expectation of superior land and water transportation promised by the construction of canal and railroads, the commission selected the western terminus of the projected Illinois and Michigan Canal.

After the agents had made their report, a group known as the Massachusetts Colony set out for Illinois. Aaron Gunn from Montague, Massachusetts, was one of the seven young men who formed this colony. On May 7, 1831, they left from Albany, New York, by way of the Erie Canal, and ten days later they arrived at Buffalo. To their disappointment they learned that they could not go by boat to Fort Dearborn, and they were compelled to take passage to Detroit. At Detroit, they hired a team to convey them overland to Lake Michigan; they arranged, also, to have their trunks transported later by schooner. When they arrived at Mottville, Michigan, they bought two perogues, or canoes, from the Indians, lashed them firmly together side by side, launched them, and



paddled down the St. Joseph River to the site now occupied by the city of South Bend. Here, at a French-Indian trading post, they hired a man and team of oxen to haul them the six or eight miles across country to the Kankakee River. Following the route taken by Father Marquette and La Salle a century and a half before, they sailed down the Kankakee and Illinois Rivers. They reached Fort Horn on June 9, 1831, and landed at a point just below the mouth of the Little Vermillion.

The season was wet, and the men, because they were afraid of an epidemic, scattered to various parts of the country. Mr. Gunn went at first to Princeton, and then to the present location of La Moille where he bought a claim from a Mr. Hall, who, the following summer, was killed by Indians at Indian Creek. After having lived at La Moille and later at Magnolia for two years, Mr. Gunn, in 1835, sold his claim and bought 400 acres north of the town of La Salle. He had been told that his land was worth \$40,000. He soon found, however, that this was false, and in 1837 he turned to farming, assured that his acreage was worth what his crops would realize. In the same year, he married Nancy Winters of Mount Palatine.

In 1833, while attending a religious service conducted by a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, Mr. Gunn determined to devote his life to religion. He was a Baptist, but, as no organization of that faith had as yet started in the area, he united with the Methodists. He was an able speaker, and the Methodists found him to be an earnest worker. For several years he held a prominent place in their meetings. During one year he had charge of the circuit, covering the territory east to Morris, north to Dixon, and west to Hennepin. He was the first Protestant minister to settle in La Salle and was one of the founders of the first Protestant church here.

In 1832, at a session of the Illinois conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Reverend Zodac Hall was appointed to the Peoria mission. He traveled widely through this area, and he established a preaching center at the home of John Long near the mouth of the Little Vermillion. His class, consisting of four members, marks the beginning of Methodism in La Salle. For years, this preaching center at the John Long residence was the meeting place for the Methodist missionaries and their congregations.

The Black Hawk War broke out in 1832. Although Fort Horn was out of the range of hostilities, it supplied some volunteers to the ranks of the state militia which had been formed to quell the ferocious Sauk and Foxes under the leadership of Chief Black Hawk. South of La Salle, near the river bridge, is the site of Fort Wilbourn where, on June 16, 1832, Abraham Lincoln enlisted in the company commanded by Jacob N. Early. Aaron Gunn served in the militia under Colonel Strawn; he was mustered out after twenty-nine days' service.

When Burton Ayres heard of the massacre at Indian Creek and the threats of the Sauk and Foxes, he decided to leave temporarily. He took up his anvil block and buried a quantity of silver under it. He then departed for Ohio where he remained until the close of hostilities. When he returned here, he found that none of his possessions had been disturbed.

The Rockwell Land Company of Norwich, Connecticut, in 1835, sent Dixwell Lathrop west to select and purchase land for speculative purposes. By that time, construction was about to begin on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and the Illinois Central Railroad had been proposed. Mr. Lathrop chose the land near the crossing of the canal and the railroad believing that a city would probably locate there. He then proceeded to lay out the town of Rockwell. Daniel Baird from Westborough, Massachusetts, opened a boarding house in Rockwell in 1836. The village gave early promise of prosperity. A colony from Norwich, known as the Rockwell Colony, arrived in 1838, and the success of Rockwell seemed assured. Rockwell then had a population of nearly 200. A Baptist church, the first Protestant church to be established within the boundaries of the present city of La Salle, was organized at Rockwell on June 19, 1839. On that occasion, Reverend Thomas Powell was the preacher and moderator, and the congregation consisted of twenty-one members. There were in the town two good pioneer stores, a blacksmith shop, and a nearly-completed large frame building intended for a tavern.

But the summer and fall of 1838 were fatal to the small community. An epidemic of malaria struck the West and was particularly severe along the wide and low bottom lands of the Illinois River. All the Rockwell colonists were ill, and many of them died. The survivors scattered through the country. Rockwell never recovered, and eventually it became a part of La Salle. Location was quite probably as much a factor in the failure of Rockwell as was the epidemic: when the people saw that the canal terminus was below them, they knew then that their hopes for the town would never materialize.



The Illinois and Michigan Canal project was one of major importance in the early development of the State of Illinois. During the period of construction, it brought numerous laborers to the area, and settlements along the right-of-way quickly grew into towns. The completed canal greatly facilitated commerce and communication by forming a connecting link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.

The comparative ease with which such a canal might be constructed to join the Lakes and the Illinois and to form a single waterway to the Mississippi, and the possibility of supplying the canal with water from Lake Michigan were recognized at an early date. Father Marquette and Jolliet, in 1673, as they portaged across the divide for the first time, saw the practicability of such a waterway. Later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a canal over this route was recommended for military purposes. In 1814, President Madison advocated such a canal to provide a passage into the interior of the country, and in 1819, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun made a similar suggestion.

Governor Bond, in his opening message to the first session of the State Legislature, proposed the construction of the canal. In 1821, the Legislature appropriated \$10,000 for the surveying of the route. The two engineers appointed estimated that the construction of the canal would cost between \$600,000 and \$700,000. The total cost when the canal was completed was more than \$8,000,000.

In 1825, a law was passed to incorporate the canal company, but no stock was sold. On March 22, 1827, the United States Congress made a land grant to the State of Illinois for the purpose of furthering the canal project. The grant consisted of every alternate section of land within five miles of the proposed canal, in all about 325,000 acres. The selection was given to the commissioners who chose the odd sections, the government retaining the even. In this grant were large areas of the present city of Chicago, including parts of the Loop district.

A board of Canal Commissioners, vested with plenary powers of exploring and disposing of land, was appointed in 1829, and construction of the canal under State sanction was authorized. Shortly thereafter, a new survey of the project placed the estimated cost at approximately \$4,000,000. In 1834, a preliminary loan was made by the issue of State bonds, and work on the canal began in 1836. The chief engineer for the canal project was James M. Bucklin.

The terminus of the canal at La Salle was decided in 1836. Construction was formally begun with appropriate ceremonies and celebration at Canalport on the Chicago River, July 4, 1836. The Canal Commissioners, desirous of completing the waterway as rapidly as possible, on October 20, 1836, let contracts for work on twelve sections of the western division, including the steamboat basin at La Salle. As a result, preliminary work on the canal was begun simultaneously at both ends, at Summit and at La Salle, as well as at various places along the line. However, no great progress was made on the canal during the autumn and winter of 1836. Much of the time was consumed in preparations, such as the constructing of roads across the marshes on the eastern section, the building of dwellings for the laborers, and the securing of machinery and supplies.

Floods in the Des Plaines Valley hindered progress in that section. In addition, the shortage of manpower delayed construction along the entire route. With the hope of drawing laborers from the eastern states, the Canal Commissioners inserted advertisements in eastern papers offering a wage scale of \$20 to \$26 a month. This prospect of employment soon drew scores of people into the area, and towns were laid out along the entire canal route.

Philo Lindley of Seymour, Connecticut, arrived in La Salle in 1836. A year later, near the present crossing of the Rock Island Railroad over the Little Vermillion River and close to Burton Ayres' blacksmith shop, he erected a store, the first in the limits of La Salle. He was a contractor on the canal, and his store supplied needed commodities to the canal workers and other settlers.

Another store, William Byrne and Company, was soon opened near Lindley's. At about the same time, Isaac Hardy built a store on the bluff. It was a log structure, and it overlooked the site of the present city, then a staked-out town overgrown with grass, weeds, and small timber.

The village, in 1837, became prosperous through the trade of the canal laborers. A



few canal men built cabins on bluff lots in order to establish a prior right to buy. The land thus preempted was eventually sold by a committee of appraisers appointed to evaluate it. If it happened that a lot were bid to more than its value and the value of the improvements, the preemptor, in order to retain his lot would be obliged to pay the difference. Generally, however, the owner of the improvements would bid a sum equal to the appraisal and would not be bid against.

On February 7, 1837, a post office was established at La Salle, and H. L. Kinney was appointed postmaster. He was succeeded by A. Hyatt on December 12, 1838. The first post office was located on the south side of Main (First) Street in the 600 block, that is, between Marquette and Gooding Streets; the post office was next located on the north side of Main Street in the 500 block, between Gooding and Wright Streets.

In 1837, the town of La Salle on the bluff was platted. The State of Illinois had deeded the canal lands to a Board of Trustees in trust as indemnity for money borrowed to prosecute the work of construction. Their first sale of lots was in La Salle in 1838, and lots on the summit of the bluff fronting Main Street realized from \$400 to \$600 a lot, while others brought from \$50 to \$100 and occasionally more. In various places the site of the city was covered with a growth of trees. Some of these were removed and sawed into boards at the sawmill on the Little Vermillion. They were then used in the construction of the canal and in the first houses erected in the town.

The need for the establishment of a Catholic church with resident Catholic clergy was keenly felt by many people of the area. Up to this time, there had been occasional visits from Catholic missionaries, but no attempt had been made to erect a church at any of the towns which had sprung up along the river and the canal route. The diocese of St. Louis, embracing the greater portion of the Louisiana Purchase together with much additional territory, was vast, and the priests were few. In spite of the difficulty of obtaining priests, many Catholics were hopeful that a mission might be established at La Salle.

William Byrne, a contractor to whom the digging of the canal westward from Marseilles to La Salle had been awarded, John Cody, and several others were well aware of the need for a mission. Consequently, near Christmas in 1837, Mr. Byrne made the journey by water to St. Louis for the purpose of requesting Most Reverend Joseph Rosati, C. M., first Bishop of St. Louis and a Vincentian from Italy, to send missionaries to La Salle. He described to Bishop Rosati the condition of the hundreds of Catholics from Ireland then living in the northeastern portion of Illinois, particularly of those employed on the public works. Bishop Rosati promised that the people would be cared for as soon as possible.

Therefore, on Thursday night, March 29, 1838, Father John Blasius Raho, C. M., and Father Aloysius John Mary Parodi, C. M., like their Bishop, Vincentians and natives of Italy, arrived on the Illinois River at Peru. They were welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd numbering about 500 who held torches and shouted jubilantly as the boat carrying the priests docked. After preliminary greetings, the missionaries mounted waiting horses, and, while an improvised fife and drum corps played "Gary Owen", they and the people in procession moved up the hill to the Byrne home which became temporarily the residence of the missionaries.

The La Salle Mission was inaugurated on Passion Sunday, April 1, 1838. Mass on that day was celebrated in the largest room of a boarding house operated by John H. Hynes. The make-shift chapel was crowded to overflowing, and windows and doors were opened so that the many people unable to gain access to the room might participate in the service.

The missionaries continued to make their headquarters in La Salle. While Father Raho traveled for many miles around to minister to Catholics in the surrounding villages, Father Parodi remained in La Salle to care for the needs of those here.

Meanwhile, the years 1837 and 1838 were marked by countless quarrels among the canal laborers. The majority of the men employed on the canal were immigrants from four provinces in Ireland: the southern Connaught, Munster, and Leinster called the "Corkonians", and the northern Ulster, the "Far-downs". Almost all of these men lived in poor shanties, and little if any recreation was provided for them. Among such a large force under these conditions it was natural that animosities would arise. William Byrne and John Cody, who had been instrumental in the establishment of the first Catholic mission here, with other prominent Irishmen, were sincere in their desire to help the workmen, but they could do little to offset the prejudice between northern and southern Irishmen.



At Marseilles, in May, 1838, the difficulties developed into a bloody fight between the two factions. The Corkonians won a decided victory, and then marched westward to a spot between Ottawa and the Little Vermillion, at Split Rock, known as "Kerry Patch". They were joined by approximately 200 men who worked under labor boss Edward Sweeney, a Corkonian. Sweeney assumed command of the forces, and the men advanced to La Salle and Peru, mistreating any Far-downs they met and destroying their shanties.

Here the county authorities interfered. Sheriff Woodruff, who had ordered Zimri Lewis, his deputy at Peru, to gather together a force of men and meet him, left Ottawa with a strong posse. Deputy Lewis and his men were reinforced by a group under William Byrne, an immigrant from Leinster. Lewis and Woodruff met at Kerry Patch where they were confronted by the Corkonians who had marched there from La Salle. Woodruff ordered them to lay down their arms and to submit to civil authority. Instead of obeying, the Corkonians charged against the sheriff's men who retreated. Byrne quickly moved into position and confronted the Corkonians. Lewis repeated the sheriff's order to lay down arms; he also was answered with defiance. His forces then fired on the Corkonians, and his mounted men charged against them. The Corkonians dispersed in every direction. Some even threw themselves into the river, and several who were in the water were shot. A large number was arrested and removed to Ottawa. Seven were known at the time to have been killed; three others were afterwards found dead in the tall grass.

Father Raho wrote in a letter to his superior that after this first battle La Salle became "quiet, peaceful, sober; generally (the people) attend to their own duty".

M. C. O'Byrne in his *History of La Salle County, Illinois*, points out, in partial extenuation of the men who engaged in the conflict, that they had come from a land which for centuries had suffered under a tyrannous rule, that they were accustomed to regard faction fighting as chivalrous, and that, finally, they had been too long without the steady influence of their Church.

During this difficult time, Father Raho and Father Parodi had been living at the Byrne cabin. After five weeks of celebrating Mass at the cabin on week days and at the Hynes boarding house on Sundays, the priests as well as the parishioners saw the urgent need for a church building. At first, they contemplated a brick church, but because of lack of funds they decided on one built of logs. They planned a church sufficiently large for the congregation of the day: the length was to be fifty feet, the width thirty feet, and the height fourteen. They further decided that after the completion of the church, a five-room home of the same material would be constructed for the priests.

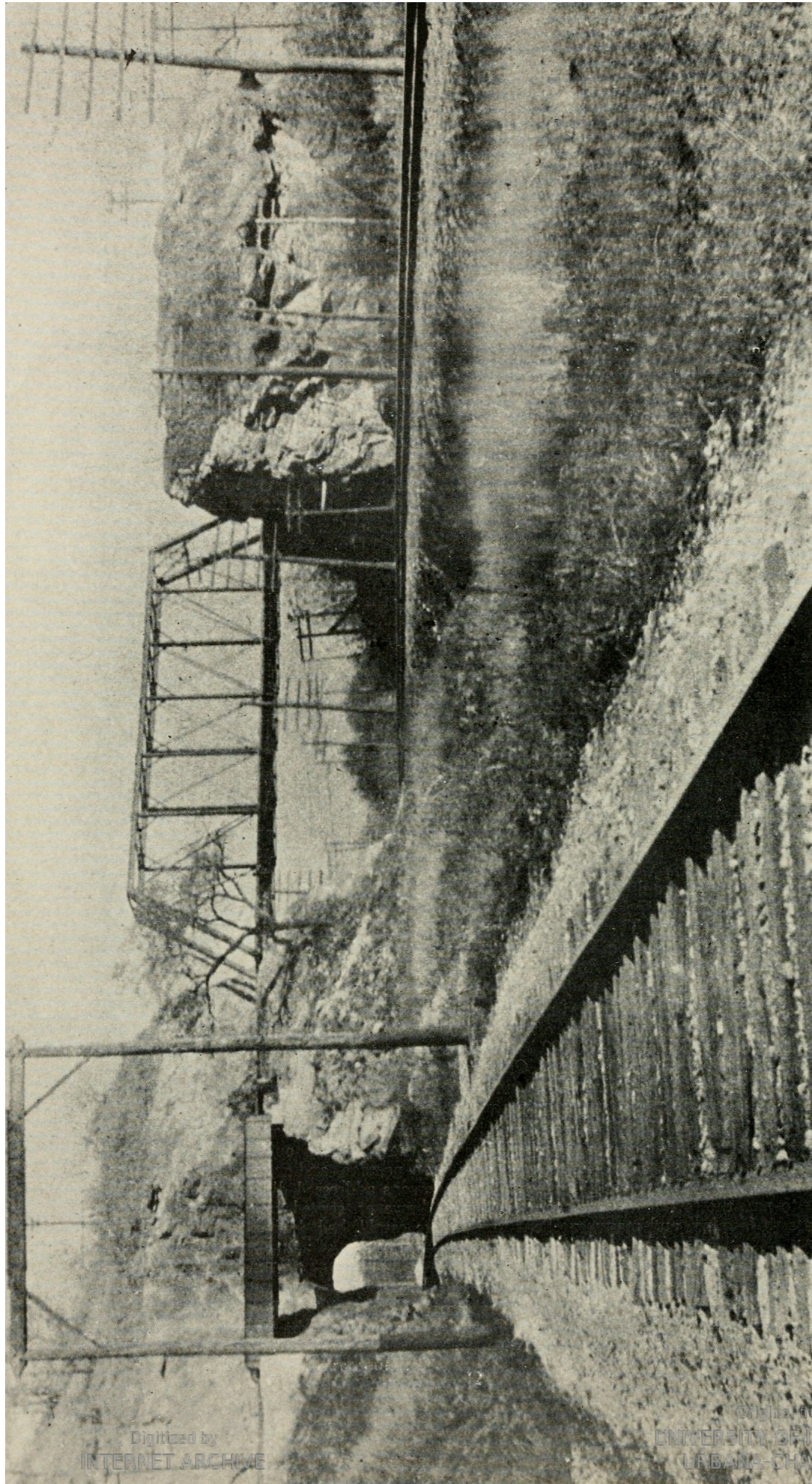
The canal company donated the land amounting to several lots on the south side of Third Street west of Chartres. With a treasury of twelve dollars, the priests and parishioners began the work. On July 1, 1838, just three months after the arrival of the missionaries, the completed church was dedicated and called the "Church of the Most Holy Cross". A month later, a belfry was added, and on August 5th, the bell was rung for the first time. The Church of the Most Holy Cross was the first Catholic church to be erected between Chicago and St. Louis. At about the same time, the new home for the priests was also finished and occupied.

