

NEWS 'N' NOTES

JONES COUNTY GEN. SOC.
P.O. BOX 174 ANAMOSA, IA 52205 May-June 2000

due to innovations in operating procedures that he introduced. It is said that he was the first operator in the United States to use hydraulic power for stripping quarries and the first to load large holes with several hundred pounds of black powder and with one large blast prepare a section for stone removal. The latter was a three edged sword, that greatly increased his production, hastened the end of his business and created problems for future operators in the area. No doubt it was an awe inspiring sight as the earth jumped, emitting a chorus of muffled thunder and spewed forth surface rock; but within its bowels lines of fracture spread deep, crisscrossing with each new explosion and reducing to rubble what would have been building stone for future generations. Little did observers at that time suspect the hidden damage caused by this technology.

Blocks of building stone were removed from the quarry face by a Channeling machine. Here a row of rotating drills powered by a steam engine and compressor moved down a line on the cleared bed, cutting holes to the desired depth. After a line of holes to the appropriate length had been cut, the large block would be wedged loose, tilted on its side and then cut into smaller blocks with wedges or a steel wire saw. Other equipment included upright derricks, circular rubbing beds for dressing stone, a Gates stone crusher, a steam plant containing an eighty horse power engine, ~~and~~ ^{as well as} a pumping station containing pumps and hydraulic engine used in stripping off superficial material. This hydraulic operation cut the cost of

removing earth by eighty percent. Horse power was not a cliché in those days as most of the stone was hauled by horse-drawn stones over the short distance between quarry face and railroad cars. Horse powered hoists were also operated by the real thing.

With this assemblage of equipment Mr. Green furnished crushed stone, riprap, rubble, bridge stone, flagging and all grades of dimension stone. During peak periods this gave employment to 460 men as machinists, stone cutters and laborers. All this made a great deal of money for Mr. Green who used it to support his wife Ellen and their nine children in a manner to which they were not accustomed but were willing to learn about. The center of his domestic life was a large mansion completed in 1883 on the highest point in town and overlooking the scene of his labors. The massive structure consisted of three stories and a basement, a pillared entrance, seven marble fireplaces and overall opulence. The grounds also sported a three story turret like water tower, an ice house and other buildings to meet basic human needs. Everything had walls of stone and those of the mansion were two feet thick. It was only logical that Mr. Green should develop an interest in the sport of kings so a three story stone barn with two foot buttressed walls was erected where his thoroughbreds lived under a roof second only to that of their master. With the horses came a practice track, travel and all the trappings of affluence. Truly Mr. Green found gold in the streets of America but when he arrived he exercised the benevolence of social minded success and a tax structure ^{FROM} of bygone days. During the

1880s and 1890s the fiscal flood ~~was~~ reached their high point and J.A. Green rose to the occasion by constructing a gay ninety shopping center. Called the Columbian Hotel and Opera House it was one of the most costly structures in the county. Like the ^{MANSION} it was made of local stone, four stories high and no doubt its building supplemented slack work periods. In any case it was the social center of the area, with a fifty room hotel, several large shopping areas, an opera house that held between 400 and 500 people and a grand stage that supported various national musical troupes and such fading famous forms as Jenny Lind and General Tom Thumb. Green also spearheaded the construction of the town's Catholic Church, railroad station and two stroy school among other projects. Like most men atop the mountain of financial success Green turned to the apex of politics and was elected state senator in 1891.

As the centry turned so did Mr. Green's fortunes and those of Stone City. His 1904 candidacy for the national congress as a democratic represenattive was unsuccessful. The era of railroad expansion was past and what construction that did take place used Portland Cement. This economic cancer ate away at the family fortunes and life style but the final blow came from Green's own genius gone wild. He was the big blasting powder man and on some date between 1917 and 1920, that everyone tried to forget and succeeded in doing, the blasting boomeranged and delt a death blow to its inventor's fortunes. The date is lost but the event stands clear. While opening a quarry ledge, excessive chrages were set, blast directions miscalculated, so that when the earth shook it rained

destruction upon the quarry equipment that had gouged it for nearly half a century. Such poetic revenge was well timed for with the operating equipment damaged or destroyed by tons of rock and with new capital nonexistent there was no more business as usual in the quarries of J.A. Green.

