

Skipmunk

A Story of Chicopee



D. Williams

As high school students in Chicopee, we sometimes cringe at the events that we see, hear, and read about in a seemingly awesome world. We contemplate what goes on in the minds of the individuals who steal, rape, murder, and even abuse their own bodies with harmful drugs. We may temporarily close our eyes and hope that such human crimes vanish, but when our day-to-day activities remove us from our secure homes, and bring us back into our city environment, the injustices reappear at every corner--even within our own School!

With reality where it is, therefore, we may easily allow ourselves to fall into that ever-present web that catches so many people--the web of depression, physical illness, and psychological mania. How then do we escape?

As ridiculous as it may sound, this Magazine is one means through which we may escape, for it is one fragment of the necessary ingredient that is the key to good health: Activity. With our minds and bodies always active, we have no time to worry about what ills life may hold for us, or what trauma may be lurking around each new bend. We will certainly not ignore the world's maladies, but we have no time, nor desire, to worry about them, for worrying has never accomplished one positive thing, and on the contrary, has frequently intensified many an already undesirable situation.

Thus, it is with active and positive minds that we go to school each day to learn another aspect of life, and a little bit more about ourselves and our predecessors. And the amazing thing is that more times than not, we are not even aware that our activity has consumed the time that others utilize on static depressive thoughts!

We know that we are a select group, but within our group are people inside and outside of our school - people who are involved in all kinds of activities--people of all shapes, colors, and ages. The people of our group can be found throughout the world, involved in school activities, both academic and extracurricular; they can be found active in church and social groups; and they can be found active in senior citizens' groups or in city sports events.

You may call us dreamers--and as it turns out, we often are. But all individual realities begin with dreams. When we began our Magazine back in '76, it was only a dream--but once we set out to make into a reality: and now, over two years later, we have proof that we're not dreamers: our sixth issue of SKIPMUNK MAGAZINE.



NOSTALGIA--The above photo, supplied to the T-T by Roland Long of 2 Riverview Place, Willimansett, is of the 1922 church league baseball champions from the Beulah Baptist Church of Chicopee St., Willimansett. The team defeated Grace Church of Holyoke for the league title. Pictured are, first row, from left,

Leslie Buchanan, Alex McDonald, Roland Long, Howie Cummings, standing with trophy; Bobbie Anderson, Stanley Strutters and Alfred Coupe. Standing, from left, Earl (Kenny) Newsome, Ralph Mead, Elmer Deardon, Pastor Rev. Mr. Bangs, Walter Newsome Sr., Coach Jay Mead, Manager Earl Farr, John Buchanan, Walter Newsome Jr. and Robert Ward.



JIM RICE AND HIS GOOSE BILLY

Billy Died Thursday Mourning for His Master Whom He Lost Several Weeks ago. Billy Was the Mascot of the Chicopee Vets

The goose used to follow his master everywhere, even up the steps and into the City Hall. On "Muster Day", he used to ride on one of the fire trucks and wore a red shirt provided by the "Vets."

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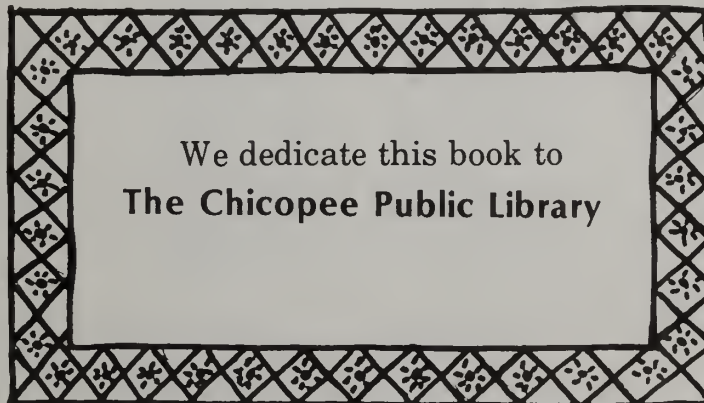
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"CHICOPEE"
Birch Bark Place and Raging Waters



SKIPMUNK is a self-financed, non-profit and continuing historical publication directly or indirectly related to Chicopee's History. PATRONS for subsequent issues will be greatly appreciated. Suggested donations are \$25.00 and \$12.00 for large and small businesses or organizations, respectively, and \$2.00 for individuals. Please make checks payable to SKIPMUNK.

Many of the articles appearing in this issue were accompanied by bibliographies and reference sources. Any questions on such matters should be sent to the editors, and they will be answered within ninety days of postmark. If sufficient requests occur, sources will be printed in subsequent issues. Send all correspondence to:

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Chicopee's Haven Of Knowledge

by Ann Marie Starzyk

Libraries have always been a place for enjoyable activities; reading books and magazines, digging up facts, or just browsing through the large variety of periodicals on local history. But while flipping through the card catalogue, or reading yesterday's newspaper, have you ever stopped to think that the Chicopee Public Library has a very unique history in itself?