The effects of the Panic of 1837 were not felt until after 1838. Financing then became increasingly difficult. The State was unable to pay its canal debt in specie and commenced to use scrip. By 1841, when work on the canal was suspended entirely, the State was near to bankruptcy. Almost \$5,000,000 had been spent on the half-finished canal, completed from La Salle to Marseilles and from Chicago west almost to Morris. In order to save money, in 1843 the Commission abandoned the idea of a lake level canal and adopted plans for a shallow canal containing numerous locks.

The people during the depression were living from hand to mouth. It is estimated that over eighty percent of the working class left the area. No one asked for or gave credit. At that time, the recipient of letters paid the postage, and many letters remained unclaimed in the La Salle post office because the persons addressed did not have sufficient money to pay the few cents' postage. The period, however, served to turn some of the residents to farming, and many excellent farms were established during this depression.

With cessation of work on the canal, other internal improvement projects for the state were also halted. Before 1830, agitation for railroads had begun in Illinois. Scarcely had the feasibility of the steam railroad been demonstrated when public-minded citizens saw in it the solution for the transportation problems of the interior. The first railroad for Illinois, proposed in 1833 by the Canal Commissioners, was to be a substitute for the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Among other railroads suggested for the state was one





### SPLIT ROCK

Split Rock is the highest presentation of St. Peter's sandstone, the top of the geologic La Salle Anticline which was formed by a gigantic upheaval deep below the earth's surface.

For many years, the Rock Island Railroad ran its westbound tracks through the tunnel at Split Rock. At about the same time, two bridges used by an interurban electric line spanned the railroad tracks. Split Rock was the scene of the Kerry Patch battle of 1838.



to be constructed from the mouth of the canal to the mouth of the Ohio River. Because it was to run north and south through the middle of the state, it was to be known as the "Illinois Central". Two other roads, east and west, were to intersect the north-south road, and were to be called the "Northern Cross Road" and the "Southern Cross Road". It was then planned to supply all sections of the state with railroads. During 1839 and 1840, a proposed "Illinois Central" was graded through La Salle.

In the crisis following the Panic of 1837, railroad plans were temporarily abandoned. However, early in 1841, shortly after work stopped on the Illinois Central, the State Legislature passed an act chartering a La Salle and Dixon Railroad Corporation whose line through La Salle was to be built on the present Bucklin Street. The Illinois Central was required by this act to transfer to the new corporation the materials and the right-of-way between La Salle and Dixon.

When the act was passed, a bank of issue was set up at La Salle by A. H. Bangs on the pretense that it was authorized by charter. The project brought to life the energies of the town, and for a while prosperity seemed again to be at hand. Bangs embezzled the meager savings of most of the canal workers as well as those of farmers and other residents of La Salle and the vicinity. It has been estimated that in this area he swindled at least \$9,000. He gave to Father Raho a note for \$500 and a worthless deed for an acre of land on which to build a church; the fraud was discovered, but not before Father Raho had ordered the bricks for the building.

Bangs had succeeded in deceiving most of the citizens of the towns when suddenly the whole project collapsed by the failure of the bank. Some of the enraged victims seized him with the intention of dragging him through the streets of La Salle and Peru. He was saved from possible lynching by another group of citizens who put him on a skiff in the Illinois River to float downstream with the current.

This was an extremely dark period for the little village of La Salle. The people were in desperate straits. After the bankruptcy, Bangs was revealed to be a mere adventurer lacking both character and credit. Not even a hundred dollars had been used to start the railroad or to put into operation the bank which had circulated dozens of worthless notes.

When Thomas Ford became governor of Illinois, he attempted to relieve the economic conditions of the State. He proposed a plan, which was adopted, whereby the creditors of the State would advance sufficient funds to insure the completion of the canal, and the people would be taxed heavily to meet the interest on the debt. Governor Ford realized that the revenues to be derived from the completed canal would save the credit of the State. The canal, then, was completed in 1848, and, on April 23rd, the first boat, the *General Thornton*, made the first trip along the entire canal and docked at Chicago. This waterway became immediately profitable.

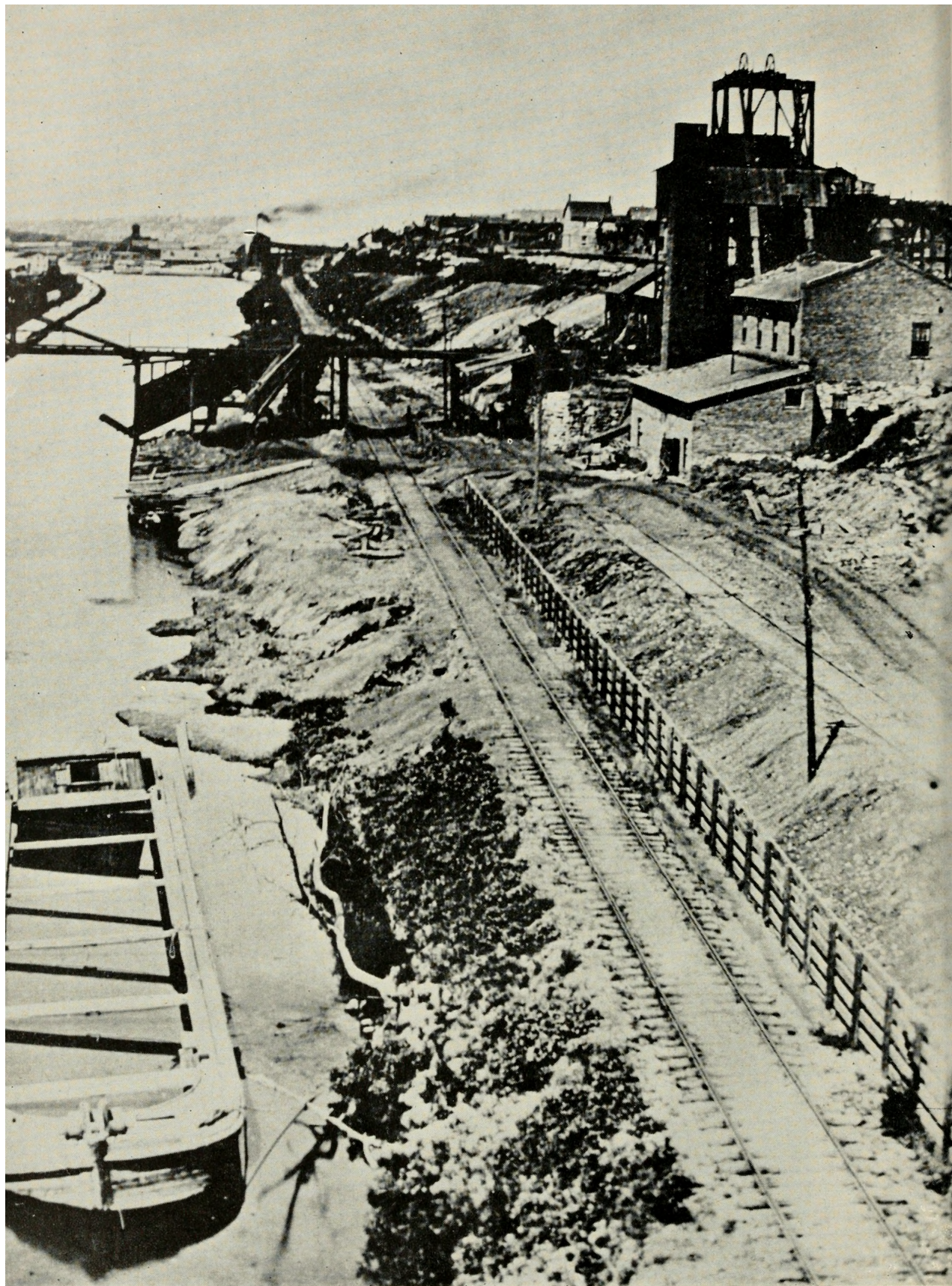
On the other hand, the canal had been an expensive project. In money, it had exceeded \$8,000,000. In lives, from cholera, fever, discord, and faction quarreling, the canal had claimed one man for every six miles of construction.

Packets were introduced on the canal. Canal boats were pulled by horses or mules which walked along the tow-path. This method of transportation was definitely an improvement over the ox-team and wagon which it supplanted, and canal travel became a luxury.

Many commodities, also, were shipped on the canal. Among these, lumber ranked first; it was of only slightly greater importance in the traffic than corn. Grain, sugar, molasses, tobacco, and hemp were also handled on the canal boats. As the territory surrounding the canal built up, corn soon became the leading product to be shipped. Before the opening of the canal, wheat and corn had been grown equally extensively in the area. The cheap transportation afforded by the canal made it advantageous to produce corn on the heavy, rich prairie soil, and wheat became a subordinate crop. The influence of the Illinois and Michigan Canal was so great on the development of this region that among North American artificial waterways only the Erie Canal outranked it in importance.

Star Union Products Company of Peru, probably of the local businesses the one having the longest continuous history, began production in 1845, when Fred Kaiser established a brewery on the site now occupied by Star Union. He brewed in large kitchen utensils, and he carried water, two buckets at a time, suspended from a wooden yoke set on his neck and shoulders. He used a horse with a capstan to grind the grain. In spite of hardships, his production was successful, and he continued to operate the business until 1860, when he sold his brewery to Benjamin Ream.





THE CANAL, THE ROCK ISLAND, AND THE LA SALLE SHAFT

The La Salle shaft is in the upper right of the above picture. Boats on the canal and trains on both railroads were loaded from a coal chute, center. One of the last canal boats may be seen in the foreground.



The Baptists of the community obtained their first regular pastor in 1847, the Reverend Alfred Osgood. Prior to that time, services had been conducted in private homes. During the ministry of Reverend Osgood, the first church, located at Fifth and Marquette Streets, was built.

Toward the end of the decade, two great catastrophes, disease and flood, hit the district. During 1848 and 1849, the Asiatic cholera claimed hundreds of victims in the vicinity of La Salle and Peru. The epidemic appeared first among the dwellers in the shanties who lived in the dampness of the Illinois bottomlands and who used drinking water which was quite possibly contaminated. It next struck the crowded boarding houses, and finally the dwellings on the bluff, the present site of La Salle. The cholera continued unabated for months. Deaths were rapid, and bodies in rough boxes or in blankets were quickly buried. Occasionally, huge trenches were dug, and many bodies in a common grave were covered with a little earth. There was scarcely a family in La Salle and Peru which did not have at least one death. In some instances, entire families were wiped out.

The second disaster, a flood in the spring of 1849, inundated most of the lowland area. With the spring thaw, much water had poured into the valley. Suddenly, the temperature had dropped, and the water had frozen. A thaw again sent the water swirling over the bottom lands, driving out families and doing untold damage to business and shipping enterprises. It was reported at that time that the water extended from the north to the south bluff entirely covering the bottom lands.

The First Methodist Church of La Salle, known formerly as the Methodist Church, was founded in 1848 by the Archibald Long family. Mr. Long made possible the building of the first Methodist church edifice in La Salle, then located on Fourth Street between Joliet and Hennepin. During the construction of the church, Mr. Long contracted an illness from which he did not recover. His son, Archibald Long, Jr., after the death of his father, became, for the next four decades, one of the mainstays of the church.

1849 marks the establishment of La Salle's first hotel, the Hardy House, of which Isaac Hardy was the proprietor. This hotel, which was later destroyed by fire, became well known between St. Louis and Chicago. A second hotel, the Harrison House, was opened in 1851 on the northeast corner of First and Wright Streets. A. I. Hartshorn, the first proprietor, used the second and third floors of the building as a boarding house. Among the first guests were several of the engineers connected with the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad. The Harrison House, however, was intended primarily as a store building rather than a hotel, and the lower floor was occupied by the Postlethwaite and Fuller drug store and by the Louis Eliel clothing store.



## VI

1850-1854

La Salle in the 1850's, with a population of about 200, was emerging from the backwoods era of its existence. The village proper had deserted the bottom lands and had moved onto the bluff. Several buildings were under construction both on Main Street and farther north in town. The original Harrison House and a five-story structure next to it, called the Greenwood building, were erected in 1851. St. Patrick's Church, the present stone edifice at Fourth and Marquette Streets, was completed in the early part of the decade.

La Salle in area was small. The village lay almost entirely below Fifth Street; north of that line, houses were scarce. In 1850, there were few dwellings in the village. St. Patrick's Church was built at the edge of town. Beyond Fifth Street the site of the city was almost entirely timber- and pasture-land.

Even the settled parts were far from urban in appearance. Swamplands were to be found in almost every section of the platted town. Streets were puddles of mud in wet weather and hardened ruts in dry. There were no street lights. The sidewalks were two narrow strips of planking from which the pedestrians, depending on the time of year, would be splashed with mud or covered with dust by each passing horse and vehicle.

Nearly every family kept a cow, a pig, and chickens, and these were frequently found wandering or resting on the streets and sidewalks. Horse races were run on what is now Union Street, and the bottom lands, also, were often used for a race track.

Labor was cheap. It was the experienced workman who was paid more than \$2.00 a day. Girls who did housework could be hired for \$1.50 or \$2.00 a week, and any girl would work eleven or twelve hours a day for seventy-five cents.

On the other hand, living costs were low. Sugar sold for about five cents a pound; dressed hogs were worth from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a hundred pounds, and wheat was selling at from twenty-five cents to thirty-five cents a bushel.

The levee district at the canal was a busy part of the village. John Allen, John Gaynor, and Richard Cody ran grocery and boat stores near the levee. Giles A. Lindlay, who later became mayor of La Salle, and I. D. Harmon and Company both operated forwarding and commission firms. All the stores in the levee district sold liquor as a sideline, and nearly every one of them operated a bar in the rear of the store.

Boats and barges were often congested in the "big basin" of the canal, and many times traffic was so heavy that an hour was required for a vessel to clear port for Chicago. Fights among the boatmen to get into the locks first were common occurrences.

This was the village whose citizens, on September 17, 1851, voted to incorporate. The village government, organized in 1851, under which the election had been ordered, had the following members: Edward D. Davis, president, Nicholas Duncan, John Allen, Francis Le Bean, and William Whaley.

The official record of the incorporation of the City of La Salle shows that the proposition carried with a unanimous affirmative vote. The names as taken from the poll book used at that election are regarded as a fairly complete list of the men settled here in the early 1850's.

*At a public meeting of the legal voters of the Town of La Salle, in the county of La Salle, state of Illinois, held at the La Salle House in the said town of La Salle, on the 17th day of September, A. D. 1851, in pursuance of a notice published in the La Salle Standard (a newspaper published in the said town of La Salle), of the 6th of said month, for the purpose of voting for, or against, the incorporation of said town, David L. Hough was appointed by said legal voters president of said meeting, and George M. How, clerk of same.*

*The said Hough and How, having been duly sworn according to law, by Daniel Cosgrove, Esq., a Justice of the Peace in and for said county, the polls were opened and 66 votes were given, of which number 66 were for incorporation and none against incorporation. A list of the names of those who voted as above stated is hereby furnished and made a part of this report.*

*Daniel Cosgrove, Chester Haney, E. R. Moffatt, W. H. Valentine, John Gray, William Martin, Alanson Reed, E. G. Spalding, Patrick O'Connor, Isaah Stoker, A. Cambal, H. Scott, F. Sisson, Jas. Cody, John Allen, Nicholas Duncan, A. Vreeland, J. V. Swarthout, Thos. Mulligan, E. B. Chumasero, George H. Buck, M. Colain, William Byrne, Jos.*



*Blish, A. G. Lawton, T. J. Greenwood, E. D. Davis, James Armour, James W. Garfield, E. M. Garfield, John Feeney, Charles Kelehan, Dennis Genty, W. S. Swan, Patrick O'Conner, A. McFadden, David Brown, John Aylesworth, A. H. Palmer, John McCarthy, William McFarland, Robert Logues, Aaron Parkhurst, David L. Hough, Geo. M. How, Michael Burke, Francis Bry, Francis Harrison, M. Neustadt, G. H. Lamb, Jas. Fennity, W. G. Porter, Peter Dillon, Patrick Mulligan, Peter Maluly, Geo. Stuart, John McAvoy, James Baker, Pat Kennedy, Andrew Camball, Patrick Bowers, O. N. Adams, David Crichton, James R. Ferguson, Ira Comin, and H. L. Osburn.*

A charter was drawn up and was in force on August 4, 1852. Article one, section one of the charter, following the enacting clause, reads as follows: "That the inhabitants of the Town of La Salle and State of Illinois, be and they are hereby constituted a body politic and corporate, by the name and style of 'The City of La Salle,' and by that name shall have perpetual succession, and may have and use a common seal, which they may change and alter at pleasure".

The boundaries of the newly incorporated La Salle are given in section two: "All that district of country embraced within the following limits, to wit: All of section fifteen (15) and so much of section fourteen (14) as lays (*sic*) on the west side of Little Vermillion river, in Township thirty-three (33) north, and range one (1), east of the third principal meridian; also, the south half of section ten (10), in the same town and range." These boundaries have been enlarged many times since 1852. The first expansion was authorized on February 18, 1857.