There was no lamb's blood to protect and quarrymen's fiscal door and similar reverses soon engulfed the city reducing it from a population of some 500 to 50. Shortly before his death in 1920 even old J.A. Green moved from the scene of his triumphs and tragedy to nearby Anamosa. If this was the end of an era it was not just an era of J.A. Green but also such men as Henry Dearborn, John Ronan and the nameless lesser faces that moved through the clatter and dust of this stone world. How much alike were these men? Henry Dearborn was born in West Compton, New Hampshire in 1829 where he also learned to be a stone cutter. He too went west and in 1856 found him in the Stone City area. After a time he opened the Stone City Quarry also called the Dearborn & Sons quarry and continued operation at the same site for fifty years, during which time he delivered in excess of 50,000 car loads of stone. The family lived in town where they opened a small store and in 1874 Henry became postmaster, a post he held for 16 years. As a republican this was the height of his political aspirations and though his fortunes and influence were not as great as those of Green he none the less provided a constant source of revenue and employment by the skillful operation of his quarry. After his death in 1908 his large family continued the operation, but the decreased

demand for stone and management trouble forced the sudden closing about the same time Green ceased operations.

And what of John Ronan, another Irish immigrant child two years younger than J.A. Green. His family came to Waterloo in 1857 where John's father was a stonecutter. Like father, like son, but not too fast, in this case young Ronan went to sow some wild oats with F company of the 7th Iowa Cavalry where from 1864 to 1868 he engaged in the slaughter of Sioux to secure the Yellowstone and Wyoming area. Back from the Indian wars, with enough stories for one life time, he married in 1869. After working in quarries for over ten years he saved enough money to purchase the Anamosa Quarry in 1881. By 1895 Ronan had shipped 20,484 cars of stone, to give him respectable standing but this quarry also hit the skids and finally closed in a tight race with the Dearborn operation during the later 1920s. But it served its purpose and Ronan's fortune allowed him to support his family of eight in a modest mansion on the town's second highest hill which was appropriately overlooking his quarry. A republican, he succeeded Dearborn in the post office business, a post the family held for many years. A man by the name of F. Erickson ran the Gold Hill quarry for a number of years before its closing shortly after 1917. We can only speculate on the type of man he was, but no doubt he was a variety of the rest, only a little less successful, which would most likely be the principal difference down much of the town role. They were hard working men who started with their resources and those of nature to make something for themselves and others.

By 1930 the economic sands of time had run out for Stone City and with the closing of the Dearborn and Ronan quarries the land stood like a giant split log gouged and gnawed by hundreds of mechanized termites that now stood in silent disarray as if struck down by some invisible financial insecticide. All was quite along the Wapsipinicon as dust and rust settled in. Some fifty tenacious residents watched the vultures of business pick clean the remains of their town. Half of a million tons of stone from the Columbia Hotel were trucked to Cedar Rapids for use in new construction. Up and down the main street houses emptied and evaporated like memories of water. Trains still whistled but no longer stopped, prairie grass grew where it hadn't seen sun in seventy years and in 54 the mail no longer came through.

The Nissen Family acquired the Green Mansion in 1908 and used it as a summer residence. The painter, Grant Wood, saw a need for a mid-western summer art school so in 1932 with the permission of the Nessen Family, his art colony descended on the old Green Mansion, converting it into dormitories, studios, dining and recreation rooms. The ice house became a sort of rathskeller named the "Sickle and Sheaf" while the water tower became an apartment. So great was the success of the first year that extra dormitory space was secured through the use of old ice wagons. As is often the case success in number is not necessarily success in dollars and 1934 saw another promise pass. In 1963 the grand old mansion made a grand old fire leaving only the walls of stone like a hollow skull gaping at the sky. The Green Mansion, water tower, ice house, stables and track are all in ruins like a battlefield being buried in green. The town school has become a youth center and meeting place,

