



Quarter-Mile Link

History and Reflections

of



Shady Oaks
and the
Rock Valley Community



Mary C. Gift





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DEDICATION

I dedicate this document to my grandson, Michael ("Mick") S. Jurgensen, who has always loved and maintained a keen interest in this area. As a three-year old boy, he was intrigued by the native oaks and one very small maple tree. His innate sense of belonging fortified my desire to learn about and love this new frontier which was destined to be our home for more than three decades. It's been a rewarding adventure.

Thank you, Mick, for the friendships I've made, the experiences beyond my comprehension and the joy of sharing your creativity, The Golden Link (the Treehouse), to a multitude of people right in my own backyard.

The Maple Tree

When you and I were very small,
You often came to me;
Climbed to a branch, told me all,
I was your maple tree.

I also grew the same as you,
To reach toward lofty heights;
Your dreams and worries, shared with me,
I was your maple tree.

You always have kept coming back,
To gaze from my green boughs;
To fly with birds, set spirits free,
In your own maple tree.

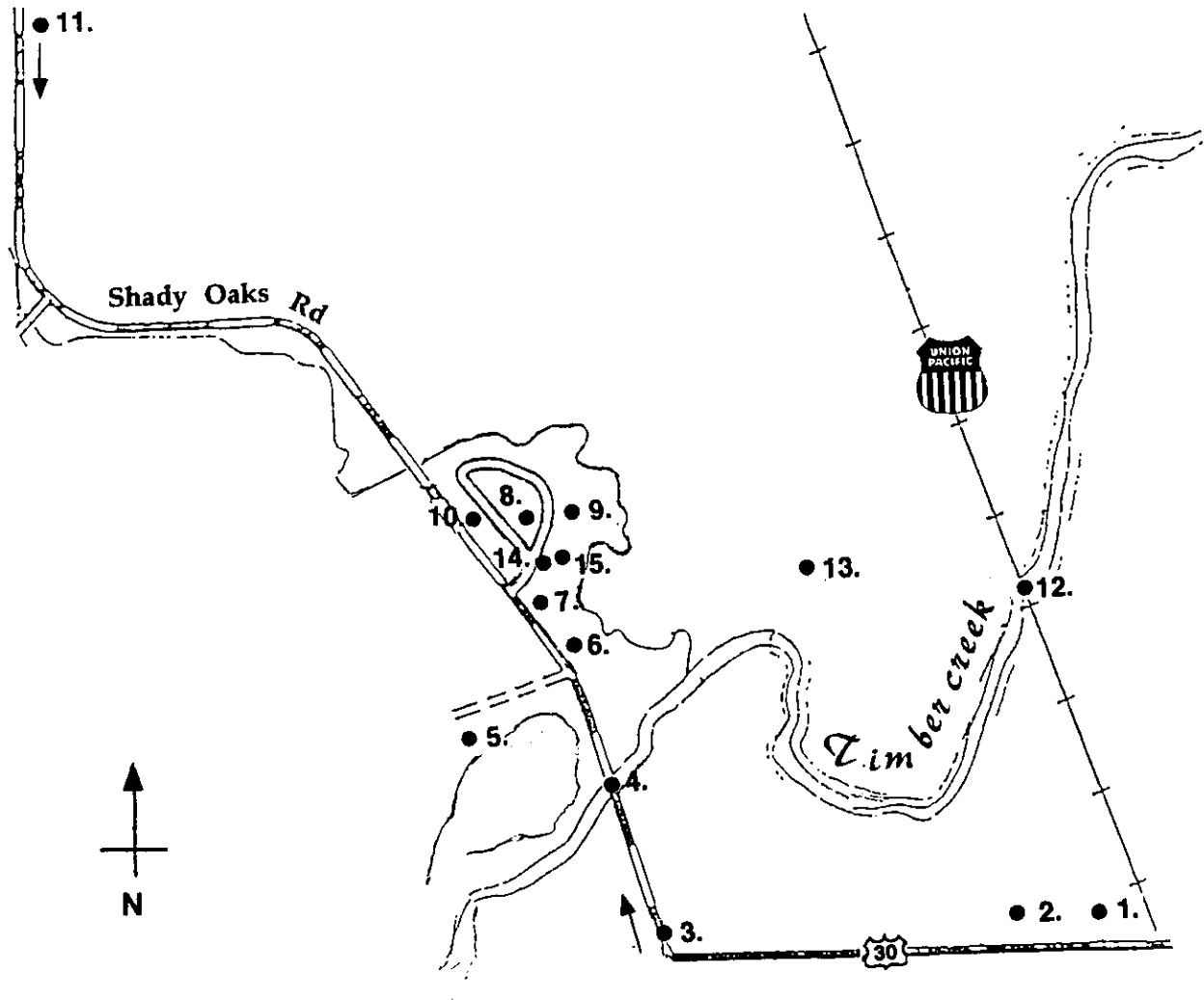
Tho something beckoned you away,
You shall return someday;
To climb up high, again be free,
I am your maple tree.