City elections were to be held yearly on the first Monday of October. The law provided that "all free, white, male inhabitants, over the age of twenty-one (21) years, who are entitled to vote for state officers, etc., shall be entitled to vote for city officers".

The city was divided into two wards, and the first council consisted of four aldermen, two from each ward. Alexander Campbell, who later was Congressional representative of the district and a friend of Abraham Lincoln, was elected first mayor; Nicholas Duncan was justice, exercising concurrent powers with the mayor. John H. McFarran and George H. Buck were aldermen of the first ward, Nicholas Duncan and Norman McFarran, aldermen of the second ward.

During the early years after the incorporation of La Salle, the mayor was a magistrate with powers similar to those of a justice of the peace. In case of the absence of the mayor, the law authorized the city council to appoint one of the aldermen to act as mayor.

W. T. Bedford in the *Post Tribune* for August 1, 1927, quotes from the charter some of the powers granted to the city:

*To license and regulate porters and fix the rate of Porterage.*

*To regulate the fixing of chimneys and the flues thereof.*

*To provide for the inspection and measuring of lumber and other building materials, and for the measuring of all kinds of mechanical work.*

*To provide for the inspection and weighing of hay and stone coal, the measurement of charcoal, firewood and other fuel to be sold or used within the city.*

*To provide for and regulate the inspection of tobacco, and of beef, flour, meal and whiskey in barrels.*

*To regulate the weight, quality and price of bread to be sold and used in the city.*

*To regulate the size of bricks to be sold or used in the city.*

*To provide for the taking enumeration of the inhabitants of the city.*

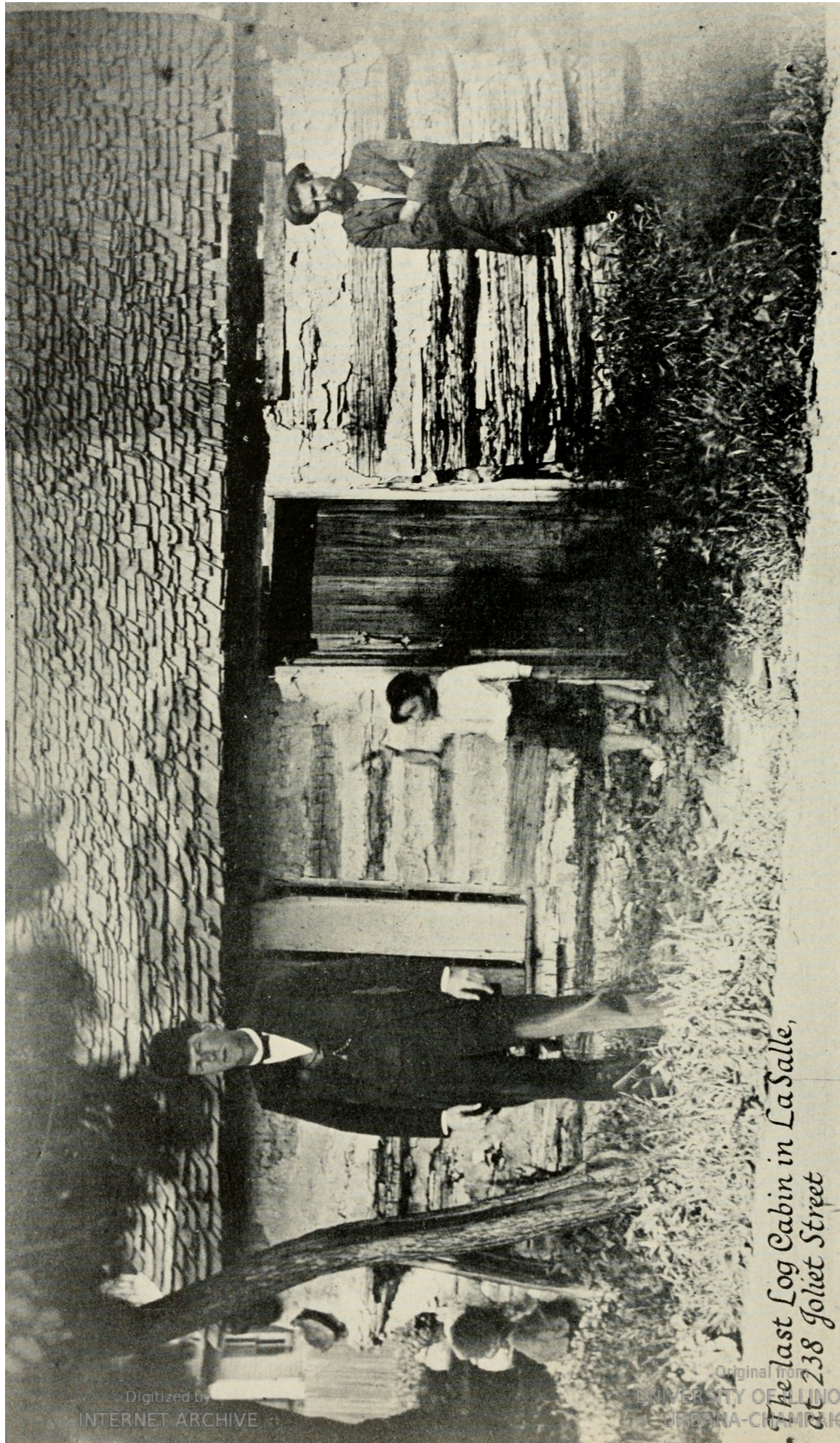
*The city council shall have exclusive power within the city, by ordinance to suppress and restrain billiard tables.*

*The city council shall have power to establish ferries, license and regulate the same, in the Illinois river opposite to said city for the benefit of the inhabitants and the public.*

*The city council shall have power for the purpose of keeping the streets, lanes, avenues and alleys in repair, to require every male inhabitant of said city, over 21 years of age, to labor on said streets, lanes, avenues and alleys, not exceeding three days in each and every year, and any person failing to perform such labor when duly notified by the supervisor, shall forfeit and pay the sum of \$1.00 per day for each day so neglected or refused.*

*No provision of this act shall be construed as to authorize the sale of ardent spirits in a less quantity than is now provided by law.*





*The last Log Cabin in LaSalle,  
at 238 Joliet Street*

LA SALLE'S LAST LOG CABIN

Luke Green's cabin is pictured above. This log cabin was used until late in the nineteenth century.



As a result of incorporation, a steady stream of new residents came to the city. Many who might have objected to living in a village were attracted by the idea of living in a city on the middlewestern frontier. Population began to expand, and with the added trade on the completed Illinois and Michigan Canal, prosperity seemed again to be assured.

On Sunday, June 13, 1852, two months before the enforcement of the city charter, the First Congregational Church of La Salle was organized. Fourteen members who are regarded as the founders of the congregation were present at the first meeting: Dixwell Lathrop, Sarah Lathrop, Herman Baldwin, Orville N. Adams, Caroline Noble, Mary A. Leonard, Harriet Brown, Jacob Haver, Ellen E. Haver, Nancy Leonard, Julia M. Loomis, Amelia Ayers, Elvira Aylesworth, and Joanna Hartshorn. The Reverend William H. Collins, first pastor, came to the church in the summer of 1852. Two years later, on June 15, 1854, he was formally installed as pastor. At this service, Reverend Owen Lovejoy of Pinceton, who became famous in the anti-slavery crusade, was present and took an active part.

The first Congregational Church in La Salle was located at the southeast corner of Fourth and Joliet Streets, the present St. Paul's Episcopal Church. This building was used by the Congregationalists until January 12, 1890, at which time a new building at Fifth and Joliet Streets was dedicated.

On October 3, 1853, Daniel Merritt gave to the Baptist congregation the property on Third Street between Marquette and Gooding on which the present church stands. In the following year, construction was begun, and the church was completed in 1856. It was destroyed by fire in 1865, and was rebuilt immediately. The parsonage property was purchased in 1853.

At this time, the population of the entire state of Illinois was growing rapidly. However, many of the villages were not easily accessible by waterways, and this fact led to demands for railway connections with the markets. The prospect of two railroads which would run through La Salle brought additional settlers to the city in 1851 and 1852.

The first of the railroads to be completed through La Salle was the Rock Island. Plans for this road were discussed as early as 1846. On February 27, 1847, a charter was secured from the Illinois State Legislature for a railroad to be called the Rock Island and La Salle Railroad. The purpose of the projected road was to link the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, with the Illinois River at La Salle. The early planners had the idea that much freight from the upper Mississippi could be unloaded and put aboard the railroad for trans-shipment to canal boats at La Salle. Ultimately, this railroad was to come into rivalry with the canal.

For many years, the question of the construction of a canal or a railroad from the Illinois River near the terminus of the Illinois and Michigan Canal to the Mississippi at Rock Island had been agitated. It was anticipated that this road by its contribution to the development of the region between the two rivers would be an important feeder for the canal. On February 7, 1851, an amendment to the charter authorized the extension of the road to Chicago and changed the name to the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Company. It seems to have been the intention of the legislators, in granting the right of extension, to make the railroad a supplement to the canal rather than a competitor for its traffic.

Construction of the Rock Island line began at Chicago in April, 1851. On October 10, 1852, the first passenger train made the run, in two hours, from Chicago to Joliet, a distance of forty miles. The first locomotive was called the "Rocket", the name which has been carried down to the present day streamliner passenger trains. Work on the remainder of the right-of-way was pushed vigorously, and the road was opened in January, 1853, to Morris, in February, 1853, to Ottawa, and on March 21, 1853, to La Salle. In April, 1854, the entire line from Chicago to Rock Island, as authorized by the charter, was completed.

The Rock Island, the first railroad built in this region of Illinois, has been of great importance in the development of the upper valley. The railroad contributed to and was supported by the rapidly developing country between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers.

The contest for traffic between the canal and the railroad began immediately. The Rock Island quite easily took passenger traffic from the canal, and the improvement of rail travel over canal boat was as great a step of progress as the canal boat had been over the oxen team. For six years, the canal had enjoyed almost exclusively the passenger



transportation of the region, but within a few months after the opening of the Rock Island, almost all travelers were using the speedier railroad. The passenger rate of four cents a mile charged on the canal boats was cut by the Rock Island, and the time of transportation was reduced to one-fifth of that consumed in canal travel. It was, in the final analysis, the Rock Island which caused the failure of the canal.



## VII

1855-1859

A second railroad, the Illinois Central, was constructed almost simultaneously with the Rock Island. Its possibility was seen as early as 1833, when plans for a north-south road through the state were considered as a part of internal improvement. The Panic of 1837 prevented any immediate realization of the project, but with the return of prosperity, the idea was revived. In 1850, Congress granted 2,005,095 acres of land to finance the building of the railroad. This land grant to the Illinois Central, the first made by Congress to any railroad, gave a right-of-way of two-hundred feet and title to every alternate even-numbered section lying within six miles of the trunk road or its branches. For land already occupied at the time of the grant, the deficiency was to be made up from the unoccupied even sections within fifteen miles of the railroad.

The Illinois Central was chartered in 1851. The La Salle-Bloomington line of the railroad was surveyed in the summer of 1851 under the general direction of Colonel Roswell B. Mason, chief engineer, and under the immediate direction of Timothy B. Blackstone, division engineer, who later figured prominently in railway developments in Illinois. Mr. Blackstone, a native of Connecticut, was one of the organizers and the first president of the Union Stock Yards and Transit Company of Chicago, the company which was largely instrumental in making Chicago the world's largest livestock and meat packing center. The Blackstone Hotel, Blackstone Avenue, and the Blackstone Memorial Library, all of Chicago, perpetuate his memory. In 1854, Mr. Blackstone was elected the second mayor of La Salle; he served one term.

Among the young men who came from New England with Mr. Blackstone was Grenville M. Dodge, who later became an outstanding general in the Civil War. Mr. Dodge also directed the building of many of the Western railroads including the Union Pacific, the first railroad to span the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Dodge, when he was in La Salle with the Illinois Central, was a young man of about twenty years of age, and the Illinois Central was his first railway employment. He married Miss Anne Brown of Peru.

The Illinois Central through La Salle is a part of the original main line which was opened between the Illinois River and Bloomington on May 16, 1853, and between the Illinois River and Mendota on November 14th of the same year.

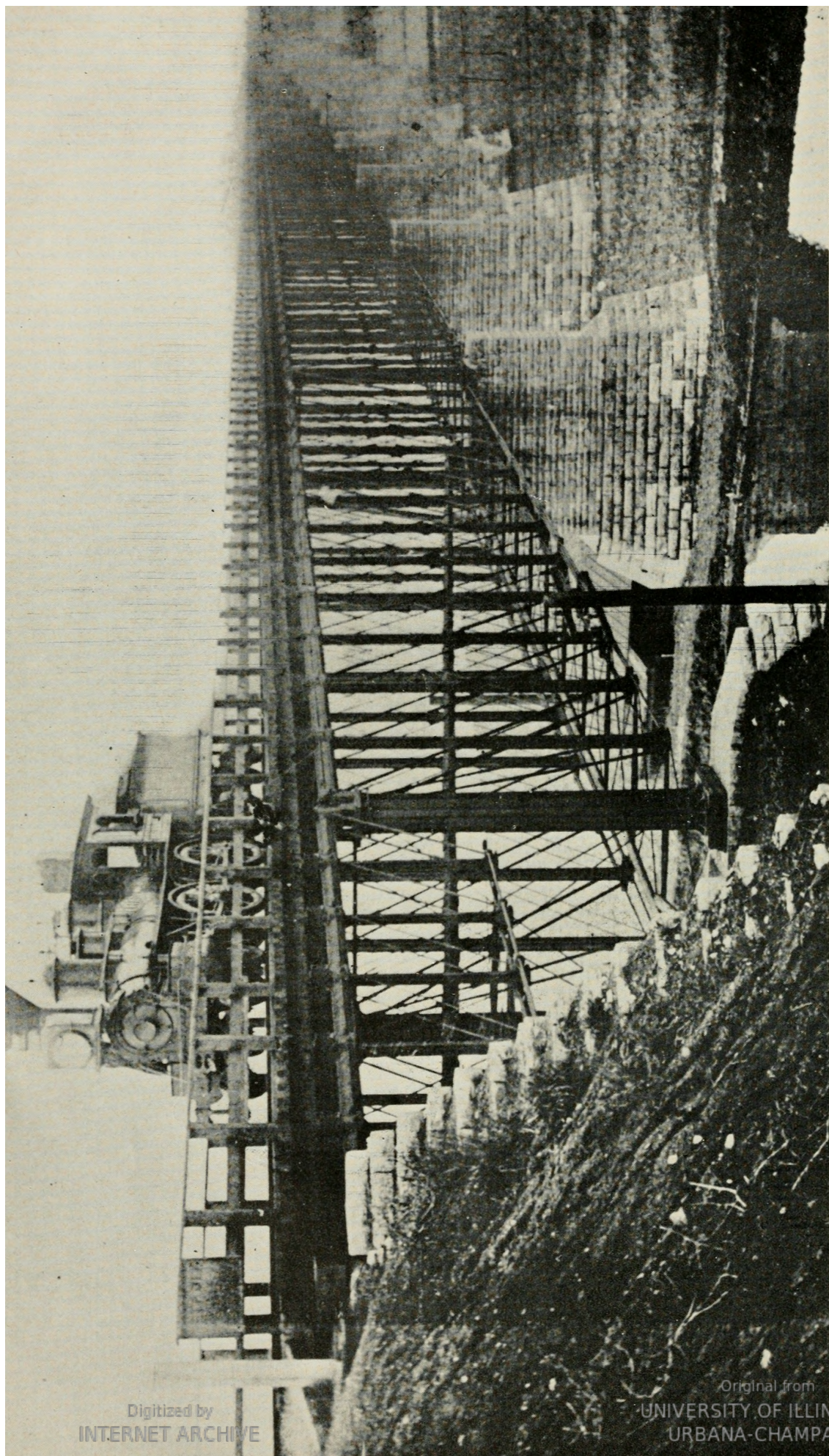
The opening of the line between La Salle and Bloomington marked the beginning of Illinois Central train service. The conductor in charge of that first train was A. D. Abbott who also served as United States mail agent handling the mail in bags between La Salle and Bloomington. Mail was heavy over this route because it formed a part of the first rail route for mail between Chicago and St. Louis, and it carried the mail also between Chicago and down-river points including Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and New Orleans. The sixty-mile run between La Salle and Bloomington required four hours.

One of the most difficult problems facing the engineers who built the Illinois Central was the construction of the railway bridge across the Illinois River at La Salle. The bridge was a stupendous project for that day, and the construction required two years. The foundations for the bridge were built with heavy blocks of stone which were transported long distances by horses and by oxen teams. The super structure was built of iron and truss spans encased in wood because steel and concrete had not yet come into use in bridge construction. The Illinois Central Bridge is a Howe truss bridge, 2,899 feet in length, resting on seventeen massive piers and two abutments. Officers of the Illinois Central Company referred to it as "a most striking structure", "one of the most imposing structures of the kind in the country", "equal to anything seen in America". The first train to pass over the bridge consisted of Engine No. 42 and four cars, and the date was about August 21, 1854. In a letter dated August 24, 1854, Colonel Mason wrote to William P. Burrall, then president of the Illinois Central:

*I returned last evening from La Salle where I have been for several days. We crossed the bridge on Monday last with an engine, and since then have been engaged in widening and strengthening the banks and shall cross with our trains regularly after this week.*

La Salle, during this period, was headquarters for a large construction force; this was partly because the La Salle bridge and the fills in the vicinity were very heavy pieces of construction and partly because large quantities of materials and supplies reached





ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD BRIDGE

The Illinois Central Bridge, for its day, was a masterpiece of engineering. It was opened to railroad traffic late in August, 1854. In 1893, this bridge, with the exception of the piers, was entirely rebuilt, span by span, without interrupting train schedules.



