



THE ROCK VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD



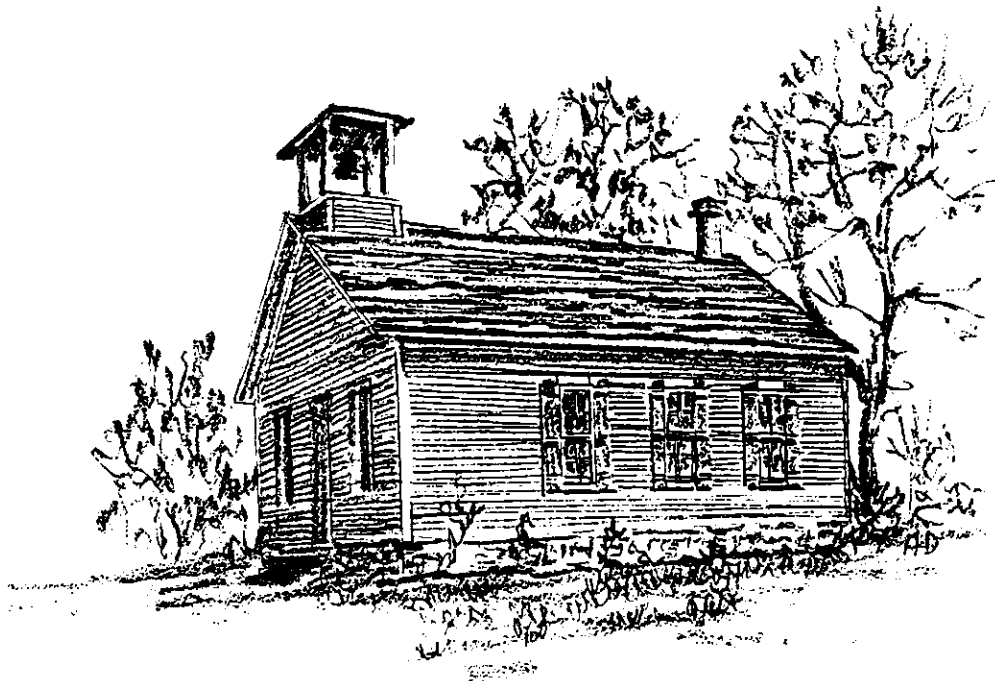
The Rock Valley School

The first Rock Valley School ("School"), officially named School District No. 2 of LeGrand Township, originally stood where Shady Oaks Cabin Camp was established years later. In 1924, Les and Bill Norton began developing the acreage which had been a pasture turned campground. The Nortons immediately discovered the foundation of the schoolhouse. On it, they built the original lodge/office which still exists today and is used as a home.

The County school system was organized in 1859, and the half-acre of land for the schoolhouse was made available to LeGrand Township in 1862. The Charles Brennekes and William Davidsons sold quit claim to the Township for this purpose. This tract in

Section 8, Township 83, Range 17, commenced at a point indicated by a Stake and Stone, north and east of the State Road running from Marengo to Fort Dodge (the Western Stage Company's early mail route).

If you close your eyes for a moment and allow your imagination to soar above the wind, you may hear the sounds of creaking harness, turning wheels, snorting horses and the dauntless, high-seated Western stagecoach driver shouting commands to his team. He was conductor, engineer, fireman and brakeman. When the driver gathered up his "whiplash" and "pulled out," he was the boss to the end of the route. If time were measured by experience, a driver would have lived 100 years; however, they were usually under 50 years of age.



The Rock Valley School

The Rock Valley Neighborhood

The Rock Valley neighborhood children received an abundance of religious training along with their A,B,C's. Father T. D. Austin, a farmer and licensed minister, conducted worship services in the School (Shady Oaks site) until his death in 1878. The little, white frame schoolhouse with a cross above the door was nestled in the heart of a Methodist community.

In the early 1880s, a half-acre of land was designated as the second location for the Rock Valley School. The new site was past two farmsteads, two corners and up the hill, less than a mile from the original location. An exact date for moving the schoolhouse is not known; however, it was indicated as such in the 1885 Iowa Atlas.

In 1938, David Sommerfield Forrey ("Sonny") told Josephine (Chinn) Sipling that the School was moved up the road 53 years before. Although Sonny was just a little boy when the School was pulled up the road, he remembered finding some pennies at the original site. Rondo Handorf, whose folks moved to the farm just north of Shady Oaks in 1890, understood that some remodeling and enlarging was done after the move.

In the late 1800s, couples had large families; and the School grew too large for one teacher. The Hagerland family, who lived back in the field west of the second location of Rock Valley School, offered to house part of the School in an extra bedroom. At recess time, the boys played in the nearby barn. In later years, it looked a little strange to see the bedroom with a porch and door to the outside. Another teacher had to be hired for the additional schoolroom. Teachers were hired by the term, or quarter; and men were paid higher salaries than women. After 1862, women teachers outnumbered the men.

When the attendance dwindled in size, the School was divided down the middle lengthwise. Thus, two stoves and two chimneys were necessary. Mabel Mills taught the younger students on one side, and Hasseltine Mettlin taught the older students on the other side. The girls roomed in the Mettlin home in Marshalltown, and they drove a horse and buggy back and forth as long as the weather permitted. In the winter, they had a light housekeeping room upstairs at the Hagerland home. When Hasseltine left to teach at Quarry, Maude Lawry took her place.