In 1853 The Cabot Institute, which was a social and reading club, offered its collection of books to form the beginning of the town's first public library. This offer was accepted, and the Institute gave its 900 books to Chicopee, with the understanding that the Town would "appropriate and spend, for increase and improvement, a sum not less than \$100 annually for ten successive years." The inability to maintain this condition would revert the books to the Institute.

The Chicopee Public Library was first established in a room at Cabot Hall, located where the Starzyk Building now stands, in Market Square. During this time, fifty cents was required for an annual subscription to the Library. This remained in effect until 1884, when it became a free public library. More room was soon needed, and in 1872, the Library moved into the town Hall, opposite Market Square.

When Chicopee became a city in 1890, the Town Hall was needed for the Aldermen, so the Chicopee Library had to move again. It was then located on the Jerome Wells Homestead, at the end of the City Hall grounds which faced Market Square. The Library remained there for a time, until the many interested citizens and numerous books crowded it to a degree which necessitated a long sought for opportunity-the building of a new library.

Local people of the city donated much money to see their dream of a totally new library come about. An especially substantial amount of money was given by Mr. and Mrs. Justin Spaulding.

From 1890 to 1906, Justin Spaulding was a trustee of the library as well as an avid reader. He spent much time in the library and was generous in helping any way he could. Mrs. Spaulding also enjoyed books and shared her husband's interests in the Library. Justin Spaulding died in September of 1906, and Mrs. Spaulding died in November of 1907. Mrs. Spaulding's will revealed the wishes of herself and Mr. Spaulding:

I give to the City of Chicopee, Mass., the sum of \$5,000 for the benefit of the Public Library, and the amount of this bequest shall be kept invested, and the income thereupon shall be devoted to the purchase of books. I give to the city of Chicopee the sum of \$20.00, to be used with such other funds as may be appropriated or donated for the purpose of the erection of public library in the lot owned by the city and known as the Jerome Wells Lot.

Other Capital donations were generously given by Emerson G. Gaylord and James L. Pease. This brought the total amount of money toward the construction of a new library to \$47,000.

In the fall of 1911, contractor Denis Murphy began work after the Springfield architectural firm of Kirkham and Partlette drew the plans. The Library Building Committee consisted of Miss Clara F. Palmer, Frank E. Tuttle, James L. Pease, Dr. F. X. Deroin, Emerson G. Gaylord, John E. Granfield, Judge Luther White and N.P. Ames Carter. This group worked very diligently to see the brand new Library constructed for the City of Chicopee. It took eighteen months to complete the



The Public Library of Chicopee, 1908. Library staff:

Librarian
Anne A. Smith
 Chicopee Center.
Laura E. Ingraham
Louise S. Partenheimer
Bessie V. Burgess.
 Chicopee Falls.
E. Emma Gorton
Joseph B. Cobb
 Willimansett
Anna V. Kidder.

The Public Library
 Chicopee, Massachusetts
 1913



The Chicopee Public Library
 1973



Bessie Warner Kerr
Head Librarian 1939-1947

In 1853 the Library was operated by Mr. Childs, of the Institute, and Town Clerk, Lester Dickinson. In 1864 George Wheelock took over the Job until he died in 1893. His successor, Miss Anne Alcott Smith was with the Library for forty-nine years and eleven months. During that period, she served as Head Librarian for forty-one years! Bessie Warner Kerr wrote memoirs of her time in the Library and they can be found, today in the local history library files. Following Mrs. Kerr, Dennis Patnode became the Chief Librarian. Next, Rita Kusek became Head Librarian. Following Mrs. Kusek's retirement, Dolores Allen became Head Librarian and remains so today.

construction of the new library, and it was officially dedicated on May 31, 1913.

After its completion, several additional gifts were given to the new Library by citizens of Chicopee. Mrs. E. O. Carter gave a collection of classics from the private study of her deceased husband, Judge Carter. A day nursery donated \$100 and it was used to buy new children's books. Chicopee sculptor Melzar Mosman gave a copy of the Greenbough Bust of Washington; and many others donated portraits of well known Chicopee residents.

This new Library in the Center was not the only Library in Chicopee, however; in 1879 a branch library opened in Chicopee Falls. A short time later, in 1898, the Willimansett Library opened; and then the Fairview Branch, in 1909; and finally in 1922, the Aldenville Library was established.

The Chicopee Public Library uses the downstairs of the building to house the very popular children's room. Every day there are many young folks from grades one through eight eagerly utilizing the wide range of learning material that is offered to them. There is also a select and very important group of people in our library that no one can overlook, the Librarians. These people go beyond expectations each day to help everyone, and they are the factor which has made the Library the success that it is today.

CITY LIBRARY.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Year of 1907.