La Salle by river and were there transferred to freight trains. At this time much iron rail, imported from England, reached La Salle by water either through the Erie Canal—Great Lakes—Illinois and Michigan Canal route, or by way of New Orleans and the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

While the bridge was under construction, a serious difficulty arose between the men and the contractor, Albert Story. On December 15, 1853, a force of approximately 450 men was employed on the excavations and the embankment on the south end of the bridge. A dispute had arisen over wages. The men said that they had come from the East to La Salle assured that they would receive a daily wage of \$1.25, and for a while they had been paid that amount. In December, Mr. Story announced that after December 15th the daily wage would be \$1.00, and that those who were dissatisfied with that wage would, on December 15th, be paid off and discharged. The men, on the other hand, stated that they had spent all their means to reach central Illinois, that the promise of wages had been violated, and that, unless they were willing to work at a reduced rate, they, with families to provide for, would be unemployed in the winter. On the date set, when the clerk commenced to pay the men, some error was found in the payroll, and immediately the payments were stopped. Incensed at what they regarded as a breach of faith, the men rushed into the office and declared that they themselves would take over the payroll. In the scuffle which followed, one of the men struck Mr. Story.

Meanwhile, a superintendent of the work, Colonel Maynard of Chicago, left through a back exit to protect Mrs. Story and the Story children. While Colonel Maynard was gone, the assailants were forced from the office, and the door was bolted. The men with axes, picks, and shovels then broke down the door, and one man re-entered. Mr. Story was armed, and he inquired of his clerks concerning the advisability of shooting. The clerks recommended that they all remain quiet.

Story, who did not know that Colonel Maynard had gone to take care of Mrs. Story, then left through the back exit to go to the house. On arriving there, he found that his wife and children had been taken away; immediately he started for the stable to get a horse on which to leave the place. The men, seeing him, rushed shouting toward the stable. With picks, shovels, and stones, they brutally and almost instantly murdered him. It had been asserted that Story fired into the crowd, but there has never been any conclusive proof of the statement.

By this murder, the entire county was aroused. The news quickly reached La Salle, and a telegram was sent to Ottawa for Sheriff Thorne who arrived with a company of militia at about seven o'clock on the same evening. Mayor Alexander Campbell and about a hundred citizens accompanied the sheriff to the scene of the murder. When they reached the spot, they found that a number of men was in the neighboring hills, and that some of them were armed. The militia fired on them; one man fired on the sheriff's men, but he was shot twice in the arm and then taken prisoner.

The sheriff went through the shanties and arrested sixty or seventy men; about thirty or forty were recognized as participators in the disturbance, though none had actually committed the murder. The grand jury subsequently found true bills against twelve of the leaders. Four of the men, James Terry, Michael Terry, Koven Brennan, and Martin Ryan, asked for a change of venue to Kane County and were found guilty of murder. At a new trial, the same verdict was returned, and the men were sentenced to death. This sentence was, however, commuted by Governor Matteson to life imprisonment. Before he left office, the governor granted a full pardon to the men. This move was so unpopular that when Mr. Matteson later visited La Salle, he was publicly burned in effigy.

When Sheriff Thorne returned to Ottawa on December 15th, he left at La Salle a portion of his force as a permanent guard. The work on the bridge was continued by new contractors and laborers, and during the remainder of the construction period, the area around the bridge resembled a military camp.

The Illinois Central Telegraph Company opened its line between Amboy and La Salle through Mendota on May 22, 1855. The line was completed between Cairo and Dunleith, opposite Dubuque, through La Salle, Freeport, and Galena by November 20th of that year.

St. Patrick's Church, completed in 1851, was consecrated on April 11, 1853, by Most Reverend James O. Vande Velde, Bishop of Chicago. Constuction of the church had begun on May 24, 1846, under the direction of Reverend Mark Anthony, C. M., pastor. The cornerstone was laid on Friday, October 14, 1846, and the Most Reverend William Quarter, Bishop of Chicago, was present for the ceremonies. The church was opened to the public on June 1, 1851, and the parishioners, after having worshipped in the log



Church of the Holy Cross for some thirteen years, moved to the new stone church. Free from debt in 1853, the church was consecrated.

St. Vincent's School for girls was established in 1854 when Sister Vincentia and three companion Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul arrived in La Salle. Their first home, which served also as their school, was a two-story brick house on Second Street near Chartres. In 1855, they moved to a new stone house on Fourth Street near Gooding.

During the summer of 1854, Illinois was again swept by a severe cholera epidemic. In July, Colonel Mason of the Illinois Central wrote:

*Cholera prevails to a considerable extent at several points . . . This dread sickness has broken out again on the north side of the river, at La Salle, and no men were at work there this morning. A much larger number of cases . . . than usual were reported today . . .*

Giles A. Lindlay became mayor in 1855 succeeding Timothy Blackstone. In 1856, he was elected for a second term; he died in office, and James M. Mills was elected to fill the vacancy.

The last five years of this decade were characterized by the rise of industry. The development of coal mines played a major role in this advancement. This fact may be traced to the magnitude of the industry itself as well as to the influence it exerted on other industries by attracting them to the area.

The early French explorers had been aware of coal in this territory. Father Marquette and Jolliet, as early as 1673, noted outcroppings. Henri Joutel, a companion of Cavalier de La Salle and a commander of Fort St. Louis, described in his journal of 1687 the coal deposits which he found exposed on the slopes of the Illinois Valley. Pioneers later experienced the value of the fuel which they dug from the sides of the valley. In 1816 and 1817, Major S. H. Long, U. S. A., during a preliminary survey he made in connection with the Illinois and Michigan Canal, also noticed outcroppings of coal. The earliest coal mining consisted of working the outcropped banks, and the first of this type of mining in the vicinity was done near Split Rock. In 1855, J. G. Norwich, state geologist, conducted a thorough examination of the La Salle and Peru area, and he discovered three veins or strata of coal underlying about 500 square miles and varying in thickness from three and a half to seven feet.

The La Salle Shaft at Canal and Union Streets was among the first coal shafts to be sunk in this area. Under the direction of Louis Grant, work on the sinking was begun in August, 1855; in June, 1856, the first coal was hoisted to the surface. Among the early laborers and foremen were Patrick Hayden, Henry Burke, Michael O'Connor, and Ira Corwin. The first payroll of the company, in 1856, shows a payment of \$346.56. The pit boss received \$55.00 a month; carpenters, \$2.00 a day, trackmen, \$1.25 a day, and day laborers, eighty cents a day. On September 29, 1856, the shaft was destroyed by fire; soon afterward it was rebuilt.

A second shaft, the Kentucky, near the site of the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company, was sunk in July, 1856, and coal was raised to the surface the following October. The mine was operated by James Cowey, identified with Cowey's Addition in La Salle. This shaft, in 1868, became the property of the Northern Illinois Coal and Iron Company, and it was closed in the late 1870's.

For several reasons, industries began to grow during the following years. The community is, first of all, well supplied with raw materials. Moreover, the population then increased providing both labor and market. Railroads and the canal were making more distant markets accessible. Finally, the development of the coal mines provided a cheap and efficient source of power.

Of great importance to La Salle was the decision, in 1858, of two pioneers in the development of the zinc industry to establish their plant at La Salle. Frederick W. Matthiessen and Edward C. Hegeler, who had been fellow students at and graduates of the school of mines at Freiberg, Saxony, came to the United States together in 1857 for the purpose of gaining practical experience in mining engineering. At Mineral Point, Wisconsin, where ore had been found, they conceived the idea of constructing a plant for the smelting of zinc ore, but because of the lack of fuel at Mineral Point they determined to build elsewhere.

Approximately two tons of coal are required to smelt one ton of zinc ore; it is practical, therefore, to bring the ore to the coal. The coal deposits nearest Mineral Point



are at La Salle, and this greatly influenced the choice of a location. In addition to the coal supply, the two railroads and the canal were important factors in the decision.

Mr. Matthiessen relates the founding of the plant in this way:

. . . . The late Alexander Campbell encouraged our enterprise, obtaining for us all the necessary real estate, and also a contract with the Illinois Central Railroad. We located near the Central tracks . . . . Mr. Hegeler had examined the fire clay in St. Louis, and he ascertained that it was suitable for our needs. He bought the necessary fire brick in St. Louis, and had it shipped by boat to La Salle, and we started to build the factory.

The first shovelful of dirt was turned December 24th, 1858. We had a furnace running successfully when the Civil War broke out, there being no sale for spelter after the outbreak of hostilities. We ceased temporarily, but commenced operations again when in 1862 or 1863 a lively demand arose for zinc in the manufacture of arms and cartridges. During the cessation of manufacturing we had been making experiments so that when we started again, we did so with decidedly improved methods. Our means were limited, and we were very careful in our expenditures. We spent no money that was not absolutely necessary. \*

The La Salle Public Elementary School system was begun in 1857 when the citizens of La Salle organized a school district which included the entire township of La Salle. Before this time, in addition to St. Vincent's School for girls, several private non-denominational schools were conducted in improvised classrooms at various locations in the city. There was then no certification of teachers and no compulsory attendance of pupils; anyone who felt that he was qualified to teach selected a suitable room and solicited homes to find children whose parents were willing to pay the specified tuition fee. When the Baptist Church was built on the corner of Fifth and Marquette Streets, a private school was operated for several years in the church; this was probably the first of the private non-denominational schools. In 1853, a Mr. Powel built a school as a business enterprise. It was a two-story structure located at Fifth and Gooding Streets; the first floor was used for girls, and the second for boys.

A movement was started in 1856 to provide public schools in the city. During this same year, Aaron Gunn donated to the Baptist congregation two acres of land on North St. Vincent Avenue. The congregation raised money by subscription to build a two-story school called the "Seminary". The Seminary was intended to be a kind of high school, but as attendance was low, the project was abandoned. When the Elementary School District was organized, arrangement was made with the Baptists for the use of the Seminary, rent free. A few years later, the stockholders sold the Seminary property to the school district for \$2,000. The Seminary for a number of years was the principal elementary school; however, to provide necessary space as enrollment increased, the Board of Education rented other buildings throughout the city.

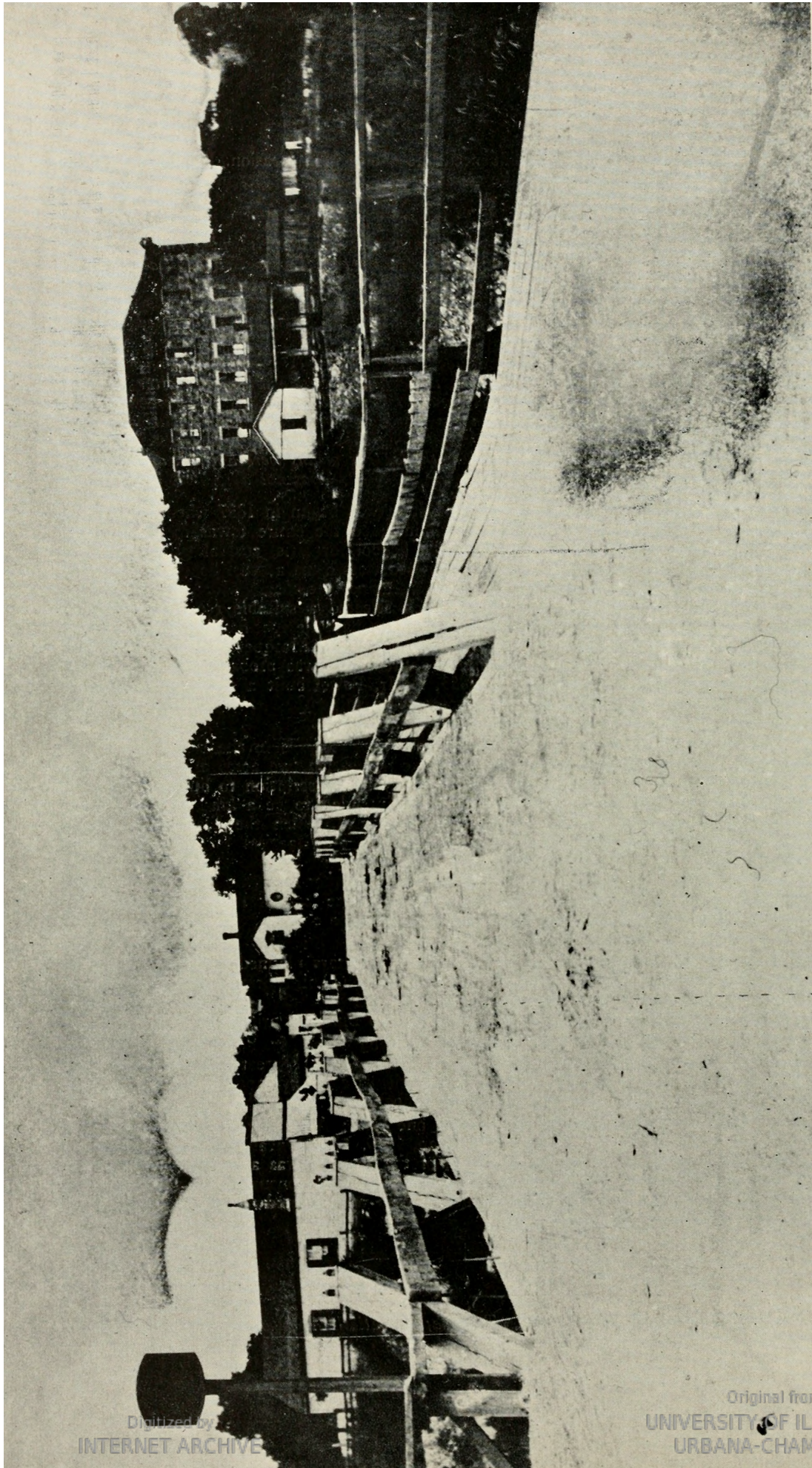
The members of the first Elementary School Board of Education were Richard Cody, Alfred Greenwood, and Dr. A. G. Lawton. These directors planned the construction of a new school and for that purpose bought two lots on Third Street near Bucklin. On this site, a four-room building known as the "Old Brick School", was erected. In 1859, the school was put into use. At this time, Mr. Alonzo Bull was principal.

In 1859, the Board of Education rented the building which Mr. Powel had constructed. The Board rented, in addition, a building on Main (First) Street between Joliet and Hennepin which was named the Third Ward School, and also another at Eighth and Tonti Streets which was known as the Finkler School.

La Salle's next three mayors each served one term: Alexander B. Hitchcock, 1857, Nicholas Duncan, 1858, and Norman McFarran, 1859. Mr. Duncan had been a member of the village board before the incorporation of the city; he was a justice of the peace, and after La Salle was established as a city, he had held concurrent powers with the mayor. Mr. McFarran and Mr. Duncan, before they were elected to the mayoralty, had both been aldermen of the second ward.

\* (William T. Bedford, *The La Salle Tribune; Twentieth Anniversary Souvenir Edition*, p. 59.)





“THE FIRST BRIDGE”

This bridge between La Salle and Peru, pictured here from the Peru side, was known as the “First Bridge”. To the right may be seen the Brothers’ School for boys.



## VIII

1860-1869

When La Salle became an incorporated city, it was a little community huddled on a brush-covered bluff overlooking a river valley where a few poor shanties, a canal basin, and several business houses bore witness to a village that was rapidly passing away. The annual report of the Illinois Central Railroad shows that the population in 1850 was approximately 200; before 1855, that number increased to about 3,500. The number of houses increased from twenty-five in 1850 to 800 in 1855. In 1855, La Salle had four churches. Before 1860, a number of factories and stores was established here.

George H. Buck was elected mayor in 1860, and he served until 1863, when W. C. Cannon was elected for one term.

The La Salle Evangelical and Reformed Church was founded in 1861. In the early days, it was known in the community as the German Lutheran Church. The inception of this congregation, however, antedates 1861. Several years earlier a group of German ladies united to bring about the establishment of their church in La Salle. These ladies were deeply concerned because there was no minister who could meet their spiritual needs and speak their native language. In their homeland, they had been accustomed to attend religious services regularly. Determined to rectify the situation, they met on April 17, 1861, at the home of Mrs. Gottlieb Haage to discuss the matter. Mrs. Haage, who has become known as the "mother" of the La Salle Evangelical and Reformed congregation, suggested that the group organize itself into a Ladies' Aid Society. The society thus proposed was immediately formulated, and the ladies began to find various ways of providing religious services in their mother tongue and of educating their children in their faith. Invitations were sent out to pastors of German Evangelical churches in the surrounding area asking them to come to La Salle for the purpose of conducting services for the congregation. During the next eleven years, before a church of their own was a reality, the services were conducted in homes, churches, and public buildings.

In St. Patrick's parish, a grade school for boys, the Brothers' School, was opened in September, 1861. This school, conducted by the Christian Brothers, occupied the property on which the log Church of the Holy Cross had stood. The Christian Brothers left La Salle in 1877, and in 1882, the Brothers of the Institute of Mary staffed the school. Between 1877 and 1882, it was operated by a faculty of lay teachers. Later, the school was located on Marquette Street near Fourth, and early in the Twentieth Century, it was discontinued.

From 1864 until 1867, E. F. Bull was mayor of the city; Mr. Bull later moved to Ottawa and practised law there. In 1867, Philip Conlin was elected mayor, an office which he retained until 1871. While he was mayor, he was in the lumber business; he afterwards ran a livery stable.