Most Rock Valley women taught in the School prior to marriage. Many were single when they came to the area, and they met their husbands in the neighborhood. School attendance expanded like an accordion in the winter months. Usually a male teacher was hired to teach the older boys. In the spring, farm boys had to help their fathers and did not attend classes. When, or if, they finished eighth grade, they were older than town boys.

Can you visualize neighborhood families gathering for the traditional Christmas programs by the light of kerosene lamps?

In 1940, 100 people attended the annual Christmas program; it was a large number for the size of the building. The following year an inspection revealed that the joists under the floor were rotting. Carl Sipling was the director of the School at the time. Neighborhood men excavated the basement aided by teams of horses. Basement walls were cemented, hard oak floors were laid and a new, automatic oil-burning furnace was installed. The Rock Valley School closed in 1951.

When the School was sold, Lyell and Ursula Johnson bought it for \$800 (\$600 for the building and \$200 for the land). The Lyell Johnsons converted the schoolhouse into their farm home. The October 5, 1957 issue of Wallaces' Farmer noted ". . . the atmosphere changed from readin', writin' and 'rithmetic to one of home, hearth and hospitality." The home was totally remodeled in the 1980s by Don and Jean Searle.

I was fortunate to locate one of the former teachers at Rock Valley School. When I called the State Center Manor to speak to Eloise (Ambler) Wood, I mentioned that she had been a teacher. This was a surprise, as it wasn't on her record. The lady on the phone seemed pleased to know this. When I told Eloise, she simply said, "They never asked." In March of 1993 at the age of 93 years, Eloise shared the following information with me.

Eloise graduated from Garwin High School and attended Iowa State Teachers College (University of Northern Iowa) in Cedar Falls for one year prior to accepting the position at Rock Valley in 1920. The Handorf's offered her room and board throughout the school year, and she paid around \$30 a month. Eloise was without a car, so she walked one-half mile up the road to start the fire each morning before school began.

The second year she taught, the board was unable to find anyone to clean. Eloise said she could do it. Luckily, she had assistance. Her friend from State Center, Lawrence Wood, helped her. They became better acquainted, and later Eloise married him.

The School was along the Lincoln Highway, and travelers often stopped to use the outdoor toilets. It was a nuisance throughout the school day. Even though she padlocked them at night, it didn't stop the travelers.

Eloise enjoyed the lively group she taught at Rock Valley. It kept her busy thinking of new activities for them. Some of the students will never forget their dance lessons. In return, her admirers brought gifts, such as wildflower bouquets for her desk. Rock Valley School and friends are still dear to her heart.

Birding and searching for wildflowers always brought joy to Eloise. She told me about walking down to Shady Oaks to meet Ruth Norton. They both enjoyed hiking along Timber Creek to chat and watch and listen to the many birds both big and small. Red-headed woodpeckers and other large birds reigned supreme in the woods. Eloise, who is now widowed and blind, knew that spring was just around the corner and wistfully remembered the violets galore mixed with many others species of wildflowers in the woods near Shady Oaks.

The library silence of the classroom was usually broken on an sunny April day when a spill of marbles rolled down the aisle. Marbles announced the arrival of spring. A new vocabulary went with the season such as "shooters," "dibs" or "knucks-down." During recess or noon hour, the boys huddled together for an intense game around a circle scratched in the soft dirt.

The only kindergarten class ever held at Rock Valley School was in the Spring of 1951. Mrs. Garrett was the teacher, and the students were Ray Mitchem, Dave Trowbridge and Pat Wright. The students entered first grade in the LeGrand School system that fall.

Rock Valley School had a Federated PTA when Esther McAnulty taught there from 1938 to 1942. The PTA met at the schoolhouse in the evening and was a well-attended social event. J Norton was a student at that time. Esther loved Rock Valley School,

as it had electricity, new basement and an oil-burning furnace (added in 1941). However, the outhouses remained in use.

Don Searle reminisced about the annual skip day at Rock Valley School. The teacher, Rose Peshel, made a field trip to a "field" a special event. Every May before school was out, the students hiked south and east on Highway 30 to what is now Coppock Park Road. They continued south to the top of the hill. At the curve, a narrow, dirt road wound down a grassy slope that was blanketed with wildflowers every spring. They had a picnic in this spot. Skip days were red-letter days.

The grass in the school yard was allowed to grow all summer. Before school started in the fall, a parent mowed the yard. Searle hasn't forgotten the delightful smell of new-mown grass!

Before a well was dug at the schoolhouse, two students were sent to Don's home to get a pail of water. It was uphill. Sometimes it took longer than others to get the icy, cold drinking water.

Behind the School, there were two outhouses on the side of the windy hill; the girls to the north, and boys to the south. The WPA (Work Projects Administration) rebuilt the outhouses in the late 1930s.

During prohibition days, students kept an eye on the hill just west of the schoolhouse. At recess, they could see the same cars slow down and pull to the side of the road to drop off bottles near the fence row. Usually, they checked them out on their way home, but they never disturbed them. The children knew the situation.

In 1993, Ida (Ash) Butcher (deceased) recalled that one of her teachers was Mrs. Poduska, who lived on a farm nearby. She also remembered that Irene Sapp brought a bright red apple to the teacher daily. Irene's brother was Carl, and their father was director of the school board.

Imagine the first five children in the Austin Abraham Ash family (one boy and four girls) trailing up the road to the Rock Valley School in the early 1920s. They walked to and from school each day from the Rock Valley Mill property. They often went barefoot.