The appropriation granted to the library for 1907 was \$3,700. This money was expended as follows:

Salaries and labor on catalogue	\$1,623.80
Electric lights	211.98
Cartage	137.00
Binding	205.11
Printing	126.60
Magazines and subscriptions	78.23
Rent and janitor, Falls	254.00
Water, gas, carpentry repairs, etc.	71.48
Cards, pockets, card files, sundry supplies.....	217.85
Coal and wood	172.50
Books	601.10
	\$3,699.65

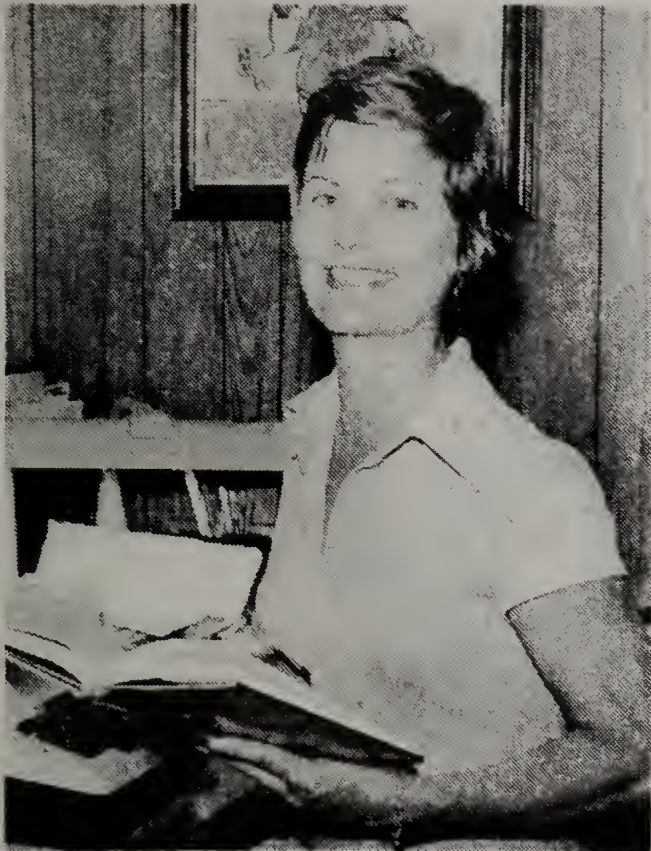
The work has grown so rapidly, particularly at the branches, that to continue equally efficient service through the coming year it is estimated it will cost about \$4,500.



Mr. Dennis Patnode
Head Librarian 1948-1962



Mrs. Rita B. Kusek resigned after twenty-seven years of service. She is a native of Chicopee and holds a B.A. degree from Our Lady of the Elms College. During her eleven years as head librarian, Mrs. Kusek received awards which included: an appreciation award for service in the development of the Chicopee Library in 1965; honorable mention in the 1970-1971 edition of "Who's Who of American Women" and the "Community Leader of America Award" in 1970 presented by the editorial board of the American Biographical Institute. Pictured above (*left to right*) are Mary Graham, Rita B. Kusek, Mona McKay, and B. Eugenie Pollard.



*Dolores Allen-Acting Head
Librarian from 1974-1977; head
Librarian from 1977 to present*



Present Staff Members (left to right): Dorothy Beam, Doris Bresnahan, Andrea Powers, Eileen Cullinan, Kathleen Crosby.

The Chicopee Library today is of course known for its thousands of books, but the Library also offers many other interesting exhibits. The latest display is one about the life of Thaddeus Kosciuszko, and tells of his efforts in the American Revolution. This exhibit is on loan from Mr. William Matuszczak of Westfield. Past exhibits have included Melzar Mosman's Statue of Grant (now in Chicago); The Bronze Doors of the Capitol in Washington, and photographs of the Ferry across the Connecticut River after the Chicopee-West Springfield Bridge burned in 1903. Throughout the years, all citizens have enjoyed these exhibits very much and they have become a fixture in the Library's History.

The historical comments mentioned in these pages add up to the second oldest free library in New England, and a small portion of which we all can be proud: The Chicopee Public Library.

NOTE: The information for this article was found in the Chicopee Public Library files.

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

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—
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 MAIN LIBRARY
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—
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 621 GRATTAN ST.
 532-4278

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FAIRVIEW BRANCH
 373 BRITTON ST.
 533-8218

—
FALLS BRANCH
 216 BROADWAY ST.
 592-0177

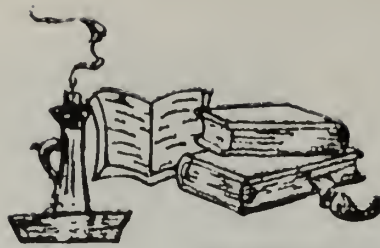
—
WILLIMANSETT BRANCH
 824 CHICOPEE ST.
 532-3364

"Give to a wise person and he will become still wiser. Impart knowledge to someone righteous and he will increase in learning."

THE HOLY BIBLE, PROV. 9:9

Have you read the Bible?

Contributed by Robert Bator
 Chicopee, Mass.



Chicopee Town Library.