When the Civil War broke out in April, 1861, La Salle County's population was less than 50,000. President Lincoln called for volunteers, and the quota for the State of Illinois was fixed at six regiments. The response from La Salle County was prompt. Because the troops from this county could be moved quickly by rail to Springfield, the companies organized here were among the first which Governor Yates accepted for service. Before the end of the war, more than 5,000 enlisted men from the county entered the conflict; the total number of La Salle County men in arms represented ten percent of the population and fifty percent of the county's voting strength.

From La Salle a company left under a Captain Carter. This company went into the Eleventh Regiment; William H. L. Wallace of Ottawa, who later lost his life in the Battle of Shiloh, was colonel. The Regiment, which was largely made up of volunteers from La Salle County and the surrounding districts, figured prominently in the Battle of Fort Donelson and lost more men than any other regiment.

A company of volunteer troops, later known as Co. L of the 55th Volunteer Infantry, was formed in La Salle by a Captain Clay. This company reported to Camp Douglas, Chicago. At this same time, in addition to Co. L, 101 men from La Salle volunteered.

Although President Lincoln frequently called for men, there was no necessity for a draft in this county until October, 1864, when approximately 200 were conscripted. Some of these, by giving a bounty, furnished substitutes and did not serve. The news of Lee's surrender, April 9, 1865, eliminated the need for additional troops.

At the close of the Civil War, it was possible to appreciate the growth of the city of La Salle. The Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company was continuing in the development of new scientific ideas. In 1866, its rolling mill department was added. The Rock Island



and the Illinois Central Railroads were carrying much of the shipping which had formerly been handled by the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and after 1865, the tolls of the canal decreased rapidly. A coal mine, known as the Rockwell Shaft, was opened in 1865. Two years later, the Rockwell and the Kentucky Shafts were consolidated, and in 1868, these were consolidated with the mines of the Northern Illinois Coal and Iron Company. A shaft at Jonesville, south of the Illinois River, was sunk in 1865. In 1867 and again in 1869, by legislative amendment, the boundaries of the city were enlarged.

*The Illinois Central Directory* of 1868 (or 1869) published the following information about La Salle:

*LA SALLE . . . is at the head of navigation on the Illinois River and the terminus of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The Chicago and Rock Island intersects the Illinois Central Railroad at this point. La Salle is thus most favorably situated for commercial purposes, and large quantities of produce are annually exported. Immense coal fields underlie the city and country around, and five shafts are at present in operation, having capacity for mining and hoisting 600 tons per day. The annual product of the mines is 160,000 tons. Population about 7,000. Considering the mineral wealth of the region, the manufacturing and transportation facilities, the healthfulness of the situation, (the mortality being not more than three-fourths of one per cent.), and the enterprise of the people, La Salle bids fair to stand in the first rank of manufacturing cities of the West. The total business of the place last year amounted to nearly eight millions of dollars.*

*The city has four churches, —Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Roman Catholic, — and others are about to be erected; three public school houses, with 950 scholars, and three private schools, with 260 scholars; a printing office, publishing a weekly newspaper, the "La Salle County Press;" a glass factory, having a capital of \$50,000; zinc works, capital \$300,000, and which produced last year 2,000,000 lbs. spelter, and in the last four months 943,000 pounds sheet zinc; a National Bank, capital \$50,000; two grain warehouses, one with steam elevator of 75,000 bushels capacity; brick yards, making 1,500,000 bricks per year; one foundry, planing mill, door and sash factory, three grist mills, twelve blacksmith-shops, three furniture rooms and shops, one carriage factory, and three wagon shops. The most of the produce of this region is sent to market by canal, but in 1868, 77,370 tons were carried from this point by the trains of the Illinois Central Railroad.*



## IX

1870-1879

By 1870, zinc manufacturing had taken its place as one of the leading industries in the community. Before 1877, the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company had become the largest zinc mill in the country and one of the largest in the world. At that time, 300 men were employed constantly. In 1874, the company opened a mine and began to dig its own coal.

A second zinc company, Illinois Zinc, in Peru, which soon became, with the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company, one of the largest in the nation, was established in 1870 and was incorporated in 1908. The first president of the plant was Calvin Wells who came here from Steubenville, Ohio. This plant originally occupied fifty-six acres.

Three mayors served La Salle during the 1870's: Matthew Noonan, 1871-1875, except for the year 1873; James W. Duncan, 1873, 1875-1879; and George H. Locey, 1879-1880.

Mr. Noonan operated a brick yard. Mr. Duncan, an attorney, was later elected to the State Senate at Springfield. He was a brilliant orator, and one of the leading members of the La Salle County Bar. He subsequently moved to Ottawa and then to Chicago. Mr. Locey was known as Judge Locey because, in addition to his duties as mayor, he presided over the City Court which was organized as an adjunct to the La Salle County Circuit Court.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, the second Catholic parish of the city, was founded in July, 1871, by the Reverend Bruno Rihs. Two lots at the corner of Fifth and Hennepin Streets were purchased, and a frame church was erected at the corner. The lots and the first church cost a total of \$3,785.84; this included \$7.00 paid for walks. The building was used for thirty-five years until the completion of the present church.

In 1870, the La Salle Elementary School Board of Education secured several lots on Third Street between Hennepin and Tonti and constructed a brick building to be used as a high school. The La Salle City High School, the first public high school here, was established in 1871 as a part of the La Salle city school system. It continued to operate as such until 1898 when, by a vote of the citizens of La Salle and Peru townships, the La Salle-Peru Township High School came into existence. In 1912, the original City High School building was replaced by the Jefferson grade school.

Mr. T. C. Kohin, who later became assistant principal of La Salle-Peru Township High School, served as principal of and instructor in the La Salle City High School. One other teacher, Miss Emma Worley, completed the faculty. Two of the seven rooms in the building housed the high school department; the remainder of the building was used for the lower eight grades. The school was duly accredited, and the enrollment numbered between fifty and sixty. The subjects taught included general history, algebra, physiology, geometry, grammar, rhetoric, literature, Latin, astronomy, arithmetic, bookkeeping, geology, and zoology.

At the First Methodist Church, in the fall of 1872, Reverend W. H. Smith was appointed pastor. During his pastorate, the church property on Fourth Street was disposed of, and a lot on the southwest corner of Fifth and Gooding Streets was purchased. A brick church was completed here in 1873 at a cost of \$11,750.

In 1873, the members of the Ladies' Aid Society of the Evangelical and Reformed congregation realized their desire for a church of their own when the Methodist Church property on Fourth Street was sold to them. At a meeting of about fifty families, the Society presented the congregation with the church and property. Records show that the church was incorporated in April, 1873, under the laws of the State of Illinois. The new congregation called a resident pastor, Reverend Mr. Henry Staehlin. The congregation grew rapidly; in a short time a parochial school was organized, and classes were conducted regularly until the school ceased operation in 1913.

The Union Mine, formerly known as the Kilgovern Shaft, located on East Fifth Street, Peru, was put into operation in 1874. It was owned by Nicholas Duncan, John Stuart, and Lawrence Christopher, and it remained in the possession of Mr. Stuart and Mr. Duncan until 1894 when the La Salle County Carbon Coal Company purchased the property.

A third Catholic church, St. Hyacinth's, was founded in the year 1875. Those who laid the groundwork for the establishment of St. Hyacinth's parish were poor Polish people who had been persecuted in their own land for their religion as well as their nationality. They had come to La Salle, as had many before them who had entered America, in quest of security and freedom. By the middle of the nineteenth century, a





“THE DAVID SWAIN”

Pleasure boats on the Illinois River provided, until recent years, a popular form of entertainment. The picture above shows one of the four “Swain” boats docked in the Big Basin of the Illinois and Michigan Canal.



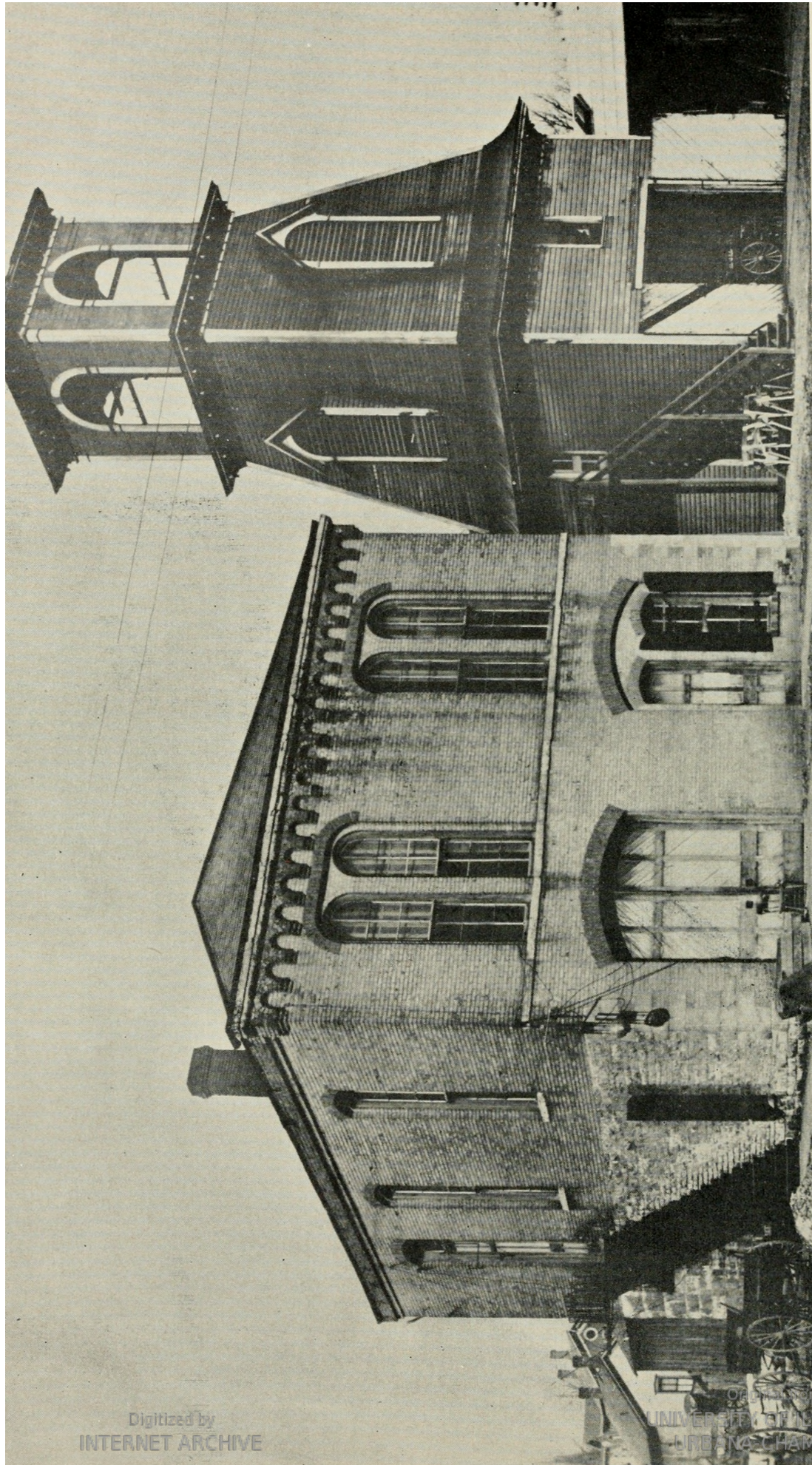
group of Poles had settled in La Salle. According to an account by the late Rt. Rev. Msgr. L. Bobkiewicz, when his parents arrived in La Salle in 1868, a representative number of Polish people was residing here, including such families as those of John Waszkowiak, Joseph Waszkowiak, Joseph Siekierka, and Paul Konczak. Because these people had come from German-occupied Poland and understood the German language, they at first attended St. Joseph's Church, Peru. When St. Joseph's Church, La Salle, was established, they transferred to that parish.

In 1874, approximately 200 Polish families proposed to build their own church, and for this purpose they purchased three lots on Tenth Street near Tonti. The first pastor, Reverend Erasmus Bratkiewicz, came to La Salle in November, 1874, and organized the Polish people into a parish. Under his guidance, a frame church, costing \$7,000, was built on the corner lot. The completed church was dedicated on October 24, 1875, by the Most Reverend Thomas Foley, Bishop of Chicago.

Two frame school buildings for St. Hyacinth's parish were constructed in 1875. These served as a parochial school and as an orphanage, and they were both conducted by the Felician Sisters. The orphanage was transferred to Polonia, Wisconsin, in 1876.

The Elementary School Board of Education, in 1879, purchased the property on Tenth Street near Crosat, and, at a cost of about \$4,000, built a four-room school known as the Fourth Ward School. At a cost of \$2,000, a two-room addition to this building was attached in 1879. This is the present Grant School which is no longer used by the School District.





LA SALLE'S FIRST CITY HALL AND FIRE STATION NO. 1

The fire- and patrol-wagon station are at the right of the picture. The building to the left is the City Hall. The lower floor of the City Hall was occupied by the city jail, and the offices of the police magistrate and the chief of police. The upper floor was used as the council chamber. This building stood on the site of the present City Hall which was constructed in 1907.



John M. Welch, who had come to La Salle in the early canal days and who later became proprietor of the Harrison House, succeeded George H. Locey to the mayoralty in 1881. He remained in office until 1884. During his term of office, in 1883, a team of horses, a bay and a gray called "Tom" and "Jerry", was purchased for the fire department. Before this time, fire-fighting equipment had been transported on a hand-drawn cart. Next, in case of fire, a passing teamster would unhitch his own vehicle and pull the fire wagon. Garrett Dillon was the first regular fire driver, and he retained that position from 1883 until 1889. The second team for the fire department, two bays, was obtained when John Brennan and Michael Charley, aldermen, were members of the Purchasing Committee. As a consequence, the horses were called "Jack" and "Charley". Fire Station No. 2 at Eighth Street did not have its first team until 1888. Henry Schmidt then became the driver.

In 1880, Henry Hoerner acquired all the stock of the Union Beer Company of Peru except that held by Phil Link. The name of the corporation was changed to Star Union Brewing Company. From that day until the present time, the business has remained within the same ownership and management. Brewing in the nineteenth century presented in particular the problem of refrigeration; Star Union solved the difficulty by harvesting ice from the river during the winter months and placing it in caves in the hills behind the brewery. The beer, brewed in the winter, was stored deep in the caves and cooled by the huge cakes of ice.

Andrew J. O'Connor became mayor in 1885 and retained that office until 1886. While he was mayor, stone sidewalks were laid in the city. Mr. O'Connor was an attorney; he and his brother-in-law, James W. Duncan, who had been mayor during the 1870's, were partners in a law firm. Mr. O'Connor, like Mr. Duncan, served the district as State Senator, and several bills passed during his term at Springfield bore his name.

The next mayor was F. W. Matthiessen, a man whose philanthropy La Salle will always reflect. Schools, churches, the hospital, private and public institutions as well as the city itself have all experienced his munificence. Mr. Matthiessen was mayor from 1887 until 1896. Although he was still handling the business affairs of the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company, which had in 1881 expanded to manufacture sulphuric acid, he managed to devote almost all of his time to the duties of mayor. The work of improving the city advanced during his terms of office. He purchased and gave to La Salle the waterworks system and an electric light plant. His generosity and his capable leadership were shown in the many accomplishments of his administration.

Among the great industries of the community is Westclox which was established in 1884 when an inventor with a new idea about clock making arrived in this community. He had a device which he felt would improve the quality of low-priced clocks. He succeeded in interesting a number of townsmen in his idea, and they backed him in the building of a small plant, a three-story brick structure, 100 feet long and forty feet wide.

On December 23, 1885, the United Clock Company started operation. The factory was completed, and the bare necessities of manufacturing were installed. The output of the new plant was fifty clocks a day. The finished clocks were loaded onto a push-cart and trundled to local stores where they were either sold or given away as premiums. Every effort was made to bring success to the enterprise, but the firm failed to make progress, and, in 1887, the company went into bankruptcy. The little push-cart no longer made its daily visits to the local merchants.

F. W. Matthiessen was far-sighted enough to see in the idle factory an opportunity to give work to many people, and he possessed sufficient capital to finance the venture. He purchased the plant, installed new management, and furnished the money to carry on. There were many problems. In addition to those connected with manufacturing, financing, and marketing, the management was faced with a decided prejudice against the plant's method of clock construction. But the men believed firmly that this prejudice would ultimately be overcome by the superior performance of the product. For several years, Mr. Matthiessen found it necessary to put money into the plant in order to keep it going. Eventually, it was able to operate without assistance. By 1890, there were 81 workers on the payroll, and by 1900, this number had increased to 245.

The late 1880's were marked by construction projects at several of the parishes in the city. At St. Patrick's, under the direction of Reverend Felix Guedry, C. M., pastor, a rectory was begun in 1887 and was completed in 1888. In the same year, construction of



a school and home for the Sisters of the parochial school was started on the south side of Fourth Street near Marquette, just east of the stone building which the Sisters had occupied since 1855. The new school, providing suitable living quarters and sufficient space to accommodate 400 students, was ready for occupancy in 1888.

By the end of the decade, the Evangelical and Reformed Church congregation found that their first place of worship had become too small to accommodate their growing numbers. In 1889, during the pastorate of Reverend Mr. Christian Schaer, the present church structure was erected. In the tower of the church three bells, named St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John, were hung. These bells are so cast as to harmonize when they are rung simultaneously.

The original Congregational Church building had also become inadequate, and on August 6, 1889, under the Reverend George L. Roberts, pastor, the cornerstone was laid for a new building at Fifth and Joliet Streets. On January 12, 1890, the church was completed and dedicated.