Later, after Herbie was born, their home was located near the first curve of Coppock Park Road. It was a tar-paper shanty with a

dirt floor. At that time, there were other tarpaper shanties along the railroad tracks near Quarry and in the Hazelbrush Timber. Austin Ash later purchased "The Coach" (a railroad car) as a home for \$75. It cost \$125 to move it to that location. As a result of all their experiences, the Ash children grew up happy and healthy.

The children passed Shady Oaks on their way to school. The "paper doll" row of white cabins seemed like a luxury. Often they picked up bottles and stashed them in clumps of grass. They scurried to pick them up after school so they could trade them for penny candy at Shady Oaks Gas Station/Eatery.

This is a story about little Herbie Ash and a last day of school picnic in the 1930s. Each child was asked to bring something to share for the picnic. Herbie came to school with his pockets full of mushrooms. When asked what he brought, he said "mush-rooms." The teacher asked him again. This time she was sure she understood as he laid them on the desk. Slightly in shock, she said, "Herbie, you were supposed to bring MARSHMALLOWS!" He lived in the timber, it was May and there were many white, puffy delicacies.

In October of 1994, Herb, the youngest in the Ash family, recalled playing in the sandpile with J Norton at Rock Valley School and a Halloween party at Norton's Shady Oaks home. Sometimes Herb walked as far as the Nortons and rode to school with J. Young Norton's health was always guarded, and Herb knew just how much wrestling around J could take. They were the best of school friends.

Clifford Hudson Chinn happily remembers the last day of school picnics held at Shady Oaks Park in the 1920s. It was a special occasion for the 20 or more children of all ages through eighth grade, the teacher and a few neighborhood parents. Making the day extra special, Clifford's father would give him a coin to buy candy at the nearby Shady Oaks Cafe.

Clifford and his wife, Fern, are the last remnants of pioneer families living in the community. They still reside on the original family farm called "East View." Clifford is the great grandson of Father Austin who located in Rock Valley the spring that Lincoln was assassinated.

John Hudson Chinn, Clifford's grandfather, was born in North Carolina. He enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861 and was taken prisoner by Custer's command following 32 battles. He was released after seven months of imprisonment at Point Lookout, Virginia. In 1869, he rode into Marshall County on horseback to marry his childhood sweetheart, Lydia Austin.

Clifford's father, Charles Carter Chinn, was the fifth child of John H. and Lydia Chinn. His mother, Gertrude (Santee) Chinn, died when he was born in 1919. Two years later Charles married his brother John's widow, Mabel (Mills) Chinn. Thus, Charles' children, Alice (Hitchings), Gilbert and Clifford and Mabel's daughters, Josephine (Sipling) and Mildred (Hitchings) became the extended Chinn family.

Fred and Minnie Lawler, parents of Maxine (Lawler) Tift of Westminster, California, moved into the neighborhood in 1936. Maxine attended seventh and eighth grade at Rock Valley School. Twice a day, she crossed the "crooked bridge" at Underwood Avenue and 235th Street. It was between the School and her home (now Quakerdale Ranch) on the lane that went east.

Imagine, less than 50 years ago, Highway 30 didn't exist west of the junction of Shady Oaks Road and 240th Street (Highway 30). There was no bridge over Timber Creek, just a lane to the west. Now cars, cars and more cars, traverse this road day and night.

The Rock Valley Cemetery

Rock Valley Cemetery is on the north side of Highway 30, just east of Shady Oaks Junction. The entrance is west of where it was originally. The driveway to the quarry (which adjoined the cemetery on the west) was very steep. That entrance was where the present cemetery drive is today.

Ralls Cemetery (Rock Valley) is one of the oldest cemeteries in Marshall County. Many of the early records have been lost. The oldest gravestone dates back to 1854. It was once considered a paupers' cemetery and cost five dollars for a burial plot for eight.

I found a very old Abstract of Title that dated back to July 20, 1853, between the United States and Isaac N. Griffith. On November 4, 1874, William Ralls was grantor



The Entrance to Rock Valley Cemetery

and Joseph S. Myers was grantee to nine acres in the SE corner of SE4 SE4; four of these acres were deeded for a burial ground. On December 20, 1867, the Iowa Central Railroad (north-to-south line) was granted a swath of land 100 feet in width for the right-of-way through and across this same property. Early day trains using this track crossed over a timber bridge until 1901. A permanent truss bridge of masonry and steel replaced the original Timber Creek crossing.

Some records say that the cemetery land was given to the community by a local farmer in 1926. One lot has eight children buried in it, all of whom died of the dreaded diphtheria epidemic in the 1800s. Burials now average one a year. Rock Valley Cemetery received its

name, because it was near the rock quarry which began operations in the late-1800s.

Not so long ago, the State of Iowa wanted to move the entire Cemetery to the south side of Highway 30. However, a small group of interested people dug their feet; they wanted it to remain in its original location. This was a wise choice, as it would have been moved to where the present overpass is located.

Major vandalism has totally destroyed some markers. Resetting the remaining headstones cost over \$600. Some were damaged beyond repair, and many others are worn with age. The Cemetery is still very attractive with its large trees, sloping land and a wonderful view of the territory. A few wreaths continue to be placed there each

Memorial Day. One small section without graves is called, "The Church Yard." That area was designated as grounds for a church.

According to a Memorial Day write-up in the Times-Republican dated, May 29, 1982, "The two acre Cemetery operates on donations and \$200 yearly from County funds. The Cemetery is not run by perpetual care, as many are, therefore the board of trustees must depend on the families of people buried at Rock Valley for financial support."