Affectionately,

Your loving Grandma

The Quarter-Mile Link

Section 8 LeGrand Township
Marshall County, Iowa



1. Rock Valley Cemetery
2. Rock Valley Quarry
3. 3-Mi. Stretch - Lincoln Hwy.
4. Rainbow Arch Bridge Site
5. Rock Valley Mill & Pond Site
6. Shady Oaks Cafe
7. Mill House (2nd Location)
8. Shady Oaks Cabin Camp Office & 1st Site - Rock Valley School
9. Original Cabin
10. The Log Building - Dayroom
11. Rock Valley School (2nd Location)
12. 1901 Railroad Bridge
13. Timbercreek Meadow
14. My Home
15. The Big Treehouse

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Meeting people, conversing with them, nudging memories and researching and verifying facts has been delightful. While receiving mail containing stories and photos, the Winters of 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 passed incredibly fast. Lasting memories and new friendships were created by revealing treasures of the past.

The people who once lived here and on surrounding farms held the key to the history of the "Quarter-Mile Link." The ball of information rolled faster as it unraveled a network of people connected by two words, "Shady Oaks." I've called folks in Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Texas. Each one responded warmly and enthusiastically, and it's been difficult to end these enlightening conversations.

I want to thank each and every one of you who provided a reminiscence. As the story unfolds, you will find your mementoes woven into the fabric of this Quarter-Mile Link in Marshall County history.

I would also like to thank Helen Degner, local Marshalltown area resident, for the original pencil drawings she created to enhance my story.

In addition, photos open windows to the past. Their images depict people and places that once played an active part in this Quarter-Mile Link. Thus, an inspiring history and record of achievements has resulted; and I hope to keep the memories that form our heritage alive. Today, most landmarks remain the same -- trees, road, lay of the land, etc.

Two people in particular deserve special recognition. My daughter, Judy Jurgensen, spent considerable time editing this book; and my grandson, Michael Jurgensen, shared his expertise in desk-top publishing. As a dedicated team, we're pleased to present this permanent record of souvenirs for your reading and viewing pleasure.



MARSHALLMANIA

The affliction, Marshallmania, is slightly contagious; and it can reoccur after remission. If you find it a bit pleasant, avoid an overdose of facts, or information. Addiction may develop when consuming large quantities.

Marshallmania may be transmitted by prolonged contact. It may even consume, or boggle, your mind. Periods of euphoria may result. Some go into seclusion, others become permanent recluses. It is painless, and few succumb to it.

Those afflicted with Marshallmania develop glazed eyes and make feverish attempts to remember facts. When it becomes deep-seated, they reach out to others for help. Burning the midnight oil may make you feel good, but others around you will think you are in a trance or have lost your marbles.

Marshallmania has dropped me into the basement of time (the old Rock Valley Quarry). I've drifted with spirits from the 19th Century over the Rock Valley Cemetery. I've been swept down the rampaging Timber Creek and through the old Rock Valley Mill. I've drifted on the mill pond under azure blue skies on lazy, summer days and picnicked on its bank. People, who used to walk where I walk now, have returned in photos and entered my being.

Thus, my bouts of Marshallmania return each Fall when the Treehouse and garden are on hiatus. Closing my eyes briefly, I am silently and swiftly swept back in time on a magic carpet. My return trip is by command.

Don't worry, if treated properly, no permanent damage will result. Chronic cases have developed and are being studied. While writing may not be a cure, it is a tonic to my soul.

Learning of something new sends my blood rushing and my spirit spiraling. Marshall County flows in my blood.



PROLOGUE

This book is my commitment to preserving the past. The poet, Stephen Spender, once said, "History is a ship carrying living memories into the future." I am a shipmate.

The major portion of this book focuses on the "Quarter-Mile Link" of the old Lincoln Highway (Shady Oaks Road) which extends from Timber Creek past Shady Oaks. The book also includes other focal points of the Rock Valley Community encompassed in Section 8 of LeGrand Township, Marshall County, Iowa. "Marshallmania" is a term I use for the bits and pieces of Marshall County history discovered and the resulting state of mind.

Each time I returned to my book after a Treehouse summer, it was like revisiting old friends and their experiences. A wealth of information is within me to share, but my book had space limitations; and there was a need to be selective.

This book presents a composite scene of the undaunted dreamers and builders in this "Quarter-Mile Link" who faced soul-testing labors. It is a miniature panorama of man's struggle with nature.

Although this little community is not listed on road maps, its rich, cultural value is noteworthy. The Treehouse at Shady Oaks is listed as a Marshall County attraction on brochures available for tourists entering Iowa on Interstate 80 and at the Marshalltown Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.

*Life is a drama of a few brief acts,
the actors shift, the scenes change;
Our minds are set to various tunes,
disrupting and harmonizing in turn.*





Quarter-Mile Link

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