The need for a hospital in the city had always been a matter of concern. In 1853, by amendment to the city charter, La Salle was "authorized to borrow, upon the faith and credit of said city, any sum of money not exceeding \$15,000, at a rate of interest not exceeding ten per centum per annum, and for a period of time not exceeding ten years". The law states that money so borrowed shall "be expended in grading or otherwise improving the streets of said city, or the roads leading thereto . . . (or) in the purchase of grounds for and the erection of a hospital".

Apparently, the city had never been financially able to undertake the establishment of a hospital, and until the end of the 1880's, no hospital care was available in La Salle. On June 18, 1887, three Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart came here from their Motherhouse in Joliet. Their purpose was to care for the sick at home. Both the Sisters and the people of the community desired a hospital, but, at the time, the procuring of funds for the erection of a building seemed almost impossible. However, plans took definite shape when the hospital's first benefactor, Mr. F. W. Matthiessen, pledged \$1,000 toward the construction of the new institution. Two additional Sisters joined the group in July, 1887.

On October 13, 1887, a ten-acre plot of land, then outside the city limits, was purchased, and on this a frame hospital was built. When the Sisters moved into their new hospital, they took with them the two children of a widower whose home had been in Spring Valley. On October 18, 1887, the first patient, a gentleman from Lostant, was admitted.

Very soon, as this hospital became too small to care for the needs of the sick, the Sisters planned a new and larger institution. Construction was begun, and, on April 18, 1889, the cornerstone was laid. This is the building which is the nucleus of St. Mary's Hospital today.

The Franciscan Sisters in charge of St. Mary's Hospital belong to a nursing Order founded in 1866 in the village of Seelbach in what was then the Grand Duchy of Baden, Germany. Ten years after their inception, the nuns were forced either to abandon community life or to leave Germany; twenty-seven nuns then came to the United States. These Sisters brought from Germany with them the bell which now rings in the belfry of St. Mary's Hospital. The inscription on the bell is "Johann Peter Edel zu Strasburg Goss Mich., 1700". At one time, the bell belonged to Gengenbach, a city in Baden, Germany. In the early nineteenth century, trials by jury took place in Gengenbach, and whenever a criminal was led to execution, the bell was rung imploring the faithful to pray for the poor sinner. From this it received its name, "Arme Suender Gloecklein"—"Poor Sinner's Bell". In July, 1847, the first criminal was executed, and the bell tolled for the first time. On January 19, 1854, two men were executed, and as future trials were held at Offenber, this was the last time the bell was rung at Gengenbach. The bell, then, was placed on sale; a friend of the Sisters purchased it and presented it to them. When St. Mary's Hospital was founded, the Poor Sinner's Bell was installed as the Angelus bell which now rings morning, noon, and evening.

The first attempt to establish a library in La Salle was made in 1884 when a group of young people, including Mr. and Mrs. Francis X. Kilduff, formed a Literary Club. In an effort to raise money for the library project, they gave entertainments and programs. By 1885, sufficient funds were in their treasury to make a small library possible. They rented an upstairs room on the south side of First Street between Marquette and Joliet. Through the generosity of friends, the room was furnished with a table, a few chairs, a stove, and shelving. Some books were donated, and others were purchased. Miss Mary Wood was the first librarian.

In 1889, when the Congregational Church moved to its present site, Mr. F. W.

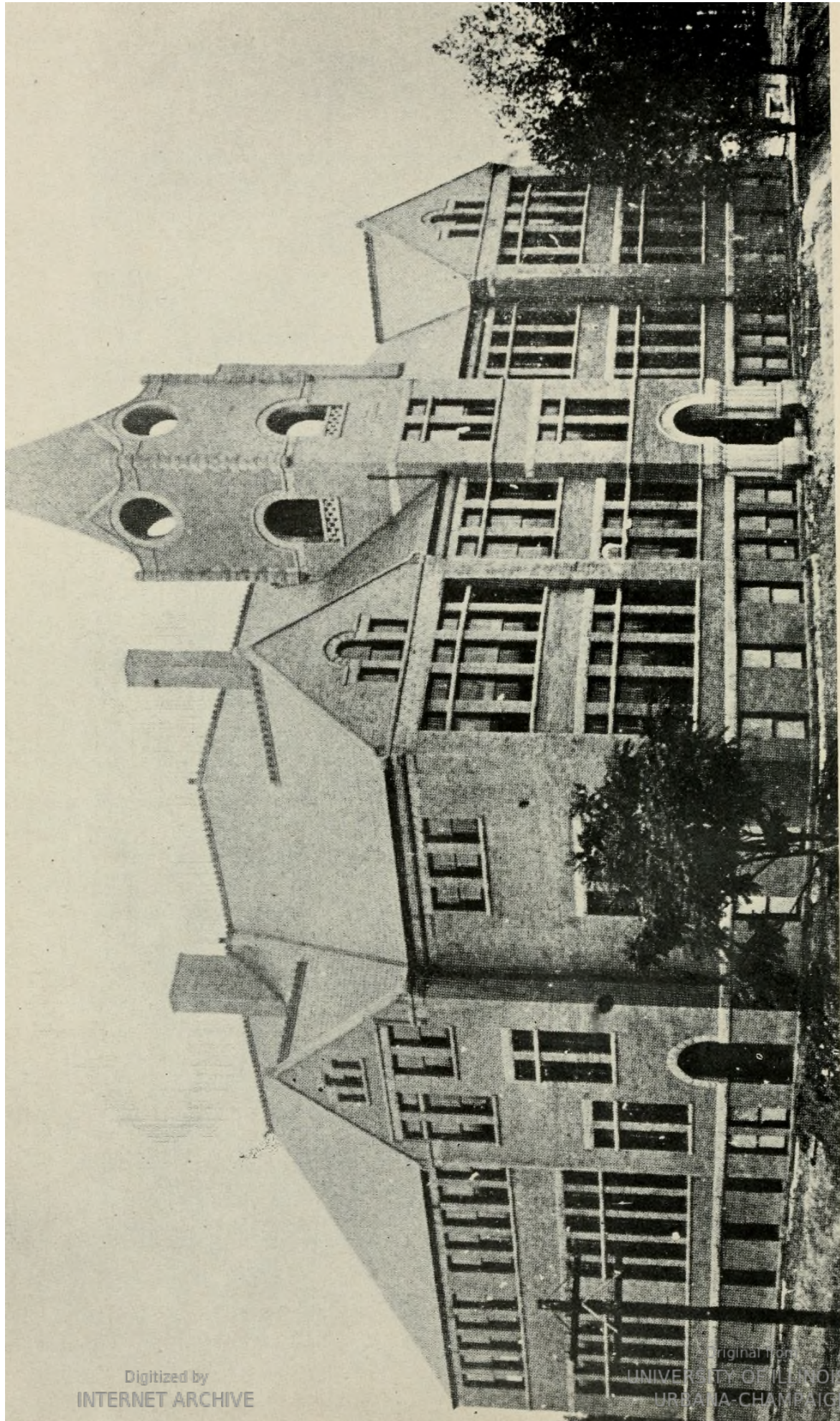


Matthiessen bought the building at Fourth and Joliet Streets and remodeled it. The northwest room, fitted with shelves and furniture, became the second home of the public library. A constitution and by-laws were adopted, and on April 24, 1890, the organization was incorporated as "The La Salle Library Association". Mrs. G. Todd was librarian. The following information concerning the financing of the library comes from an 1896 catalogue now in the possession of the La Salle Public Library:

*The use of the books and papers at the library is free to all persons; but for drawing out books, membership or a reading card is necessary. The former, which grants the right of voting in the administration of the organization, costs \$3.00 per year; the latter which entitles holders to the same reading privileges, costs annually \$1.00.*

*The income derived from these two sources together with private donations, are (sic) the library's sole means of support, and all persons are cordially invited to share in its maintenance by acquiring one or the other of these privileges.*





LA SALLE-PERU TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL  
"Old Main" was the first home of La Salle-Peru Township High School. This building occupied the site of the present campus parking lot.



## XI

1890-1899

As the twentieth century approached, industry in the tri-cities continued to flourish. Several new plants, including three cement manufacturing companies, began operations. Educational opportunities increased with the establishment of a high school for La Salle and Peru townships. At several of the churches new buildings and improvements were underway.

St. Hyacinth's Church, the frame building which had been erected in 1875, was completely destroyed by fire on the Sunday following Christmas, 1890, and parishioners again faced the need for a new church. In January, 1891, Reverend Ladislaus Grabowski was appointed pastor. Under his guidance, the erection of the present Gothic church was begun on April 15, 1891. The church, completed in August, 1892, at a cost of \$65,000, was dedicated by the Most Reverend John Lancaster Spalding, Bishop of Peoria.

During the passing years, the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company had continued to expand, and in 1890 the company made plans for the construction of a railroad to connect the plant with the Illinois Central Railroad at Midway, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad at Hegeler, and the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad at La Salle Junction. In 1890, therefore, the La Salle and Bureau County Railroad was incorporated and built by the stockholders of the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company. Operations started in 1893. At first, practically all the tonnage carried by the railroad consisted of zinc, sulphuric acid, and the raw materials incident to the zinc industry. However, during 1919, the road began to move portland cement from the three mills of the district, a business which now amounts to over fifty percent of all this railroad's traffic.

The La Salle and Bureau County Railroad is of immense importance to the community; by its connecting the Illinois Central Railroad with the Northwestern a complete railroad circle, greatly enlarging shipping facilities, is formed around the area.

In 1891, the Fifth Ward School was constructed on Sixth Street between Berlin (now Lafayette) and Bucklin Streets. The property and the two-story, four-room brick building, later known as the Jackson School, cost about \$7,000.

Cement manufacture was the next industry to be established in the community. A group of young men, using a trial-and-error method, started in 1891, a little plant which was to grow into the great Marquette Cement Manufacturing Company. The late Mr. Richard Moyle, Sr., one of the founders of the plant, wrote for the Company's Annual Report of 1947, the story of the early days:

*We actually began in September, 1891, with 40 acres of land on the Vermillion River, across from La Salle, Illinois, a chemist who had a few books and papers on European cement-making procedure, a work crew of about 12 local men, and some practical experience in mining which I contributed out of a boyhood spent in the tin mines of Cornwall, England.*

*All of us were green at the game, so probably because of that mining experience, or possibly because I could strike a drill with either hand, I was made superintendent of the project at the outset, at \$75 per month. Wages for the crew were 12½c per hour for a ten-hour day or 7c per ton for loading rock. We later put on two crews. The night shift worked 13 hours, the day shift 11 hours. I recall that I averaged about 18 hours a day on the job, seven days a week . . .*

*Those first few years were a continuing cycle of experimentation, trial and failure, rebuilding and trying again. Outgo so far exceeded income that the original company, Williamson & Wilson, went broke in 1894. Several years later, in 1898, ownership of the idle plant passed to the three Dickinson brothers—Theodore, William and John—of Chicago and Nicholas W. Duncan of La Salle. It was they who first brought the name "Marquette" into being. They organized the Marquette Cement Company, and later reorganized it as the Marquette Cement Manufacturing Company.*

*And so it was that finally, on March 30th, 1899, the first carload of Marquette cement, 100 barrels, was shipped to Des Moines, Iowa. Delivered price was \$2.20 per barrel. This cement was packed in cloth sacks, each sack gayly tied by Mrs. Moyle with a bright green satin bow. And that, by the way, is how our present trademarks happen to be green.*



The Oglesby plant burned to the ground on February 15, 1902. Construction of a larger and more modern plant was begun in June, 1902.

The Illinois Valley Manufacturing Company, Peru, which had been founded in 1875 by August Heinze, was purchased in 1893 by W. H. Maze. Originally, the plant produced screens which had found a ready market throughout the country. As carpenters did less handwork and as high-powered machinery was invented, the plant gradually converted to architectural millwork. When Peru was a river town, the plant was located south of Water Street where lumber and other materials could be delivered by water. With the advent of the railroads, the plant was moved to its present location.

The congregation of the First Methodist Church, in 1895, purchased the parsonage at 437 Gooding Street. At the time, the Reverend A. L. Shute was pastor. Through his efforts and those of his people, the property was paid for before the end of his pastorate.

La Salle-Peru Township High School came into being on April 11, 1896. On that date, School District No. 120 was organized under the township high school system of Illinois. Mr. F. W. Matthiessen became president of the first Township High School Board of Education. Erection of a three-story brick building at the northeast corner of Fifth and Chartres Streets was begun in 1897, and the building, later known as the "Old Main", was completed when classes convened on September 12, 1898. Stratton D. Brooks was the first principal, and the faculty included six members. Mr. Brooks was succeeded, in 1899, by C. A. Farnam. After he left La Salle, Mr. Brooks served as president of the University of Oklahoma, 1912-1923, and president of the University of Missouri, 1923-1931.

A new mayor was appointed for La Salle in 1897. Mr. F. W. Matthiessen, who had served the city honorably for over ten years, resigned, and the city council named William F. McNamara to fill the unexpired term. Subsequently, Mr. McNamara was elected and held the office of mayor until 1901. He continued many of the policies of his predecessors; in particular, during his administration, paving was laid on many of the city streets.

St. Joseph's Parochial School was founded in 1881 by Reverend Peter Schmal, pastor, and housed in a building south of the church on Hennepin Street. Prior to 1897, the school was staffed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, Wisconsin. In August, 1897, they were replaced by four Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This Order still operates St. Joseph's School.

The second cement company to begin operations in the community, Alpha Portland Cement Company, La Salle, was built in 1897 by the German-American Portland Cement Works. This plant was taken over by the United States Government during World War I. In 1920, it was purchased by the Alpha Company which immediately proceeded with the rebuilding of the clinker grinding and coal departments as well as the installation of modern concrete silos and packing and bag houses.

The Oglesby plant of the Lehigh Portland Cement Company was constructed in 1898 by the Chicago Portland Cement Company, and was purchased by the Lehigh in the latter part of 1916. Mr. D. D. Drummond was plant manager in 1898, and he served in this capacity until 1912.

In 1898, an eight-room brick school was erected under the supervision of the Elementary School Board of Education to replace the old Seminary. This is the present Lincoln School, constructed at a cost of about \$21,000.



## XII

1900-1909

During the first fifty years of its existence as an incorporated city, La Salle made great progress. Before 1900, many of the industries for which the community is notable were already in operation. Grade schools, both public and parochial, and the township high school were offering educational opportunities to the young people of the community. The forerunner of the public library had been set up. Six churches, three Catholic and three Protestant, were established, and of these congregations, five were already occupying the buildings which they use today. A hospital had been erected and staffed. La Salle at the turn of the century was a thriving little city with a population of 10,446. The entire industrial output of La Salle before 1909, consisting largely of zinc, cement, and clocks, was worth \$5,307,551 a year.

J. B. McManus became superintendent of the La Salle Elementary Schools in 1900. He held this position until his death in 1939. Since 1876, seven superintendents have served the elementary schools: A. C. Works, 1876-1877; E. W. Schreeb, 1877-1880; J. R. McGregor, 1880-1882; L. A. Thomas, 1882-1892; G. H. Andrews, 1892-1900; J. B. McManus, 1900-1939; and the present superintendent, E. G. Miller, 1939-

In 1901, Michael J. Charley was elected mayor to succeed William F. McNamara, whose administration had been characterized by many civic improvements. Mr. Charley's administration placed the finances of the city in a sound condition.

Early in the twentieth century, St. Roch's parish for Catholics of Slovenian descent was organized by the Reverend Anthony Podgorsek, the first pastor. The first St. Roch's Church was erected in 1902 on property located on the south side of Sixth Street east of Crosat, the building now occupied by St. Roch's School. The first Slovenes to come to La Salle had arrived here in about 1895. They are Slavic people, and the greater number of those who migrated to La Salle were natives of the northern part of old Yugoslavia. At Joliet, Illinois, late in the nineteenth century, a large group of Slovenes had settled, and many of those who later made their homes in La Salle had stopped temporarily in Joliet. At the time of the establishment of the parish, there were about twenty Slovene families in La Salle.

La Salle-Peru Township High School began to expand early in the twentieth century when, in 1903, the Manual Training and Domestic Science Building was erected on the west side of Chartres Street. This building and the land it occupied, amounting almost to a city block, were the gifts of Mr. F. W. Matthiessen, and they were the first of many gifts which he and his family presented to the school. In the same year, Mr. Thomas J. McCormack became the third principal of the high school, an office he was to hold until his death in 1932.