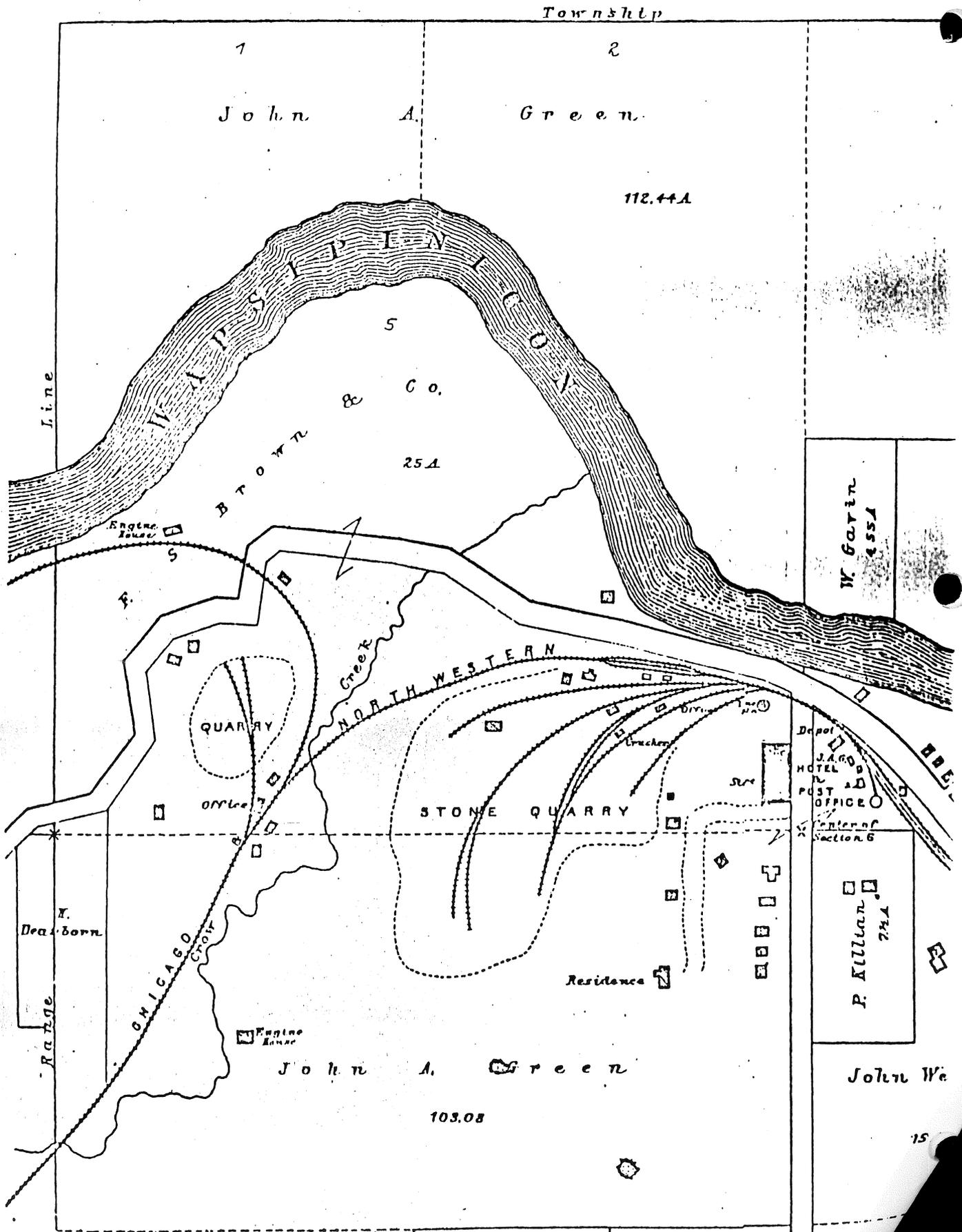
The machines of any age require men to work stone. They guide, lift, cut and haul. These men are at Stone City today, some bear the surnames of pioneer quarrymen, others are seasonal help and some like Norm Seeley are seasoned professional who have spent a life time keeping stone quarries alive. They have blasted many a ledge and when the smoke cleared they walked in frozen ancient seas where no man walked before. Scouts at the frontier of stone their experienced eyes read the trails of centuries through layers of stone good and bad. Like a diamond cutter wielding a ten ton edge they set the course along bedding planes that give the stone its greatest value.

This is not an easy business and never was. Today there is the problem of almost a new product line, to get architects to use the Anamosa stone they were denied for years. Another is the cost of transportation which limits the market of some products. Then there are the beds of shattered stone denied to today's fine buildings by the over-enthusiastic use of explosives in past years. The life of quarrymen has never been a bed of roses, *but rather* one of stone. Today the sights and smells of diesel power have replaced those of horse power but there are saws and stone polishers and wedges and clouds of dust, and danger and money to be made. All are familiar enough to stir the bones of John Green, Henry Dearborn, John Ronan or the army of workers past and present who keep the heart of Stone City alive for the dreams of men and for men to dream of.

A few fine stone houses still line the street, the store has become a private residence, the Ronan mansion likewise, the blacksmiths shop serves for storage and God still lives in the church.