The late Louella (Baer) Johnson, mother of Vern Johnson of Marshalltown, was secretary-treasurer for a number of years. She was very interested in the upkeep of the Rock Valley Cemetery as it is the burial plot for 26 members of her family. In 1982, lot dues were only five dollars annually.

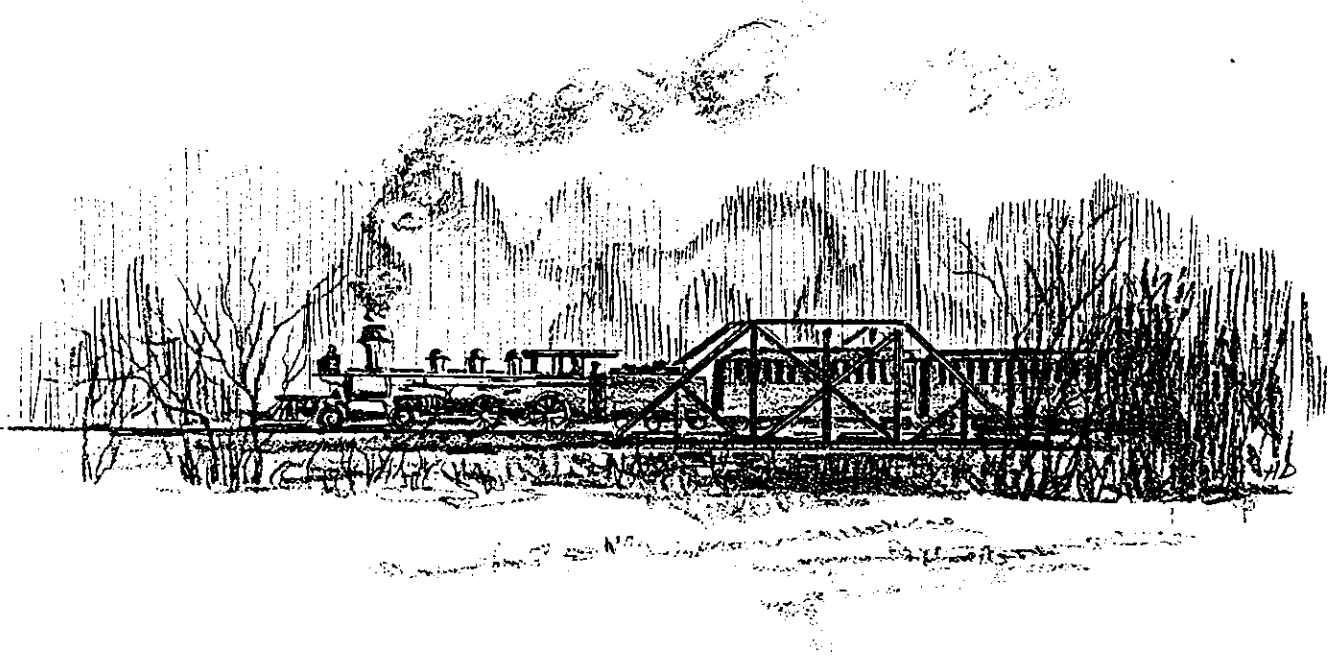
The Rock Valley Quarry

The Rock Valley Quarry was located just west of Rock Valley Cemetery. Many people have wondered why it is so low in that particular place, as it doesn't show much evidence of ever having been a quarry.

Joseph L. Myers was granted this property, in Section 8 of LeGrand Township, by judgement on March 22, 1877. The LeGrand Quarry Company leased this property from Myers on January 12, 1878. It was to be used as a stone (carboniferous limestone) quarry. By 1907, the Rock Valley Quarry was owned by the LeGrand Quarry Company, which included the quarry east of the town of Quarry and the big quarry north of LeGrand, which is now Cessford Construction Company. This is recorded in the Marshall County Engineer's office.

On February 9, 1920, the Rock Valley Quarry was deeded to August Bramer. Mary Bramar paid \$11.98 in property tax on February 19, 1920 (for the Year 1919). Soon after, a certain portion of this property was granted to Marshall County.

The Rock Valley Quarry, part of the basement in time of Marshall County, was most active in the 1920s. No one is sure if any was used for paving the Lincoln Highway. It is known that lime was used for the fields; in fact, Gilbert Chinn remembers going to the Quarry with his father to get ground lime.



Vintage Train at Timber Creek Crossing

The stone was used to gravel driveways. During the Depression years, the rock crusher was powered by electricity; and the rock was used for County roads. This operation was discontinued, because they were cutting the bank too close to the Cemetery.

The Neighborhood Remembered

Through my communications with Ward Handorf of Gladbrook, Iowa, in January of 1994, I have learned the following:

Ward wrote, "In 1890, my grandfather, William Handorf, bought the farm that joins Shady Oaks on the east and north. Some 40 years later (1930), while I was in high school, my father (Rondo Handorf) moved back to this farm with his own family.

"The railroads had a line to most towns. Truck traffic, as we know it today, had not developed. The Handorfs, Rubenbauers and other cattle feeders in the area drove their fat cattle down the middle of the Lincoln Highway to the stockyards in Dillon to be loaded on a railroad car going to the Chicago Stockyards. Both the Greyhound bus and cattle took the same farm-to-market road.

"Highway 30 had just been paved a few years before 1930, as it was the first road to be paved all the way across the United States. The Lincoln Highway was routed through most cities along its way. At that time, the adjoining property owners were taxed to pay the paving costs as there was no gasoline tax.