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 HOURS - Daily 1 to 6 and 7 to 9 P.M.
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Willimansett Tel. Holyoke 2-3364
 Hours - Mon., Wed., Fri. and Sat.
 3 to 5:30 and 7 to 8:30 P. M.

Fairview Tel. Holyoke 2-3095
 Hours - Mon. 2:30 to 4:30 P. M.
 Tues. 7 to 9 P.M. Thurs. 12 to 2 P.M.
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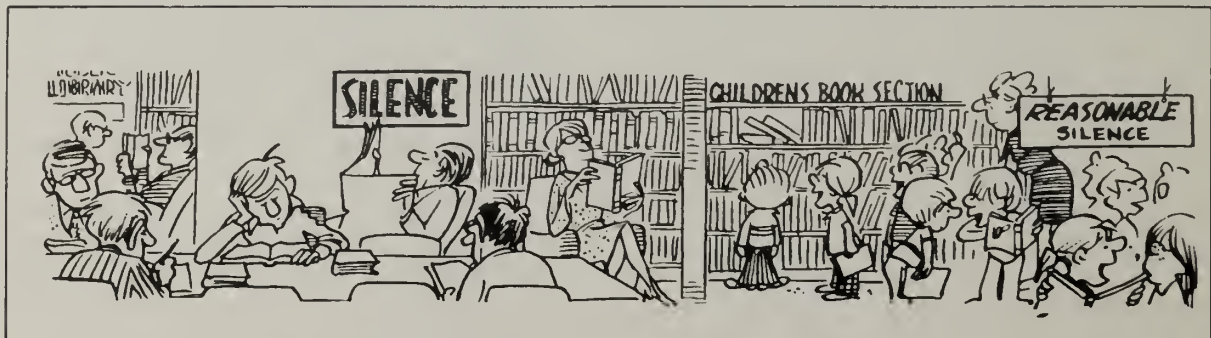
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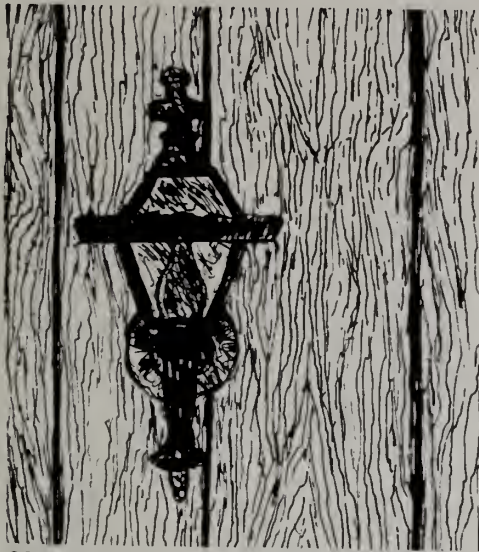
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THE MANTER CO. 3/74





Sketch by Ellen Soja

Why Can't We Go Back?

by Maryalyce Dudek

Why can't we go back,
Back to where it all began?

Back to when you could breathe,
and not have to worry about dying.

Back to when the birds were singing,
instead of crying.

Back to when people were helping each other,
not fighting with each other.

Back to when you could borrow some sugar,
and not get a door slammed in your face.

Back to when homemade pies were
cooling on window sills.

Back when people would stand
so strong and tall.

Back when waters were as blue as the sky.

Why can't we go back,
Back to where it all began?

The BLIZZARD of '88

by Mary Peters

"It was stacks high." said Mrs. Mary Leachy, a ninety-four year old widow presiding in the Chicopee Municipal Hospital on Front Street.

Mrs. Leachy, who was born in 1884 on the corner of Maple and Sargent Street in Holyoke, remembers bits and pieces of the Blizzard of "'88," especially one story that has stayed with her through all these years. Mary Leachy told me the story of Dora Fell, who was thought to be lost in the massive snow pileups.

"That night, the men in our neighborhood were all out looking for her. Oh I can remember my father so well; they had lanterns and shovels, and of course they didn't find her. Her friends and family were frantic. In the morning a woman that lived not too many houses down the street, came down and brought the little girl with her. She had seen her outside and this was the day. There weren't any telephones, so the woman took her in, and in the morning the woman brought her home."

Mrs. Leachy remembers the snow being so high that they had to shovel tunnels through to get where they wanted to go. Food rations were low, and men were out of work for a while; some people didn't make it home for days.

"People just stayed put, and waited for the snow to melt."



Then Came the Blizzard of '88



This photograph, snapped in the winter of '88 by N. P. Ames Carter, became a popular seller of the time. The only one of the three gentlemen identified is Mr. Charles Taylor at the right of the group. They are standing on the breakwater between the river and the canal where the huge chunks of ice were tossed as the river broke up. In the left background is the Ames Sword Co. It is related that a Mr. Hall was occupied with breaking up these chunks, which were between three and four feet thick because they were clogging the dam. He was using sticks of dynamite, and when one refused to explode he put it back in his pocket thinking it was a dud — it wasn't.