But men also live and this life brings hope that in 1940 saw Clarence De Wees of Marion purchase the Dearborn Quarry and Champion No. 1. Here he used crushing equipment to make road stone and fluxstone for use in blast furnaces smelting iron ore. In 1962 William C. Weber of Anamosa made the dust rise a little higher by buying into the operation and once again start the production of building stone in addition to the crushed stone. In 1959 Mr. Weber bought the Anamosa Quarry and in 1962 he bought the Champion No. 2 quarry. J.A. Green would be proud of his successor's innovative operation. The Anamosa Quarry has been turned into a closed tunnel mine which is one of the few such operations in the country for building and road stone. This change reduces the seasonal aspect of production for if the stone is worked out of doors in freezing weather it shatters. The mine has several large horizontal shaft openings into the quarry building stone. Inside there are a series of working chambers divided by columns that support the ceiling. As each chamber is cleared of useful stone, new areas are opened further back in the mine. Something else new is the use of a large wheeled trench digger outfitted with cutting blades on the wheel, to dig vertical channels in the beds so that slabs of stone can be removed by the dimensions cut. One can only hope that these innovations bring a permanent prosperity not found in the mind of J.A. Green.

Cont. next issue.



John A. Green

112.44A

W. PASSY PENNICO
BROWN & Co.
25A

QUARRY

STONE QUARRY

Residence

Depot
HOTEL
POST OFFICE
Center of Section 6

P. Killian
74A

John A. Green

103.08

John We

15

28

Scale

James Seeley
Wed 5-1-85
 Funeral services for James Seeley were held at 11 a.m. Tuesday in the Goett-sch Funeral Home, Anamosa, with burial in Riverside Cemetery. Rev. Rohn Peterson officiated at the services.

Pallbearers were Ken Helken, Robert Byers, Fred Williams, David Reth, Charles Seeley and Luke Seeley.

James. Seeley, 63, was found dead in his home in Anamosa Friday evening, April 28. *SHOT - 2-3 days*

Mr. Seeley was born April 3, 1922, at Grinnell. He was the son of Raymond S. and Edna Taylor Seeley. He attended school in Anamosa where he graduated in 1942.

He performed with many bands, including Leo Grecco, Howdy Roberts, and Herb Schriener. During the last few years, he played with Dale Heerens Country Aires.

He is survived by a sister, Mrs. Norman (Jane) Carpenter of Roy, Utah; a brother, Richard of Monticello; three nieces and three nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, one brother and one sister.

Katherine Seeley

Katherine Seeley, 85, died April 10 following an extended illness.

Services were held April 13 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Anamosa with Rev. Richard Kling officiating. Burial was in the Riverside Cemetery.

She was born Jan. 19, 1897, the daughter of Christian and Katherine Eberle Woehr at Philadelphia, Pa. She received her education in area schools.

April 24, 1922, she married Charles E. Seeley at Philadelphia where they made their home for three years before moving to Anamosa. Mr. Seeley preceded her in death in 1957. *4-21-82 Ann-JL*

She was employed in Cedar Rapids and Anamosa before her retirement. She was a member of the Mount Moriah Chapter OES and Evangeline Rebekah Lodge 31.

Casketbearers were Norman R. Seeley, William Seeley, Robert Seeley, Richard Seeley, Clarke Seeley and Norman A. Seeley.

OBITUARIES
10-20-85 at Valley View
SARA KITCHEN

Sara E. Kitchen, 84, of rural Cedar Rapids died Oct. 15, 1983, at her residence following a long illness.

Born Oct. 13, 1899, at Delmar, she married Floyd Kitchen March 8, 1922, at Cedar Rapids. He died June 30, 1970.

A lifelong resident of the Cedar Rapids area, Mrs. Kitchen was a member of the Bertram Methodist Church, American Legion Auxiliary of Mount Vernon, Linn County Farm Bureau and was a charter member of the Linn County Historical Society.

Surviving are a daughter, Doris Hinchcliff of rural Cedar Rapids and a grandchild.

Services were Tuesday at Valley View Baptist Church by the Revs. Dennis Tebis and Neil Thompson. Burial was in Campbell Cemetery. A memorial fund has been established.

I have information on the CLINE, LIVINGSTON, and GRAHAM families of Delaware and Jones Counties. Many are buried in Oakwood Cem. Monticello IA. Will share info.
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