"In the winter, if snow was on the ground, we went sliding on the bluffs along Timber Creek that were always in grass and on Cooper's Hill southwest of Shady Oaks. One time, my brother Sidney and I were going so fast that when we tried to make the corner the sled runner collapsed from the pressure. We estimated that we could reach a speed of 60 miles per hour on this steep hill.

"If the snow did not make the sliding good, we would ice skate in the evenings. Timber Creek was straightened when Rainbow Bridge was constructed for the Lincoln Highway. This left an area west of the highway where the water was not deep. When it was frozen, there was little danger of drowning. Trees had washed in on the banks, and they supplied plenty of wood for a warming fire.

"Often after I finished my livestock chores, I would walk down to the Rainbow Bridge, put on my skates and skate as far as Ferguson. I liked to skate the creek, as a new sight could be seen around every bend. This, however, was always done in the daylight, as I had to step over fences, skate around trees and avoid spots where the water ran so fast it wouldn't freeze.

"Three or four times during the winter, the neighborhood met at the School for an afternoon of vocal and instrumental entertainment. The Chinn sisters were noted for their vocal duets. Parents encouraged their children to participate in this informal event. One teacher, Eloise (Ambler) Wood, courageously tried to teach the boys to dance. It wasn't my cup of tea, but I admired her for trying.

"After the stock market crash in the Fall of 1929, most families had very little money; therefore, the teenagers provided entertainment for themselves. In the summer, the neighbor boys organized a baseball team and played teams from the area: Albion, Dillon, Ferguson, Gilman, Green Mountain, Haverhill, Lamoille, LeGrand, Melbourne, Van Cleave and the Iowa River Brethren Church. The games were played on Sunday afternoon.

"The Shady Oaks team played in Handorf's cow pasture at the bend of the road north of Shady Oaks. Cars parked along the road or in the pasture if there was room. They won a good share of their games.

"These are some of my memories of the Shady Oaks' neighborhood in the 1930s, the 'Great Depression Era.' We didn't have any money, but we were not poor. The love and helpfulness of friends and neighbors was in abundance."

According to Larry Carlson, "The Shady Oaks team was made up of young men from the neighborhood: Max Adkins, James Cagwin, John B. Carlson, the Handorf brothers (Raymond, Sydney, and Ward), Howard Mitchem, Raymond Peterson and Carl Sapp. One or two of the players were from Marshalltown." Larry is the son of John B. Carlson, and he is married to Walt Lawler's daughter, Lynne. They live on a farm near Melbourne.

On February 17, 1994, Howard Mitchem reported on Rock Valley history. The Mitchem family lived within one mile of Rock Valley

The Rock Valley Neighborhood

School. The neighborhood was made up of the school, quarry, cemetery and Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and Cafe.

"Samuel Mitchem and two children, George and Arthur (my father who was 12 years old), came to the United States from England in 1889. They moved to a farm in Rock Valley. In the Spring of 1890, Samuel's wife, Mary (my grandmother), arrived with seven additional children. The oldest son didn't come until later, as he was working in Liverpool. Lilly, the oldest daughter, died of tuberculosis in February of 1891; she was 12 years old.

"In 1891, the Mitchems' house burned down (just north of the present Shady Oaks Campground). They suspicioned arson. It was winter, and my grandfather developed pneumonia from exposure in fighting the fire and died. In those days, as today, a lot of people did not welcome immigrant families into their neighborhoods.

"Mary Mitchem was a pioneer in the true sense. She struggled to raise her family following Samuel's death. Early in 1892, Mary, along with her older sons, purchased the Mitchem farm, which I still own. This farmstead was named as a Century Farm in the Summer of 1992.

"Though the School was the hub of neighborhood activities, many other things were important to sustain life in the community. The stone quarry was an important resource in those days. Its product was needed for wells, houses and barns. East of the quarry is the Rock Valley Cemetery. My grandfather and Aunt Lilly were buried in the Mitchem plot in 1891; and later on, my grandmother and Uncle Fred were also buried there.

"Families residing in the vicinity in 1891 were the Austins, Chinnns, Forreys and Kimes. The Ashs, Harris, Moores, Petersons, Poduskas, Rubenbauers, Riggs, Sapps, Searles and Wendts arrived after 1891. Some are still living there today, or have 'connections' with the community.

"When I think of Rock Valley School, many of the teachers come to mind. My own mother, Mary DeButts, taught at the School in 1908 and 1909. My father and mother met at the School. They were married in 1911, and I was born in 1914.

"I remember the names of other teachers: Eloise Ambler (1920), Clara Brucklacher

(1921-22), Anna Caputo, Esther McAnulty, Maxine Parks, Hilda Poduska, Mildred Sturtz and Mrs. Garrett, who was the last teacher.

"During the time I was in country school, the Lincoln Highway went through and was paved in 1926. That created some inconveniences as well as interesting activities to watch, as they paved the road past the School.

"A neighborhood activity during my growing-up years was the threshing run. The threshing machine and large steam engine were owned by the farmers in the neighborhood. They hired someone to run the steam engine with 20 some farmers forming the threshing ring. At one time, I was the water boy and hauled water for the steam engine.

"The Handorf and Mitchem boys dammed up the small stream behind Shady Oaks Cabin Camp in the winter, it made a great ice skating rink. During the summers of the early 1930s, the neighborhood ball diamond provided lots of vigorous entertainment.

"Among other neighborhood activities, each winter the ladies of the Rock Valley Social Club invited the entire neighborhood to join in a covered dish smorgasbord at noon. This event was followed by an afternoon of playing 500 and other card games. These are some of my fondest recollections."

