

Ottawa Childhood
an Oral History

John Jordan, Interviewee
Of Ottawa, Illinois

Interview Date: November 8, 1976

Oral History Tape Number:
Tape Number: 77

Number of Transcribed Pages: 6

Subject(s) Covered:

Starved Rock Library System History Collection

Digitized under an Illinois Historical Records Preservation Grant
Awarded in 2013 to the Peru Public Library
1409 11th Street, Peru, Illinois 61354

NARRATOR: John m. Jordan
TAPE NUMBER: 1
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 8, 1976
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: 217 First, Ottawa, Ill.
INTERVIEWER: Kat Gerding
FOR: Starved Rock Library System

I: We are doing an oral history on Mr. John Jordan in the office of his hardware store at 119 Main St., Ottawa, Ill. on November 8, 1976.

N: Well, here I am, 90, and it's really hard for me to believe that. At present I am President of Jordan Hardware Co., started by my grandfather, John Manley in 1840. On a single occasion but we have added buildings on both sides of the original. My Dad, Richard C. Jordan, married Mr. Manley's daughter, Susan, and later became his partner in the hardware firm of Manley and Jordan.

I: How much of the original store is left? That you have.

N: After Mr Manley's death, my Dad continued with his brother-in-law as partner. The firm was Jordan and Hamilton for a _____
Then became Jordan-R.C. Jordan. Now we have two boys with me. Bob and _____ and _____

I: O.K.

(tape shuts off)

N: Let's see----o.k.---Mr. Manley's home was then on the west side of North LaSalle St. North of where the bank is now. About where the Emerick and Mason's store stands. My mother was born here. In those years, stoves, farm implements, heavy hardware was sold. The book accounts was settled annually by our customers as well as settlement of salaries was on a yearly basis. New York firms were the main sources. In the center of the main room, there was a pot-bellied stove that furnished the heat, and it was surrounded by chairs where customers sat and discussions took place. One customer who joined in was Chief Shabona, Indian.

The main store building was erected in 1855. To show the great difference

N: in our economy as of today, a brick mason was paid a dollar and half per day _____.

I was born in 1886 and started working in the store after grade school. _____ in the afternoon and then when I graduated from high school in 1904 I went to work steady.

We had a large farm trade, sold plows and _____ and harvesting machinery and so forth and all vehicles for delivery were horse drawn. We delivered through out the county. _____ Mrs. _____ and also experimented one time with mules. A series of run-aways ended this.

The rural roads were a big problem especially North of Ottawa in Wallace township. In bad weather, the muddy roads _____ and _____ there up in mud to the hibs. Gravel was the next big improvement. Then later on, of course, cement. The first concrete road out of Ottawa was a mile long on the South side of the river.

Autos or _____ came to town. The first one over by Simon Smith, the cigar maker, whose home was on West Main St. South of what is now the Kroger store. And the early cars had to trunks. Luggage was carried on the running board. Lights ran from gas tanks, horns were rubber squeezed by hand. Instead of glass doors, we had buttoned on leather curtains _____

In the early days, farmers usually favored shopping in one day. Saturday was the popular day. Stores were open every evening. and Sunday _____

When the cars first came the farmers _____

Now as a youngster I attended Professor Willis' dancing school in what is now the upstairs hall of the Elks Club. he had rather a lordly _____

Playing the fiddle _____ teaching us to dance.

Grade school-gradeschool, I recall attending classes in the _____ hall now where the American Leagion _____ they had a assortment of exercising equipment. Contests--pole climbing--poles attached to the

N: ceiling. _____

We had _____ the organization built a large auditorium on land now occupied by the Ottawa Silica Co. The _____ speakers came from all over the nation. Programs were being held day and night. This lasted for a week or two and a perimeter of tents erected on the land where a large number of Ottawa's founders lived for the time _____ George Kelly and I ran a lunch counter under this auditorium, serving ham sandwiches and coffee. George Kelly later became the President of _____ In Chicago. My Dad introduced William Jennings Bryant _____

I met my wife _____ in Milwaukee at the _____

One evening when I got off the interurban I walked up the ramp toward the entrance and as I went along I felt a splash of water in my face. Two or three girls that I knew ahead of me and one, a stranger, holding a cup of water, was _____ She could shoot a stream of water through her teeth quite a distance and I happened to be the target. The next night we had a date _____ Starved Rock _____ 1915.

St. James Episcopal Church _____ the pastor was Rev. _____

so I was sure our marriage would be a success _____

After the reception, we boarded the train for _____ Wisconsin.

then took a lumber train, riding in the caboose _____ here we

were met by a hack from the resort called _____ Boulder

Lake. It was in the timber near the Canada border. We occupied a small cabin.

_____ back in the timber. We had a porcupine for

a neighbor. In the evening, as we paddled a canoe around the shore, the

deer were very _____ we had a guide that took us fishing _____.

Now I'm looking at an invoice that I received for a 10 day-- my total cost for this was \$44.80. Can you believe it?