The Little Bike

That Could

By Mary Frisbie

The Little Bike That Could!

First it was red, then it was green, now it's blue. The Bike, made by Columbia Manufacturers, originally came from The Westfield Bicycle Shop. Since then, the little bike has stood up to Fourteen owners, and is now twenty-three years old! The owners, chronologically listed, have been:

John Coburne, Jr.

Nancy Buckly

Mr. Cristofic's son

Jim Mauer

Pat Moran

Dave Mauer

Brian Moran

Jackie Mauer

Alan Mauer

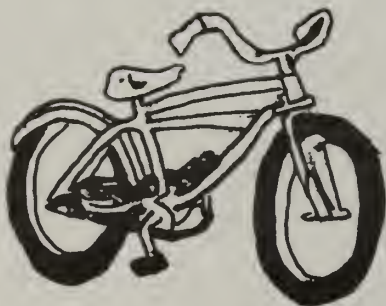
Marylou Gorski

Moe Gorski

Stephen Olivo, 111

Patti Mauer

John Coburne, 111



Although the little bike has gone through a great deal of wear and tear, it still has its original tires and only a few parts have been changed. Douglas Curtis, a Sophomore at Gateway Regional High School, was the Bike's most recent restorer, and was responsible for its present blue color. John commented that his son will no doubt pass it down to his own children, using the bike in the second generation of Chicopee residents.



*"Teeter" Olivo, John Coburne, Jr. [original owner of bike]
and John Coburne, 111 ["happy" owner of new bike]*

Photo by Ken Kostek.

border by Jane Morin

Family Recipes by Mary (Banes) Babachicos
Submitted by ... Jane Babachicos ~ granddaughter

CARROTS & HONEY

Melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey together until it bubbles. Add two pounds peeled, sliced, cooked carrots. Add one teaspoon mint and mix. Transfer to serving dishes.

KOURAMBIESES

(greek butter cookies)

Have one pound unsalted butter at room temperature. Cream butter until fluffy. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectionary sugar, 1 egg, 1 teaspoon vanilla, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder. Fold in 5 cups of flour. Work mixture into a ball. Break off pieces of dough and form into crescents. Bake at 350° for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Place on waxed paper sifted with confectionary sugar. Sift more sugar on top to cover. Roll in more sugar.

KETESES (Greek Meatballs)

Mix together: 1 pound hamburger, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon oregano, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon mint, 1 small onion, chopped, 1 egg, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup breaded crumbs, salt and pepper. Shape into small bite size balls. Roll into flour and fry slowly in hot olive oil. Cook until done. Drain. Serve hot or at room temperature.

KARIDOPITA (walnut cake)

Cake: Separate 6 eggs. Beat the egg yolks until thick. Add 1 cup sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated orange peel. In another bowl, beat the egg whites with $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cream of tartar until stiff. Fold yolk mixture into egg white mixture. Fold 1 cup flour, 2 teaspoons baking powder and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt to egg white mixture. Add 1 cup ground walnuts last. Bake in greased tube pan at 350° for 40 minutes.

Syrup: Bring 1 cup honey, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, 1 teaspoon grated orange peel, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup port wine to a boil and pour over hot walnut cake.

Family Recipes by Mary (Banes) Babachicos
Submitted by Miss Jane Babachicos - granddaughter

HISTORICAL JOURNAL

RECREATION IN CHICOPEE 1853-1857

by John A. Koziol

Throughout the colonial period agriculture was dominant in Chicopee. With the turn of the century manufacturing began to develop and by 1812 Chicopee boasted one paper mill, two textile mills, one iron foundry, and various saw and grist mills. During the 1820's and 1830's, with the arrival of the cotton mills, the community began to expand. The town's location and access to water power attracted investments by Boston capitalists. By 1850 Chicopee was a manufacturing center, claiming 65,000 of the 733,981 spindles owned by the Boston Association. Two years earlier, on April 12, 1848, Chicopee was incorporated as a town with a population of 7,861. In 1855 the cotton factories reported the employment of 1,653 women and 688 men, a majority of the working population. Chicopee had become an industrial town.

This early industrialization and urbanization had important implications for the development of the town. It affected not only the economy but also the social and cultural climate of the community. The growth of community life encouraged social interaction between residents and increased communal awareness. Consequently, all facets of life were affected including recreation. A distinct form of recreation developed, one appropriate for a burgeoning urban area. Great emphasis was placed on public recreation and the community became cognizant of the need to provide the town dweller with public amusement. Removal from the farm and the omnipresence of the work left the factory operatives and mill workers with leisure time, perhaps not much, considering the eleven hour work day, but nevertheless time for relaxation and enjoyment. The longer working hours probably encouraged the workers to take advantage of the little leisure time available to them. Therefore an increase in entertainment, both in variety and form, was only natural. Issues of the *Chicopee Weekly Journal* from this period illustrate this well. They provide an excellent description of the amusements and the entertainment which Chicopee residents enjoyed. Recreation became important in the life of the town dweller. It provided him with a social outlet as well as an alternate activity. The benefits of public amusements were described in an editorial in the *Journal*.