Howard and Lucille (Bonnett) Mitchem raised five children, three girls and two boys, in this community. They left the farm in the Fall of 1988 and moved to Friendship West, now the Embers Retirement Community, in Marshalltown.

Mildred (Merrit) Sturtz, Lucille Devick's mother, became a teacher after she graduated from the LeGrand Academy. In 1914, she married Fred Sturtz. After her husband's death in 1947, she renewed her teaching certificate at Cedar Falls and taught at Rock Valley from September 6, 1948 to May 20, 1949 and again from August 29, 1949 through May of 1950.

Josephine (Chinn) Sipling's roots are deeply imbedded in the Rock Valley Community. Her great grandfather, Reverend Thomas Douglas Austin was born June 14, 1810, in North Carolina. At 20 years of age, he went to Ohio to seek work. Being a man of many talents, he served as teacher, carpenter, member of Ohio legislature and probate judge. Austin was converted at a Methodist

camp meeting in 1832 and became a licensed preacher in 1838.

In the Summer of 1864, Reverend Austin (54 years) arrived in Rock Valley to homestead two government land grants equalling 320 acres. He constructed a log cabin of hewn timber as temporary housing. By fall, the cracks in the cabin were patched in readiness for the arrival of his wife, Mary Jane, their four children and a grandchild. In 1865, the Austin family moved into their new home.

Austin was recognized as one of the first Methodist preachers in Marshall County. He died in December of 1878 leaving a legacy of moral and religious influence to his family and community. "Father Austin became widely known, not only as a prosperous farmer, but as an active minister of the gospel preaching stately in his own (Rock Valley Schoolhouse) and adjoining neighborhoods," Marshall Republican, December 19, 1878.

Reverend Austin's daughter, Lydia, married John H. Chinn in 1869; Solomon Dunton performed the ceremony. Nine children were born to the Chinns. Their seventh child was John A. Chinn (Josephine's father).

Just after the turn of the century, Mabel Mills (Josephine's mother), a new Rock Valley teacher, met John A. Chinn at a neighborhood party. Since the only way to get around was by buggy or bobsled, young people had good times in the homes of friends and classmates in their own community. A trip to Des Moines for entertainment or shopping was unknown; however, folks could travel by train to neighboring towns. Train schedules ran so one could board the train in the morning, shop in a nearby town and catch a return trip later in the day.

Mabel wrote to her Aunt Rose Perry while teaching at Rock Valley. Her daughter, Ruth (Perry) Blayney, found the packet of letters after her mother's death. The letters were given to Josephine. All were written in the Winter of 1903 or early Spring of 1904. One letter read, "It has been a slow day at school. There is a blizzard, and only four or five pupils are on each side of the partition. Mr. Hagerland brought the other children to school along with his own." The Hagerlands never adjusted to America, and they returned to Sweden, their homeland, after several years.

In another letter, Mabel noted, "A crowd of young people from Rock Valley went bobsledding last night. We went into town for a treat. John met us, and we went to see his sister. I was almost afraid to meet her, but I liked her." She also wrote, "My boyfriend came after me this morning and started the fire in the schoolhouse. He brought in enough coal to last all day and 'bank' the fire for the night."

Mabel Mills taught at the Rock Valley School almost three years (1902-1905) before she gave up her position to marry John Austin Chinn on March 5, 1905.

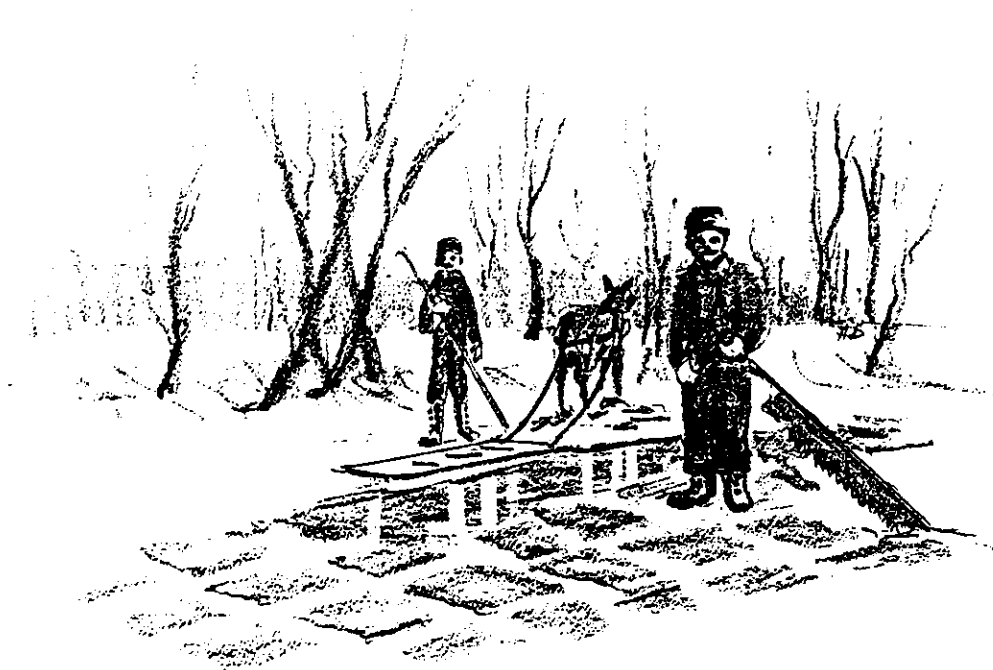
Josephine wrote, "Four generations of my family attended Rock Valley School. Grandma Chinn's 11-year old sister (Mary Elizabeth) went to the School in the 1860s, while it was still at its first location (Shady Oaks). After the School was moved up the road, my father (John A.) attended in the 1890s; his sister, Minnie (Chinn) Ogen, taught at the time. I attended seventh and eighth grades in the early 1920s. My two daughters attended the School in the 1940s. In the Fall of 1951 when the School closed, Louise, our youngest, was ready for sixth grade. It was a sad closing, as the School had served both the community and children of Rock Valley for almost 100 years.