N: Now I go back to my grade school days. There were a series of public meetings held in the old armory. A wooden building located where the city offices now stand. On the corner of Madison and Clinton street. The Ottawa Development Association held these meetings to raise funds to bring a glass plant here. It was installed by Monroe _____ . The members of the Ottawa Development Association appeared on the platform and asked the public to subscribe to the necessary amount for the necessary amount to bring the plant. Thousands of dollars were subscribed to at these meetings. In appreciation for the work that the Association had done in bringing this plant to Ottawa the public raised separate fund and presented the members of the Association with a sterling silver plaque. This plaque is now in place in the Chamber of Commerce office _____ at the Reddick Mansion. The recent political contest took me back to elections years ago. Each party organized torch like groups. Some on foot, others on horse back carrying lighted torches on a pole, parading _____ cities different cities, creating quite a sight as they marched. In the horse and buggy days, religious revival meetings were held at Buffalo Rock. It was quite a sight to see people go down in front, singing, shouting and dancing by the platform. In those days they were called the Holy Rollers as they got religion.

I: _____

N: A good friend of mine, Bill Carr, was the engineer who supervised the construction on the old interurban road. They operated between LaSalle Peru, Ottawa, Streator, Joliet carrying both passengers and freight. It was designed to really put Ottawa on the map and it did operate successfully for many years. It used to carry large crowds to points of interest in the county, one of which was the amusement park in Buffalo Rock. This is all now a memory _____ .

N: How many recall the brick _____ that was located on the back of the Illinois river, occupied the land where Central School now stands. The clay was hauled from beds East of Ottawa by caly cars operating on a track that went East t through Ottawa on Main street over the bridge to LaSalle. (pause)

Some years ago Eeen Park near Sheridan, on the Fox river, was most popular. We camped there for several seasons in the valley across the railroad across from the park. The _____ brothers entertained _____ dance _____ and also went out in boats at night with groups singing and playing the guitars. Shoot the Shoots carried you from _____ into river in your bathing suit.

There were many cottages on the _____ for rent. Some of these are still there. At one time street cars operated in Ottawa. Reaching all parts of the town as far West as _____ cars were closed in the winter then in the summer open _____. The street car company bought a peice of land on the South side of the Illinois river and built a _____. They called the park Ellis park and the lowere _____ the dance hall was on the upper ground and the lower ground was used for picnics. The stairs, about 120 st steps, led from the top to the bottom.

As a youngster my folks, well I would say I was around 5 or 6 years old, the folks took me to see the glass bloweres operate at the _____ the North side of town. They were making lamp @himineys, vases and all sorts of _____ glass.

Some 50 years ago, I became a director of Ottawa Federal Savings and Loan Association. We were rather a small instution located in a law office by George _____ over the First National Bank. Právius to being _____ it belonged to _____ Brown. He was then Secretary of our Association. Now we have a very modern _____ drive-in and our assets have risen to over 50 million. Jim McConnville is the President. We are the oldest

JORDAN

6

N: Association in the state of Illinois.

In the early days the First National Bank was on the Northwest corner of Main and LaSalle Street. The A&P Grocery which is now located West, started in the building just East of the _____ building _____

(tape shuts off)

END OF SIDE ONE

Beverly Black
Transcriptionist

I hereby release all right, title, or interest in and to all or any part of my tape-recorded memoirs to SKLS, subject to the following stipulations:

PLACE First Ave.

Ottawa, Ill.

DATE Nov. 8, 1976

John M. Jordan
(INTERVIEWEE)

(for _____)

For and in consideration of the participation by _____
in any programs involving the dissemination of tape recorded memoirs and
oral history material for publication, copyright, and other uses, I hereby
release all right, title, or interest in and to all of my tape-recorded
memoirs to _____ and declare that they may be used with-
out any restriction whatsoever and may be copyrighted and published by the
said _____, which may also assign said copyright and publication
rights to serious research scholars.

In addition to the rights and authority given to you under the pre-
ceding paragraph, I hereby authorize you to edit, publish, sell and/or
license the use of my Oral History memoir in any other manner which the
_____ considers to be desirable and I waive any claim to any pay-
ments which may be received as a consequence thereof by the _____.

PLACE _____

DATE _____



(Interviewee)

(for _____)

INTERVIEWER'S NOTES AND WORD LIST

Instructions to the Interviewer:

To assist the transcriptionist, please identify:

1. Passages which may be difficult to understand because of outside noise, other people in the room, problems with the tape recorder, etc.
2. Passages which are confidential and therefore should not be typed.
3. Passages which need to be treated in a special way.

Please list words or phrases which might be difficult to understand, all proper names, and unfamiliar terms. If there is more than one tape, note where the second and succeeding ones begin.

TAPE NO. _____

599 - Insert Wedding trip -
Correction - Interview was held in Mr. Gordon's house
217 First St. Ottawa -
Det year from Plogue in Reddick mansion
570 Married

(Continue on Reverse)