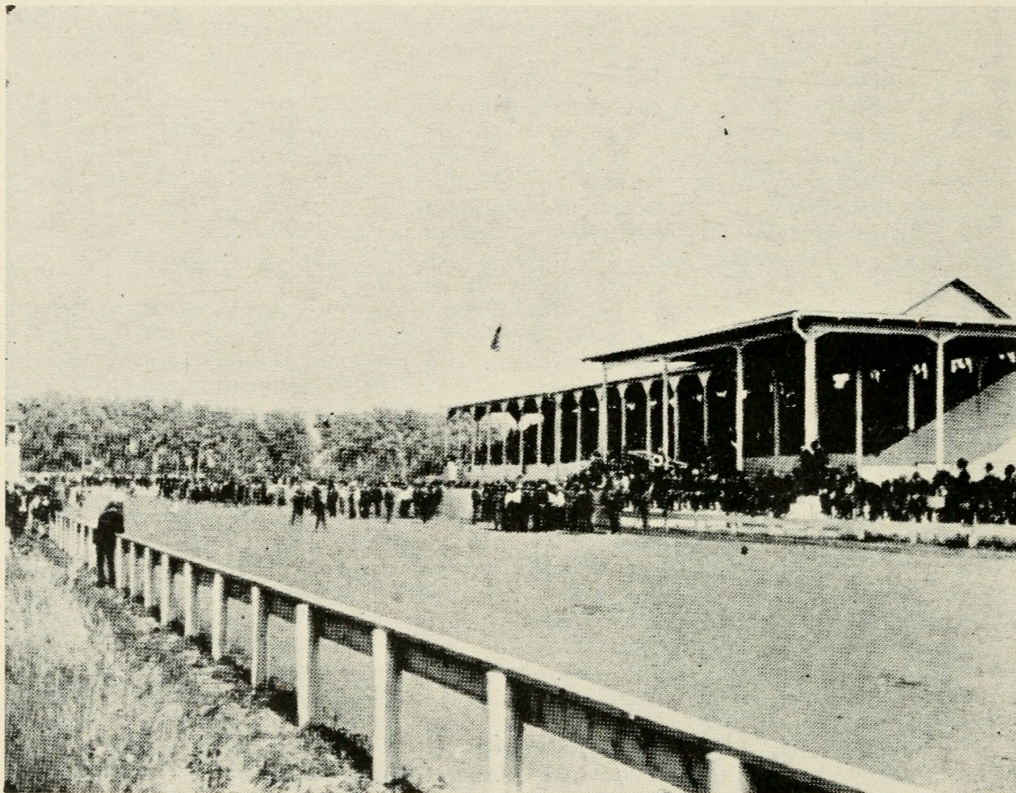
The first parish for Catholics of Italian descent was formulated in 1904. The Reverend Charles Zachini from the diocese of Loreto, Italy, came to America and had charge of the Italians in La Salle, Peru, and Oglesby. At first, he said Mass in a private home at Third and Creve Coeur Streets. Soon he purchased a house which was converted into a small church and was dedicated, on December 8, 1904, as the Church of the Immaculate Conception. A year later, the church was moved to Fourth and Bucklin Streets, and, on December 8, 1905, it was rededicated. After three years, the church was closed when Father Zachini returned to Italy where he was made a canon of the Basilica of Loreto.

Walter A. Panneck, a young attorney, was elected mayor in 1903. His terms of office lasted until 1909. During this period, many improvements were made in the city. Miles of water mains and sewers were laid, sidewalks were constructed, and streets were paved. New streets were graded and opened, and a new source of water supply from filtering beds was provided. The present City Hall, costing approximately \$75,000, was built while Mr. Panneck was in office, and it was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on January 1, 1907.

When the idea of a city building was first presented to the citizens, many were unable to see a means of financing such a project. The mayor, however, started a "subscription list". Subscribers were to receive City Hall bonds; and, while they knew that these bonds were not strictly legal and that payment might be stopped by injunction proceedings, many people were willing to purchase them. In a very short time, the amount necessary for the erection of the building was subscribed. The first bond, \$1,000, was purchased by Timothy J. Lucey.

Dedication ceremonies were held at the Zimmerman Opera House located on the





THE LA SALLE RACE TRACK

At the turn of the century, La Salle's sporting events included horse racing and baseball games. The La Salle Race Track was located in the present Cummings-Duncan-Lucey sub-divisions—a tract of land located west of St. Vincent Avenue and south of O'Connor; it extended west to within a short distance of Bucklin Avenue. Nicholas W. Duncan, former president of La Salle State Bank, John Cummings, and Timothy J. Lucey, former La Salle businessmen, were partners in and owners of the race track.



southeast corner of First and Marquette Streets. The City Hall was then opened for inspection. In honor of the occasion, a medallion was cast, and one of these was given to each person who visited the City Hall on that day.

Early in the century, two buildings were constructed at St. Hyacinth's parish. In 1900, Reverend Bernard M. Skulik, D. D., supervised the erection of the present Renaissance-style school which cost \$40,000. In the summer of 1908, work was begun on the present three-story rectory which was completed in February, 1909, at a cost of \$23,000.

The La Salle Public Library came into existence in 1904 when, at a special meeting of the City Council held on March 10th, an ordinance was adopted establishing a public library and reading room for the city of La Salle. The ordinance was approved on March 11, 1904, by Mayor Panneck. A year later, on April 5, 1905, the property at the northwest corner of Third and Marquette Streets, on which the library building now stands, was purchased for \$4,250 from Miss M. Isabel O'Connor. A Carnegie gift of \$25,000 together with subscriptions by the citizens made the present building possible, and the library was opened to the public on January 19, 1907. Miss Willa Garver, who was appointed organizer of the library, was assisted by Miss Kathryn Coleman, both of whom served for nine months. In September, 1907, Miss Coleman was appointed librarian, a position which she retained until 1921. During its first year, the library owned 3,364 volumes, and membership numbered 757.

The Grace Evangelical Church began in La Salle in 1902 when the Reverend Philip Beuscher established a mission here. At first, services were held in various churches at such times as the members were able to rent them for that purpose. In the fall of 1907, the membership was large enough to consider a building of its own. The present church on Joliet Street near Eighth was erected under the supervision of Reverend W. E. Engelter who was pastor at that time.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church was organized in La Salle in 1908. A group of loyal worshippers, on June 8th of that year, forwarded a petition to their bishop asking that they be allowed to establish a mission. As a result of their action, Reverend William Bohler Walker was appointed rector. Until 1909, services were held in the library building and later in the Neustadt building. In 1909, the members of the congregation decided to purchase the former library building at Fourth and Joliet Streets. The building was reconstructed for church purposes, and on March 25, 1909, the first services were held there.

The first pre-plated metals to be produced in America came from the American Nickeloid Company, Peru. Before 1898, the year in which American Nickeloid was founded, nickel plating on base metal, such as zinc, was imported in sheets from Germany. The building which housed the first plant in Peru was a tumble-down structure resembling a blacksmith shop. But even though equipment was simple, this venture needed capital, and for a while it seemed that the industry would fail. However, in 1903, W. H. Maze, R. F. Struever, and S. Pilson took over controlling interest and became president, treasurer, and secretary respectively. Sufficient finance was then provided, and new sales outlets were developed.

By 1908, American Nickeloid added nickel plated tin as a second product, and this opened many new markets. Manufacturers of lead pencils, containers, and brushes placed large orders for Nickel Tin.

The Cherry Mine Disaster, November 13, 1909, brought before the State Legislature the need for mine rescue equipment and men trained in rescue work. At a session of the Legislature which convened shortly after the disaster, both Houses approved an appropriation for the establishment of three mine rescue stations to be located at La Salle, Springfield, and Benton.

Because a part of the equipment was a specially fitted railroad car, the La Salle Mine Rescue Station was situated east of the Illinois Central tracks between Second and Third Streets. The car stood on a side-track ready, in case of emergency, to be coupled to a locomotive. With the abandonment of the mines in the area, the station was moved to Peru where it is still maintained.

Thomas F. Doyle was elected mayor in 1909 by a majority greater than had been polled by any mayor before his time. He served until his death in 1914. During his administration, the city improvements continued.



### XIII

1910-1919

Westclox' Big Ben, probably the world's most famous alarm clock, was introduced in 1910. Westcox then employed 896 workers, an increase of 815 in the twenty years which had passed since its founding.

Mayor Doyle, who was re-elected for the third time in 1913, died before completing this term of office. William J. Brennan, alderman of the Third Ward, was chosen by the City Council to fill the unexpired term. In 1915, H. M. Orr, M. D., was elected mayor, and he remained in office until 1920. This was the first of Dr. Orr's two mayoral tenures.

Much of the property which today makes up the campus at La Salle-Peru Township High School was donated to the school in 1914 and 1915. The present Recreation Building, which was then used also as a social center, and the property on which it stands were the gifts of Mr. F. W. Matthiessen. The Recreation Building, completed in May, 1914, was dedicated by Governor E. F. Dunne. The athletic grounds, which consisted of eleven acres west of the school, were given to the school in 1915 by Mr. Matthiessen. Through popular subscription, the erection of concrete stands on the south side of the playing field was financed. An outdoor swimming pool, also the gift of Mr. Matthiessen, was constructed in 1916.

The La Salle Post Office at this time was growing rapidly. A postal savings depository had been set up on May 1, 1911, the second postal bank to be established in the state of Illinois. The first depositor was Leo Goldsmith, and the amount deposited was one dollar.

From about 1900 until 1916, the post office had been housed in a rented building located at the northwest corner of Second and Gooding Streets. In 1907, the Honorable Charles E. Fuller, representative in Congress from this district, succeeded in having a bill passed by both Houses appropriating the sum of \$65,000 for a post office. The contract for the new building was awarded on June 17, 1915, to the Charles W. Gendele Company of Chicago. Work began in August, 1915, and the project was completed a year later, in August, 1916, at a cost of \$67,000. During the construction of the building, Frank Pierski was postmaster. On July 1, 1917, this became a first-class post office.

The present school building at St. Patrick's parish was constructed in 1914 during the pastorate of Father William H. Kelley, C. M. The building has eight classrooms and an auditorium.

The Hygienic Institute for La Salle, Peru and Oglesby was established in 1914. As epidemics continued to take their annual toll, the need for such an institution was felt in La Salle. Mr. F. W. Matthiessen became vitally interested in the problem when, during an epidemic, he hired a nurse to care for the child of one of his employees. Both the nurse and child died, and Mr. Matthiessen determined to do something about the situation.

In 1913, advised by his son-in-law, Dr. Philip S. Chancellor, Mr. Matthiessen suggested for the three cities the establishment of a modern health department to be located in La Salle and to be supported by an endowment which he would set up. The general plan was accepted in October, 1913. Necessary ordinances were passed in April, 1914, and the work of the Institute began on May 15, 1914.

The first staff consisted of Dr. Reudiger, Director of the Institute, two bacteriologists, three assistant health officers, two welfare nurses, one school nurse, a dairy inspector, and a stenographer. The Institute was housed in a remodeled building on the campus of La Salle-Peru Township High School, and building and grounds were the gift of Mr. Matthiessen.

The Institute was incorporated in 1917 under the laws of Illinois as a corporation, operating without profit for the protection of the people of La Salle and Peru Townships, and for the carrying on of scientific research, particularly in the field of preventive medicine. The Hygienic Institute has the distinction of being the only known endowed public health department in the United States.

The La Salle Fire Department was motorized in 1917, and the horses were then sold. The first truck, an American La France, was delivered on December 15, 1918. The second truck was put into service at Eighth Street on February 20, 1919.

A new convent for the Sisters of St. Hyacinth's School, erected in 1916 at a cost of \$17,700, was dedicated on December 19, 1916.



During the United States' participation in World War I, 1917-1918, approximately 650 young men from La Salle entered the armed forces. Of these, twenty-five were killed in action or died of wounds or disease:

Peter Antkowiak	Anthony Parzyth
Henry Brotherton	Emil J. Pyszka
Joseph Buczynski	Herman H. Rabausch
Stephen P. Ferris	Frank S. Rimmele
Otto Gielow	Frank Slusarek
Michael Gierat	Edward M. Spayer
Ralph Goodman	Edward S. Spayer
Frank Hallas	Julius Stankiewicz
John Kilday	William Wrona
John Klemencic, Jr.	Vincent B. Wyszynski
Edward Lenski	Herman Zaeska
Joseph McDonald	Frank Zimniak
Romulus Meehan	

*(The Roll of Honor for World War I was furnished by Romulus Meehan Post, No. 426, American Legion, La Salle.)*

Before 1924, the bodies of twenty-four La Salle servicemen were returned home for burial. Romulus Meehan, for whom the American Legion Post, No. 426, La Salle, has been named, was the first local man to die in World War I.

No call to arms has ever been received indifferently by La Salleans; the cause of the nation has justified even the supreme sacrifice. These men died that the world might be "made safe for democracy". Theirs were the first steps on the road to world peace.

Spanish influenza, probably the most severe epidemic of modern times, swept through the western world in 1918. In less than four months, influenza destroyed more human lives than had been lost in the four years of World War I. The epidemic entered America through the port of Boston and quickly spread through the country. Doctors were helpless before it.

Influenza struck La Salle late in September, 1918, and in a very short time it had become rampant. Often entire families were ill, and it was not uncommon for death to occur several times in a single family. Every effort was made to bring the disease under control: schools were closed from the first week in October until January, 1919, and many public gatherings were suspended. Local doctors cooperated with the Hygienic Institute by reporting to the Institute the number of cases under their care. In October, there were 764 recorded cases, in November, 650, and in December, 367. Frequently, in mild cases, a doctor was not consulted, and while there is no way of knowing how many more people were ill, it is safe to assume that the correct total was far above 1,781. During these last three months of 1918, 107 in La Salle died as a result of influenza. By January, the disease seemed to have spent itself here, and no cases were reported during that month.

St. Roch's Church, which stands at the southeast corner of Sixth and Crosat Streets, was erected in 1918. Shortly before the construction of the church, the La Salleans of Slovenian descent gave added evidence of their initiative when they undertook the building of the Slovenski Narodni Dom, a three-story edifice at First and Crosat Streets which is used as a social center and a meeting place for their organizations. The cornerstone of the "Dom" was laid on August 20, 1916.

The members of the First Congregational Church of La Salle, in 1923, completely remodeled their church at the northeast corner of Fifth and Joliet Streets. Since renovation, it is generously equipped with facilities for Sunday School training and meeting places for groups inside as well as outside the church. A new auditorium was then constructed for an average-sized congregation, and on the east side of this room is a beautiful mosaic of Christ and Nicodemus which was contributed by the heirs of Alexander Campbell, first mayor of La Salle and a pioneer in the local church.



## XIV

1920-1929

The ten years immediately preceding the panic of 1929 were characterized by progress in many fields. Mines, mills, and factories continued to flourish in La Salle. Educational facilities were improved, and enrollments increased. During the decade, two churches were added to the ten already established in La Salle.

In 1919, Peter E. Coleman, an attorney, was elected mayor; he remained in office until 1927. The commission form of city government replaced the aldermanic form in 1921, and Mr. Coleman was the first mayor to serve under this new type of government. During his administration, many improvements were carried on; these included additions to the city's paving and to the water and sewage systems. In order to eliminate the need for dumping grounds, a garbage incinerator was installed. The city limits were expanded to include the section lying north of O'Connor Avenue; this greatly increased the area of La Salle.

A gift of \$15,000 for the installation of a library at La Salle-Peru Township High School was made in 1920 by Mrs. C. H. Matthiessen and her sister, Mrs. George P. Blow. Two years later, in 1922, the Oglesby branch of the high school was opened; this branch continued in operation until 1929.

St. Mary's Hospital established a training school for nurses in 1919, and the first graduation took place in May, 1921.

The Matthiessen Elementary School was built in 1922. In order to care for the increasing number of pupils who lived in the north part of the district, the Board of Education purchased several lots in the Baker sub-division as a site for a new school. The property was valued at \$13,800, and the Matthiessen, a four-room brick school, was constructed at a cost of \$50,600. Soon after, in 1925, in order to provide facilities for shop and home economics classes, the Campbell was built at the southwest corner of the Lincoln School site. Construction of this school cost about \$40,000.

In 1923, at St. Joseph's parish, the present school building on the southwest corner of Fifth and Hennepin Streets was erected. The original frame school had become inadequate to care for the increases in class sizes. The two-story brick building, comprising four large classrooms and a department for the Sisters, was completed and ready for use in September, 1923.

La Salle-Peru-Oglesby Junior College was established in 1924 when the La Salle-Peru Township High School Board of Education voted to add, beyond the high school system, two years of college training. The college was opened on September 24, 1924, with a total registration of 38 students. In June, 1926, certificates were presented to this first class.

The Junior College was housed primarily in the Recreation Building. Need for additional facilities was urgent for both the Junior College and the high school, and a new building was imperative. The school and campus at that time consisted of the old Main Building and the Recreation Building on the east side of Chartres Street, and the Manual Training and Domestic Science Building with the athletic grounds on the west side of the street.

The west wing of the present building together with Matthiessen Memorial Auditorium became a reality through the generosity of Mrs. C. H. Matthiessen and Mrs. George P. Blow. Mrs. Matthiessen and Mrs. Blow offered to contribute \$400,000 toward the financing of the building, providing that the two townships would raise an additional \$200,000. In the event that the residents of La Salle, Peru, and Oglesby failed to vote the sum, the offer would remain, but it would be divided with the amount the townships subscribed. The donors would then offer 66-2/3 percent of the total amount, and the residents would raise the remaining 33-1/3 percent. The people of the community, realizing the generosity of the offer, voted the entire amount of \$200,000.

In preparation for the construction, demolition of the Manual Training and Domestic Science Building was begun on September 27, 1926. Work on the new Tudor-Gothic style structure was started on October 21, 1926. The building was completed in 1928, and the dedication took place on April 15th of that year.

Temple B'Nai Moshe was completed in 1925, and the formal dedication was held on Sunday afternoon, April 12th. For twenty-five years preceding 1924, the Jewish people of the community had no permanent religious home. Holiday services were held at first in the home of Moses Ramenofsky, and later in various public buildings. The first rabbi to come to La Salle, Rabbi Samuel Burgman, arrived here in about 1900. He taught



Hebrew to the children and officiated at the services. Since that date, a rabbi has been here almost continuously. As time passed, the people became increasingly dissatisfied with their temporary quarters, and they determined to construct a temple. In the autumn of 1923, an appeal for funds was sent out. Total membership of the congregation was then only 23; however, the property on Gooding Street between Fourth and Fifth was purchased, and construction was begun in 1923.

A year later, the building was taking definite shape, and, while it was far from completed, walls were up and the roof was on. The members held the 1924 high holidays, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, in the new Temple. Soon after, work was finished, and the Temple was equipped. In the year 1928, a four room parsonage, sponsored by the Ladies' Auxiliary, was built on the Temple lot.