"In 1922, all country school children in Marshall County were required to take an eighth-grade examination at the County Superintendent's office in the courthouse, and Alice Chinn and I passed with flying colors."

Josephine married Carl Sipling on New Year's Day of 1933. For the next 37 years, they farmed, attended church and raised their two girls (Jean and Louise) at the "Old Summers Place" on Chinn Road (235th Street). The Siplings retired in 1974 and moved to Marshalltown. After Carl's death, Josephine remained in their new home until moving to Britt, Iowa, where her daughter Jean resides.

Gerald ("Jerry") Harris recalled a chilling experience that happened in the midst of winter in the early 1920s. Jerry was about 15 when he helped harvest ice on the Rock Valley Mill Pond. This Pond supplied enough ice to stock several nearby family icehouses, including his parents, Charles and Alice Harris.

Jerry said, "Emmett Rubenbauer's expertise with wood saws and rigging up



Harvesting Ice on Timber Creek

special equipment filled many neighborhood needs, such as harvesting ice." A large buzz saw, with 33 inches of teeth, was cradled and operated by a gas motor. As it was pulled across the scored ice, 30-foot long strips were cut about 14 to 16 inches deep. Three-foot sections were cut from 12 to 18 inches wide. Big-toothed hand saws were used to cut the bottom of the cube leaving a ledge of ice about an inch wide to stand on.

Harris continued, "Three fellows were out on the ice when I slipped into the Pond's freezing waters and hit bottom. The accident happened the instant I failed to step back on the thin, remaining ledge." He was rushed to safety, and his wet clothing was removed. Jerry stopped shivering, and his teeth quit chattering as he warmed up. This numbing experience has remained unforgettable for over 70 years.

Jerry added, "After a warm day, the cut ice was allowed to stand overnight to refreeze. This kept it from floating away. During a warm spell, huge sheets of ice spilled over the existing dam."

The harvested ice was taken from the Pond on bobsleds which were lower and easier

to load. A sled held about 20 blocks of ice, setting on end. Each block weighed between 50 to 100 pounds. Horses pulled the loaded sled up the ramp. In dry weather, wagons were used to haul the ice crop to each family's ice house. Sawdust and chipped ice were packed between each layer of ice to make it last longer. Participating families lived between Shady Oaks and the Dillon Corner.

This ice, meant to keep the ice box cold, was also used to make home-made ice cream. Though it was never used in drinks, chilled water was kept in the ice box. Harris has kept some large ice tongs that remind him of this arduous task.

Lester Karns (deceased 1996) and siblings lived with their parents, Clarence and Ann (Dunne) Karns, south of Rock Valley Mill Pond for nine years. He was four years old in 1910 when his family moved there, and he was 13 in 1919 when they moved away. Their frame home was just west of the Raymond Petersen farm (Quakerdale Ranch) and east of the Nels Petersen farm on the hill. The neighborhood was then made up of a mixture of Swedish, German, English, Pennsylvania Dutch, etc.

Lester's father was a farmer and avid fisherman. His dad soon placed a willow fishing pole in the young boy's hands to test his skill at catching the many catfish and bullheads in Rock Valley Mill Pond. The Pond was very deep in places; and as farming progressed, dirt began filling in some of the area. Bullheads made their way in and out of Timber Creek. Lester vividly remembers playing around the Rock Valley Mill structure, although it was in a state of disarray.

At one time, many young willow trees grew abundantly and lined the banks of Timber Creek. As a child, Lester remembered his father making willow whistles and flexible fishing poles. His father cut down all of the willows on their property, as they were thought to be pernicious and in the way of farming. Other brush was cut for fuel. Fence posts were then made of slightly-bent sticks.

The large cooking range heated their kitchen, and the wood burning stove in the central room also warmed the east and west bedrooms upstairs through a floor-type register. The fire was banked for the night and took the chill off at bedtime; however, it was usually cold by morning. Typically, the parlor was only used during warm weather or for special occasions. Lester shivered as he recalled the cold house.

At five years of age, Lester started to Rock Valley School. Rose Peshel (1911-12) was his teacher. Raymond Handorf seemed like a very big boy to Lester, and he thought of him as his protector. At 88 years of age, he still remembers the kind deeds of childhood friends. This reflects the values that Les and his wife passed on to their nine children.

One day at recess time, Lester and the other children stood behind a fence in the School yard and watched a car speed down the hill. The car was going a terrific speed, perhaps 20 miles per hour. It wasn't the first time this particular car had sped past the School. The real sport of the drive was to see if the return trip could be made back up the hill in high gear. On that particular day, however, the car seemed to be out of control. When it didn't make its return trip, it was no surprise to see an ambulance speed past the School a little later.

Lester couldn't wait to walk home after school and find out what happened. Excessive speed had caused the car to spin

out of control. When Lester arrived on the scene, the car was still perched head-up in a big cottonwood tree along Ferguson Road near Cooper Hill. The chattering occupants were shook up but uninjured.