Public amusements, bringing multitudes together to kindle with one emotion, to share the same joy, have a humanizing influence. A variety of recreational activities were enjoyed by Chicopee residents, including those which were intellectual, musical, sporting and social.

Lectures were the most public intellectual entertainment. Almost every issue of the *Journal* announced at least one or two lectures. The subjects varied, from "The Importance of Using Soap" to "Life Among the Wild Africans." However, not all the lectures were concerned with such matters, many were philosophical and thoughtful. One article announced a lecture with the topic "Self Culture" another entitled "Every Man is His Own philosopher," another concerning "The Unity and Equality of The Races," and still another simply called "Opinion." A series of lectures sponsored by the Literary and Debate Club was announced and consisted of five lectures; the first was called "Lectures and Lectures," the second "The Character of the framers of the Constitution," the third, "The Analysis of Genius." The titles themselves suggest social awareness and interest in various areas of thought. There were indications in the *Journal* that the lectures were popular and successful. In a letter to the newspaper, the chairman of the Chicopee lecture committee commented: "Well aware of your growing tastes for lectures, we have spared no expense consistent within our means to satisfy the popular appetite for this species of intellectual amusements. The *Journal* also reported lecture tickets as "selling like hotcakes."

According to the weekly newspaper the Literary and Debate Club, which provided entertainment as well as education, offered a place where persons "who are disposed can have a comfortable place to spend an hour or two of a Monday evening in each week in exercises which must tend to enrich the mind and cultivate the social faculties." In addition to this organization, a Scottish social club was also mentioned by the newspaper. The club met once a week and engaged its members in reading, discussing, and singing "good old Scottish songs."

Besides lectures and club gatherings, the theater offered an evening of relaxation as well as education. Most theatrical performances, however, were not as popular as lectures. In one case the *Journal* indicated that a "theatrical performer exhibited to a large number of empty benches." One reason for the lack of interest in the theater was the high price of admission. It is a rare thing that any exhibition can secure even a tolerable audience in Chicopee when the bottom of the poster doesn't say 12½ cents. "Some performances, however, were well attended. In addition to the plays the *Journal* described a "series of Shakerpearean entertainment," an opera performed by the "New Orleans Troupe," and even an exhibition of ventriloquism. Art and poetry was also enjoyed in Chicopee and several articles in the newspaper expressed this. Descriptions of art exhibits and galleries were not uncommon. Interestingly a gallery of art was established and contained a "valuable collection of paintings and statuary."

Music was especially popular in Chicopee during the 1850's. An article in the *Journal* described the benefits of music.

Let taste and skill in this beautiful art be spread among us and every family will have a new resource. Home will gain a new attraction. Social intercourse will be more cheerful and an innocent public amusement will be furnished to the community. Perhaps no amusement produces so much good as music.

No other amusement was referred to in the *Journal* more than music. Almost every issue had articles on some aspect of musical entertainment, be it announcements of concerts and music lessons or reviews of musical events. Concerts were well regarded and were usually presented by small groups of vocalists, often by family groups. Companies such as "The Original Peak Family Vocalists and Germanian Bell Ringers," "The Hutchinsons," "The Avodal Troupe," "The Luca Family," and "the Barker family" appeared frequently and were well received. Larger groups also appeared in Chicopee. One article referred to a "grand musical congress... consisting of 1,500 performers, the largest orchestra in Massachusetts." Another reported that "a sonata in five parts" was performed by "100 young ladies and misses." In addition to vocal groups and orchestras, bands were very popular. The town had its own band, the "Chicopee Quadrille Band," and it also hosted, on numerous occasions, others such as Fullers Band from Springfield, "Milfred Brass Band," and "Griffins Band." It was even "proposed to make an arrangement with Griffins Band to play in this village one evening every week

through the summer." Besides the more formal types of musical entertainment there were also social singing which the *Journal* described as "when friends meet and the lively word and laughing guest are intermingled with the voice of song." Also lessons in voice, piano, violin and other instruments were frequently offered to the general public.

**The Original
PEAK FAMILY,
AS VOCALISTS AND
GERMANIAN
BELL RINGERS**




(All illustrations are from the *Chicopee Weekly Journal*.)

Chicopee residents during this period spent a major part of their leisure time involved in sporting activities. Fishing in the summer and hunting in the fall and winter were popular forms of recreation. From all indications, fishing was quite competitive. The newspaper kept its readers "posted in regard to the quality of articles taken" during the fishing season. The luck of resident fishermen was often described in the *Journal* especially the catching of trout, shad, bass and pickerel. The sport was not restricted to the fishing pole; one article reported that "10 or 12 boys and young men had rare sport at the dam in Chicopee for the past few mornings netting and spearing shad." Neither fishermen nor hunters had far to travel, as fish and game were abundant in the area. One article for example noted "our sporting friends are having some fun about these days in shooting ducks who make the water of the Chicopee a resting place in their traveling expedition."