The fifth Catholic church in La Salle, Queen of the Holy Rosary, was established in 1925 to care for the needs of Catholics of Italian descent. Seventeen years had elapsed since the first church for Italians had closed in 1908. The Reverend Peter Delo was assigned to the new parish. In the beginning, he offered Mass in the Knights of Columbus building. A short time after his arrival, he purchased the residence at 529 Fourth Street and converted it into a church. This church was blessed on the first Sunday of October, 1925, by Most Reverend Edmund Dunne, Bishop of Peoria. The membership then consisted of 34 families.

Joseph S. Brzygot, one of the youngest mayors to serve the city, was elected in 1927. While he was in office, La Salle celebrated the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Incorporation. Mayor Brzygot retained the office until his untimely death in May, 1930. His brother, Frank A. Brzygot, completed his term.

Chromium, a new commodity in the polished metal field, was introduced in America in the late 1920's. In 1928, American Nickeloid produced its initial platings of polished Chromium. This plant was the first to manufacture on a commercial basis sheet Chromium as a pre-finished metal. Chromium, plated to base metals of zinc, copper, or brass, found many uses in home appliances, kitchen utensils, electric goods, automobiles, and many other products.

With the passing years, American Nickeloid had been expanding. A new mill was established in 1923 at Walnutport, Pennsylvania. In 1928, because of the demands of the eastern market, a sales office was opened in New York.

Carus Chemical Co., established in La Salle in 1917, concentrates on the commercial production of potassium permanganate, a chemical used as a disinfectant and fumigant. The founder of this plant, Dr. Edward Carus, is a grandson of Edward C. Hegeler, the pioneer zinc manufacturer. Dr. Carus' operations in chemistry began as early as 1914 in a one-room shack which stood at the south end of the property occupied by the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company. Prior to World War I, all potassium permanganate needed in America had been imported from Germany. In 1917, Carus Chemical Company erected a small plant, but the process of manufacturing was inefficient, and the commercial price was exorbitant. This company, with 26 others in the country, discontinued the production of the chemical, and once again potassium permanganate was imported. In 1929, Dr. Carus and his associates developed a process which is both economical and efficient, and the company began large-scale manufacturing.



## XV

1930-1952

Dr. H. M. Orr, again elected mayor of La Salle in 1931, held that office until his death in 1947, a longer tenure than any previous mayor of the city. The aldermanic form of city government was re-established in 1935.

On February 14, 1930, the Union Coal Company purchased the operations and property of the La Salle County Carbon Coal Company. J. D. Walsh became president of the new organization. At the time of this purchase, Union Coal Company had three local mines in operation. The company then disposed of the mines at La Salle and at Jonesville and continued to operate only the Union Mine at Peru.

Dr. Thomas J. McCormack, superintendent of La Salle-Peru Township High School and director of La Salle-Peru-Oglesby Junior College, died on June 24, 1932, after having served the school for twenty-eight years. Dr. McCormack, a native of Brooklyn, New York, had received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree from Princeton University, where he had also been awarded a Fellowship in Modern History. After two years in Europe, he had continued his study of jurisprudence at Columbia University, New York City, and at the Chicago Law School. He edited many philosophical and mathematical works, wrote numerous articles and reviews, and translated from French and German a great number of books dealing with science and philosophy. Princeton University granted him an honorary Master of Science degree, and Northwestern University an honorary Doctor of Laws. He was recognized as one of the country's outstanding educators, and while many educational institutions were anxious to obtain his services, he preferred to remain here. His philosophy of life is epitomized in the following quotation from his writings: "A fine or generous thing has the value of a fine or generous thing, whether accomplished in the obscurity of the forest or in the mart of some great metropolis."

Dr. Fred G. Stevenson, in 1932, was appointed to the position of superintendent, and, in 1935, he was succeeded by Dr. Frank A. Jensen.

In 1935, Dr. Jensen inaugurated a building program at La Salle-Peru Township High School and La Salle-Peru-Oglesby Junior College. Within the next three years, two new wings had been added to the 1928 unit. The construction of the new stadium and the renovation of the Recreation Building were begun in 1935. During the same year, the outdoor swimming pool was demolished; the old stadium was razed in 1936.

The west and north wings of the high school and Junior College building were completed in the autumn of 1937. The total cost of the project was \$454,545, of which \$250,000 was defrayed by a bond issue and \$204,545 was given by the Public Works Administration.

On September 6, 1938, the stadium was finished at a cost of \$402,000. The setting, a natural amphitheatre, had been donated to the school by Westclox. The Works Progress Administration contributed \$250,000, and the Township District, \$90,000. The old Main Building was demolished in June, 1937, and on its site a parking lot was established. At a cost of \$75,000, the Recreation Building was remodeled in 1940 and 1941.

The Jackson (Fifth Ward) Grade School was replaced in 1938 with the present modern Jackson, La Salle's newest school building.

Eicor, Inc. established manufacturing facilities at Oglesby in October, 1941. At that time, the plant was engaged primarily in the production of armatures. Today, Eicor manufactures dynamotors, alternators, inverters, and tape recorders. This plant is one of the vital sources of defense equipment for the United States government. From 100 employees working in a small building, the plant has progressed to its present site covering about six acres and employing approximately 500.

In 1942, Sturtevant established at Peru a plant which employs about 200 persons. This company, producing air handling equipment, began in New England in 1860 when Benjamin Franklin Sturtevant put air to work with the invention of an exhaust fan to collect and remove the shavings flying from a wood lathe being used to cut shoe pegs. This fan was the forerunner of air conditioning as we know it today. The equipment manufactured by this company is used in almost every major steam power plant in the country, on almost every American naval vessel, on trains and planes, and in homes. In 1945, Sturtevant became a division of Westinghouse Electric.

A third industry to come to the community at this time is Electric Utilities Company which, for the purpose of manufacturing electric capacitors, was founded at Chicago in 1934. This plant was transferred to La Salle in 1943. Electric Utilities, located on North



St. Vincent Avenue in a modern building which provides about 45,000 square feet of working space, employs 400 men and women. Capacitors made here are used in all types of aircraft, in automotive and marine productions and in electronic and electrical manufacturing throughout the United States.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the industries of the community converted almost wholly to defense work. Plants were operated twenty-four hours a day, and many people, particularly women, who had left gainful employment, returned to work. From La Salle, 1,923 persons entered the armed services—1,892 men and 31 women.

News of the cessation of hostilities, August 15, 1945, was received quietly and thankfully. At the churches of all denominations, services were held, and hundreds of the faithful were in attendance.

During World War II, these fifty-seven young men of La Salle sacrificed their lives that others might have life more abundantly:

Gilbert Amos	Richard Marinangeli
William L. Aplington	Charles J. McDonald
Samuel Baratta	William Merrick
John Barsztaitis	Charles Mlakar
Robert Bartley	Edward J. Moriarity
Anton Budgen	Frank Novitski
Walter Brucki	Ludwig Novlan
Arthur Burkhart	George Olson
Stan. C. Frackowiak	Anthony Osenkarski
Paul Furar	Edward Pietrowski
Joseph J. Geraci	Edward Pilch
Carl J. Gielow	Anthony Piraino
Walter Gielow	Joseph Piraino
William D. Gisinger	Robert G. Reinhard
Edmund Goodman	Joseph Schultz
John Gorczynski	John Sirocki
Robert J. Hetherington	Arthur Spiess
Raymond C. Hopp	Fred Strell
Ludwig Hrovat	James Sullivan
John Iwanicki	James Taylor
Stanley Iwanicki	John Tomazin
Edward Jesiolowski	John Torchia
Albert Johnson	Bernard Valesano
Eugene Kellner	Angelo Venturi
Eugene J. Kieras	Julius Wiczorek
E. K. (Kent) Lambert	Charles Wisniewski
Casimir Lesynski	Frank Zabkor
Jittie Mardirosian	Bernard Zawila
John Marinangeli	

Since the onset of the Korean crisis, La Salle has continued to be represented in the various branches of the armed forces, and two names have been added to La Salle's Roll of Honored War Dead.

Stanley Samolinski

Virgil C. Shelley, Jr.

These are imposing lists representative of a community which places inestimable value upon the American way of life. It reflects the courage of a people who can, like the dauntless Cavalier de La Salle for whom the city is named, accept resignedly the trials and sorrows assigned to mankind, rededicate themselves to the cause of humanity, and find consolation in planning for a better tomorrow.

La Salle has continued to move forward industrially, educationally, and spiritually.

Meyer Furnace Company, which was established in Peoria in the last half of the nineteenth century, acquired a plant in Peru in August, 1945. In the foundry at Peru, the company makes the gray iron castings for its furnaces and produces gas- and oil-furnace equipment.

Edward Zuroff was appointed acting mayor in 1947 after the death of Mayor Orr.



At a special election held in 1948, Joseph Delmanowski was chosen mayor. He finished the term, and at the next regular election in 1949, Matt Bildhauer, Jr., became mayor.

In August, 1946, the Union Coal Company took over the operations of the Illinois Zinc Mine in Peru which, with the Union Mine, was one of the last two to operate in the tri-city area. The Illinois Zinc Mine was abandoned in the summer of 1947. The Union Mine was closed on April 1, 1949, terminating the coal mining industry in the community, an era that had lasted ninety-three years. Among the companies participating in the production of coal in the La Salle area were the Northern Illinois Coal and Iron Company, the Illinois Valley Coal Company, incorporated in 1865, the old Union Coal Company, the La Salle County Carbon Coal Company, incorporated in 1883, and the present Union Coal Company of which Mr. J. D. Walsh is president.

Today, Westclox is known as the world's largest alarm clock factory; more than 4,000 persons are employed here daily in the manufacturing of alarm clocks, time clocks, both spring wound and electric, pocket and wrist watches, auto clocks, and many other time-keeping instruments. General Time Corporation, formed in 1930, is now the parent company of several time-piece producers, including Westclox.

The great cement plants of the area ship to every part of the country. One of the world's largest cement producers is the Marquette Cement Manufacturing Company at Oglesby. In 1923, Marquette acquired a plant at Cape Girardeau, Mo. A shipping plant is located at Memphis, Tenn. and a second shipping plant at St. Louis, Mo. Four additional plants, at Des Moines, Ia., at Nashville, and Cowan, Tenn. and at Brandon, Miss., have been purchased since 1940.

Lehigh Portland Cement Company, Oglesby, employing about 300 persons, has an annual productive capacity of 1,660,000 barrels. Lehigh operates thirteen plants from coast to coast and is now building in Florida.

Alpha Portland Cement Company, La Salle, produces about 4,000 barrels of cement a day with a possible yearly capacity of 1,500,000 barrels.

Today, the La Salle and Bureau County Railroad employs twenty-six people and is powered by two Baldwin Diesel Electric locomotives. In 1943, the operations of the railroad were extended by trackage arrangement to a connection with the New York Central at Ladd, Ill.; this agreement brought to La Salle the facilities of an Eastern trunk line over which a great portion of the zinc and chemical products find a market. The industries which are served by direct track include Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company, Carus Chemical Company, Starved Rock Gas and Oil Company, Sweney Gas and Oil Company, the Ladd Elevator, and the Schwab Elevator.

Illinois Zinc, whose products are shipped all over the world, normally employs between 500 and 600 men. This company also operates its own railroad, the Peru, La Salle, and DePue.

American Nickeloid, the exclusive manufacturer of pre-plated nickel and chrome aluminum in sheets, in 1939 set up an export department, and today, the plants ship to all the principal countries of the world.

Potassium permanganate produced at Carus Chemical Company is today used in the drugs developed for the treatment of tuberculosis, in army medical research, in atomic energy experiments, and in the purification of carbon dioxide and other gases. In addition to potassium permanganate, Carus Chemical Company now engages in the manufacture of hydroquinone used in photographic development and in the synthetic rubber process, manganese sulfate used in fertilizers and in animal food, and blue black manganese used in the manufacture of special dry cell batteries.

Excellent educational facilities are offered in La Salle. The public elementary schools operate on a Kindergarten-eight grade plan with a regular classroom teacher in charge of fundamental subjects assigned to each grade in each building. In addition to the staff of classroom teachers, special teachers are provided in the various fields. There are special teachers, also, for exceptional children, crippled children, children with defective vision, children in need of speech correction, educable mentally handicapped children, and slow learners. Each attendance area is served by a Kindergarten. The first of these Kindergartens was opened in the new Jackson School in September, 1939. The superintendent of the elementary school system is E. G. Miller. There are 800 pupils in attendance, and forty-three faculty members.

Parochial grade schools are operated by four of the Catholic parishes. St. Patrick's School, conducted by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, has a faculty of ten and an enrollment of 320. St. Joseph's School, under the direction of the Sisters of St. Francis, has an enrollment of 122 and a faculty of four. St. Hyacinth's School, in charge of the Felician Sisters, has nine faculty members and 304 pupils. St. Hyacinth's



operates a Kindergarten in conjunction with the eight grades. At St. Roch's School, the teachers are four Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict; the enrollment is 100. The total parochial school enrollment is 846.

The La Salle Elementary School Board of Education and the City Recreation Committee cooperate in providing a city-wide recreation program during the fall, winter, and spring months. The program is planned for both public and parochial school children.

The Saturday Sewing School, organized in 1900, still operates in the Campbell School. This year, 183 girls have received instruction from a staff of five teachers.

La Salle-Peru Township High School and La Salle-Peru-Oglesby Junior College are both highly accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The high school serves the townships of La Salle, Peru, Utica, and Cedar Point, and parts of Waltham, and Dimmick townships. The Junior College draws students from the cities of La Salle, Peru, Oglesby, and from many surrounding communities including DePue, Earlville, Granville, La Moille, Lostant, Marseilles, Mendota, Ottawa, Princeton, Spring Valley, Standard, Streator, and Tonica.

In addition to the regular collegiate schedule, the Junior College offers extension courses at the following centers: Amboy, Kewanee, Mendota, Ottawa, Princeton, and Streator, as well as at the Junior College in La Salle. Francis H. Dolan is superintendent of the high school and director of the Junior College; he was appointed to this position after the death of Dr. Frank A. Jensen on March 31, 1947. The two schools have a combined faculty of fifty-five. Enrollment for the high school is 1,024, and for the Junior College, regular and extension sessions, 460.

At St. Mary's Hospital, a new addition completed in 1951 increased the bed capacity to 130. Forty-four students are enrolled in the School of Nursing. Twenty Sisters under Sister Tharsilla, superior, complete the staff.

The La Salle Public Library today houses about 16,000 volumes. The total circulation of books for 1951 was 65,459, and membership was 5,600. Miss Tessie Yopp is librarian.

The La Salle Post Office, directed by Postmaster Edward J. Duffy, has a staff of thirty-five, including an assistant postmaster, a superintendent, twelve clerks, eleven carriers, five substitutes, two rural route carriers, and two custodians. Postal receipts for 1951 amounted to \$169,393.82.

Since 1837 when the first Baptist church was organized here, and 1838 when the first Catholic missionaries arrived, twelve churches have been established in La Salle: six Protestant, five Catholic, and one Jewish.

The First Baptist Church, of which Reverend G. S. Hamilton is pastor, has a congregation of 400 members. The La Salle First Methodist Church has 345 members. Reverend Dr. Joseph N. Loper is pastor. The First Congregational Church, which this year celebrates its centennial, has a membership of 392. Reverend Merrill Beale is pastor. The La Salle Evangelical and Reformed Church has a membership of 500. The present pastor is Reverend Walter Kleffmann. Reverend L. M. Phillips is pastor of the Grace Evangelical Church. St. Paul's Episcopal Church has a membership of 200. Reverend Wayne A. Garrard is pastor. St. Paul's is now making plans for a new church edifice.

Of the five Catholic churches, St. Patrick's, founded by the Vincentian Fathers as the Church of the Most Holy Cross, is the oldest. Today, approximately 800 families are members of St. Patrick's; Reverend John Roche, C. M., is pastor, and the assistants are Reverend Walter Quinn, C. M., Reverend Charles Saunders, C. M., and Reverend John Hickey, C. M. St. Joseph's Catholic Church has a membership of 210 families. Reverend L. L. Henkel is pastor. St. Hyacinth's Catholic Church now has a membership of 600 families. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Pilarek is pastor; his assistants are Reverend Heinc Ciesielski and Reverend Marion Switka. St. Roch's Catholic Church cares for more than 600 families. Reverend Michael Zeleznikar is pastor; he is assisted by Reverend John Hunt. Queen of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, the youngest of the Catholic parishes in La Salle, has a membership of 364 families. Reverend Simon D. Bernardi is pastor. A Memorial church, representing one of the finest of Italian Renaissance designs, is proposed for Queen of the Holy Rosary parish. This new church will be located on the northwest corner of Fourth and Gooding Streets.

La Salle's one Jewish temple is Temple B'Nai Moshe. Dr. Curt Reach has been rabbi since 1945. The Temple has a membership of forty-eight families from La Salle, Ottawa, Streator, Mendota, and other neighboring towns.



XVI

1952

Since the day of its incorporation, August 4, 1852, La Salle's development has been steady. From a tiny settlement situated on the bluff of a river valley and numbering some 200 inhabitants, La Salle has matured into a city with a population of 12,083 and an area of 2.5 square miles.

The beginnings were humble. A few brave pioneer men and women migrated to the fertile Illinois Valley and cleared the prairie for the city. Men planning transportation saw the advantages of canal and railroad as they would cross or parallel each other in this area. Early scientists and inventors had sufficient faith in the location to found here their great industries. Laborers pushing westward in search of employment stayed to establish homes, churches, and schools. Farmers developed the rich land adjacent to the city. Businessmen set up stores which expanded to become today's shopping district.

La Salle has experienced the gifts of a strong past in a successful present, and at the end of the first century of incorporation, foresees the continued effects of those gifts in a prosperous future.



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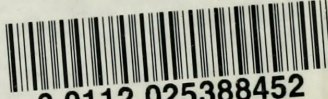








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