Lester's father righted the automobile, and the family from Marshalltown was forever grateful. They ran a small neighborhood grocery, and a week or so later they delivered an assortment of candies to express their thanks. Every time the Karns stopped at the store, the children were allowed to pick out some candies.

According to Lester, Sonny Forrey and his wife are remembered as being a little eccentric, extremely thrifty and very good neighbors. Before 1900, Sonny fell in love with Myrtie Clara Nash, his teacher at Rock Valley School; he was a year older. Myrtie was a long way from her birthplace in Keene, New Hampshire. They did marry. Although the couple remained childless, they enjoyed the neighborhood children.

In later years, Sonny was bent over at the waist (a hunchback); and she was seldom seen outside of the house. Myrtie suffered a ruptured gall bladder and died two days later in January of 1946. Sonny's heart gave out without Myrtie, and he died at the Soldiers Home in June of 1953. She is buried at Riverside Cemetery, and his resting place is in the Forrey family plot at Rock Valley Cemetery.

Equally remembered is their Jack mule that was kept in the little barn with the stone basement. At six o'clock every morning, Sonny opened the top barn door; and the Jack brayed loud and long through the still morning air. Sometimes it could be heard south of the mill pond. Lester showed me just how wide the mule could open his huge mouth. I could almost imagine this mighty mule waking up the entire Rock Valley neighborhood as it did in the early 1900s.

Ted Trowbridge, along with his father Ned, mother Margaret and brother Bob, moved from a farm south of Marshalltown to a farm on the curve just south of Shady Oaks Cafe on Highway 30 on March 1, 1935.

It had been a terrible, cold winter with lots of snow. At that time, Highway 30 divided the farm. The house was on the south side and a rather small basement barn was on the north side. Dean Garland's father built the barn.

The Rock Valley Neighborhood

Within a couple of years, the home was moved to the north side where it still exists; and a new home was built in its place by the farm owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Skinner.

Ted remembered that Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and Cafe were owned by Les Norton, and the Cafe was operated by Walt Lawler. He thought the Cafe was a fun place to go; the food was good, and Walt kept everyone laughing. Lawler had many friends.

Ted says, "I remember how my dad, brother and I would walk up there on summer evenings just to eat ice cream. When we took some home, Walt would pack the container so full, he could hardly close the lid."

Hunting and fishing have always been a joy to Ted. When the brothers were growing up in the 1930s, they caught lots of catfish in Timber Creek. Duck hunting was excellent, and there were rabbits galore. Ted says, "Times have changed. We rarely saw a Canada goose; and there were no deer. Now, it's just the opposite as they are numerous."

During the 1930s when times were tough, hired men lived with the Trowbridge family during the winter, helping out for their board and room and a few dollars for tobacco.

Ted was in 4H from 1932 until 1940. He raised Holstein dairy calves and purebred Chester White hogs. Howard Mitchem was his club leader, and they met in one-another's homes.

After graduating from high school in 1938, he enlisted in the Air Force. He was discharged in 1945 and purchased the 120-acre farm from Raymond Peterson. It was just west of his parents' farm. After Ted returned from the service, he was a 4H leader from 1947 until 1958.

When new Highway 30 was completed in 1948, it went right past his front yard. Ted said, "This property is just around the corner west of Shady Oaks on the newly relocated Highway 30. I have mentioned this because tourists would turn around in my yard to return to Shady Oaks Cabin Camp as it was the only accomodation." Ted watched this happen for several years before building a small, 12-unit motel in 1951. It was called the Fairview Motel.

Ted sold the motel along with five and one-half acres in 1956. In 1958, he sold 80 acres of the farm to Russell Hitchings; and he sold the farm home and about 33 acres to Mr.

and Mrs. Henry Wolfe. This property is now a Quakerdale Group Home.

Ted admitted, "It was fun to reminisce about the good times 50 to 60 years ago. We had so many wonderful neighbors and friends, so numerous I'm afraid to name them."

Ted built and owns the Best Western Thunderbird Motel in Marshalltown. He recently attended a motel owner-operator convention in Las Vegas. The following brought a round of applause: "The early day tourists often carried their own tent, bedrolls, towels and other supplies. Then, the cabin camps came along; and they no longer had to pitch a tent for the night. That was an improvement. Then some fellow starting putting beds in the darn cabins." Applause and laughter followed!

Maynard and Marjorie Johnson have lived up the road from Shady Oaks for over forty years. They were told that the large white house they originally lived in had been there for a long time. It was built by the William Handorfs and was the home of May, Rondo, Elmer, Floyd and Raymond. In 1920, William put up another home in the same yard and moved into the new house letting Rondo and his wife, Blanch, live in the older house. Near the house, there was a cave. Marjorie used it to store apples. Now, the Johnson's new home is built over the cave and its deep, dark secrets; and both of the Handorf homes are gone.

According to Maynard, in the Spring of 1918, a devastating flood washed out the 50-year old M & St. L trestle. The trestle belonged to the Central Railroad of Iowa until it was purchased by the Iowa Central Railroad in 1888. The M & St. L took ownership in 1912. Old-timers told that the swirling floodwaters washed the short pilings out of the sandy soil. Repairs were delayed, because longer pilings were not immediately available. It was a wise decision as the trestle is still in use today, and trains (Union Pacific) going to-and-from the Cargill corn sweetener plant in Eddyville are longer and swifter.

Most of these reminisces are reminders of life in the first half of the Twentieth Century, a time not too far in the past.