Other recreational activities common in Chicopee during the 1850's were sailing, swimming and horseback riding in the summer and sleighing and sledding in the winter. In one instance 68 apparently affluent Chicopee residents enjoyed a sailing expedition on board the luxury "sloop Emma Clifford of Westport." The newspaper also reported that at a certain place "a splendid and safe sailboat will at all times be in readiness for sailing and fishing." Swimming must have been quite popular, especially since the Chicopee river was nearby and suitable for summer "bathing."

**Ballard, Bailey & Co.'s
FRENCH CIRCUS!**

COMPRISING the very celebrated TOURNAIRE TROUPE, with all the distinguished artists who have appeared in this country during the last five years, and also those whose performances in Europe have secured them a world-wide reputation.—will exhibit in CHICOPEE, on SATURDAY, MAY 12th



Another sport enjoyed in Chicopee was archery. One account indicated that even young children were encouraged to practice archery. The children amused themselves with all sorts of games. The *Journal* reported that at a school picnic "a number of swings were prepared for the occasion and swinging, rolling hoops, hide and seek and other games too numerous to mention were carried on." Little girls enjoyed jumping rope and the newspaper sadly reported:

A bright and interesting little girl about 8 years old died on Monday last from convulsions brought on by excessive exertions in jumping rope. She was competing with several of her school companions in this exercise who were endeavoring to out do each other. She jumped 400 times in succession until entirely overcome.

During the winter months ice skating and sledding were favorite pasttimes. Interestingly, this point is made clear from numerous reports of accidents in the town. Drowning after falling through the ice while skating and mishaps resulting from sledding on roadways were not uncommon. Sledding accidents were frequent enough to

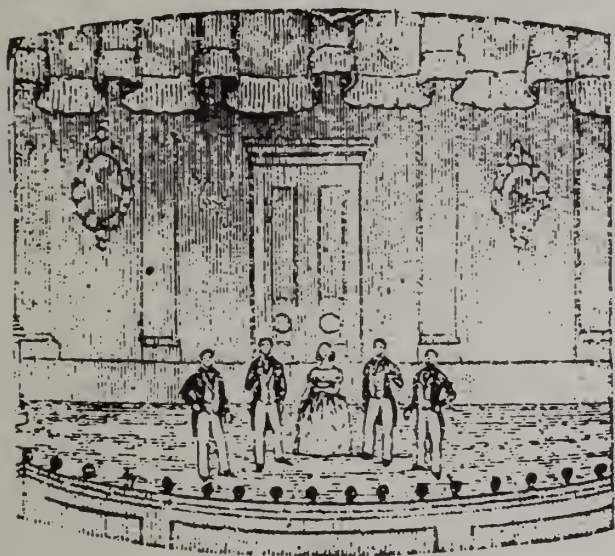
warrant the passage of an ordinance prohibiting sledding on the public highways.

A number of miscellaneous amusements were enjoyed in Chicopee. The interest in hunting led to an emphasis on marksmanship and competition often resulted. Reports of shooting matches were not uncommon. The *Journal* also gave accounts of a pig hunt, a horse race in which "the winning horse made 80 miles in 8 hours and 8 minutes," a dog fight which lasted 4½ hours and ended with the death of a dog because he "was so terribly lacerated," and a horse taming which was repeatedly done "much to the amusements of the crowd."

The citizens of Chicopee amused themselves with various types of social affairs, church festivals, fairs, balls, suppers, picnics, fire works, sleigh rides and even a baby show. The church was the center of most social activity. Every church had its own festivals or fairs, with most of the members participating. Other common social affairs were the balls and suppers which like the festivals were usually put on by individual church, ethnic or labor groups. Obviously citizens enjoyed gathering together for an evening of dining and dancing. Indeed, one issue of the newspaper listed four dances scheduled for the same weekend. In the summer picnics seemed to attract large numbers. For example a picnic held by the Sabbath School reportedly "passed off in a manner perfectly satisfactory to all concerned, the number in attendance is estimated at about 1,000." On the not so unusual side of things Chicopee hosted a baby show, where the top contender weighed in at 17 pounds. In the winter the popular social event was the sleigh ride, and in one case "a sleigh ride party without distinction of sex" was reported.

Chicopee inhabitants had many opportunities to experience interesting and unusual events; traveling circuses and shows often came to town. One such circus was "Franconi's Colossal Hippodrome" which featured "restoration of the festivals, games and amusements of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. With all its animated splendors, its daring chariot races, gorgeous tournaments, exhilarating field and desert sports and other exciting and novel exercises of the Olympian arena." The event was held under an immense tent which could accommodate 9,000 spectators. A later article indicated that the show attracted over 5,000 people, but was considered by many as "one of the greatest humbugs that ever traveled the country." Other companies which exhibited in Chicopee were "Washburn's Great Indian Amphitheater and Circus, the only Italian Equestrian establishment in the world," "The Menagerie and Circus, featuring the celebrated General Tom Thumb," "The Great

Broadway Menagerie from the city of New York, accompanied by two living giraffes," and "The American, German, and French Circus." Various other types of shows were also brought to Chicopee; from the Polytechnic Institute of New York came "The Grand Moving and Mechanical Panorama, displaying all the varied beauties of light, shade and color," and from Boston came "Jone's Great Pantascope of California, Nebraska, and the Great Salt Lake."



Even though Chicopee and many surrounding communities were by this time largely industrial, horse and cattle shows and farm fairs were often organized. Reportedly these expositions presented "attractions full of interest" for one and all. An editorial advocating temperance at the farmer's agricultural fairs to engage the whole attention of the thinking and sober minded people."

Like most cities and towns Chicopee's entertainments were not all beneficial. The newspaper indicated the existence of drinking, prostitution, gambling, and other vices. The *Journal* reported that "another of those funerals which seemed to be turned into a sort of holiday by some of our Irish friends, came off on Tuesday last and resulted as most of them do, in a drunken spree for a portion of the attendants." Another article indicated that drinking was also a problem among the young. "A couple of boys from Cabot came up here to attend the dance last Tuesday evening but before the dance they had visited a place of notoriety and imbibed too freely, getting quarrelsome and noisy, a constable was sent for to settle them."

Besides intemperance, prostitution was perceived as a problem. An editorial explained,

The time has arrived when we deem it necessary to speak out in regard to the character of the house known as the Franklin House of a house of

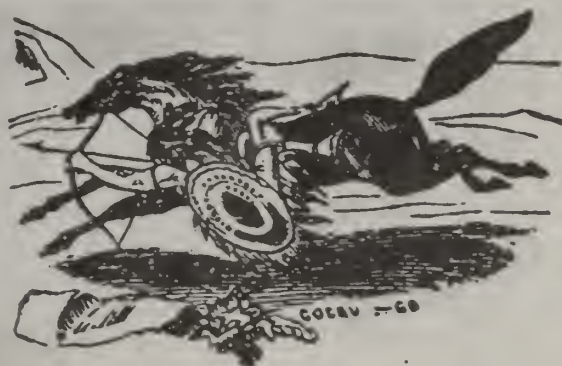
ill fame....As to the internal arrangements of the house, there are two bars where spiritous liquors have been sold freely and without reserve...Few in the community are aware of the extent to which this house has been visited or of the number and the low and debased character of its inmates.

Gambling also existed, although not extensively. In one instance "eight professional gamblers fleeced several young men out of a considerable amount of money." Being a bit riotous and "raising the devil" seems to have been an entertainment enjoyed by the young boys of the town. The newspaper noted that

The remark is common that the children have control of the village. If any one doubts this let him visit the Post Office immediately after the close of school at noon, or Cabot Hall during the session of almost any public meeting or any number of dancing parties.

A second item described a Saturday night that was "rendered particularly noisy by the rising generation; signs were moved and various antics occurred."

Of course a study based solely on newspaper accounts cannot be complete. Yet it does offer a first hand insight into some of the leisure activities enjoyed by Chicopee residents at that time. As evidenced through the pages in the *Chicopee Weekly Journal* the recreational activities, which predominated, uniquely represent a town with a deep sense of community. The emphasis on public interaction and involvement demonstrate this. The development of Chicopee from an agrarian community to an industrial town was not merely economic, it affected, perhaps even more importantly, the social and cultural life of the village.



Washburn's Great Indian Amphitheater and Circus,

Reprinted with permission of *The Historic Journal of Western Mass*, produced at Westfield State College.

Harold Riordan

by Mary Frisbie

“Wonderful!” that was Harold Riordan’s reply when asked, “What were times like when you were a child.”

“We counted our Chickens”

Harold has been a resident of Chicopee for seventy years. He originally came from Stoughton, Mass., where he adds comically, “I was a leprechaun out there.”

Harold, along with his only brother Leo and his father, John, moved to Chicopee when Harold was ten years old. Two years earlier, Harold’s mother had passed away and Spaldings had transferred his father to Chicopee to operate a machine which refined rubber. When Harold’s family first immigrated to Chicopee, they lived on School Street, across from the Victoria Theatre.

“I lived at one forty-seven School Street, across from that theatre, right side of Buster Sandlebar in a three decker block there on the second floor, and then we emerged from there, and we travelled all around Chicopee, till we found the right place: then we settled down and counted our chickens.”

In a couple of years’ time, the Riordan family found a less costly apartment above Marshall’s Lunch in the Market Square Building and resided there for a few years.

Education

Harold went to Holy Name School and then attended Cathedral High School. “In my day when I went to Holy Name we had books stacked high every day coming home from school. I could see the day I was up till eleven and twelve o’clock studying, and every Sunday we’d have to go back to church, in the afternoon, and go to Vesperis, which was the evening psalm of the church. It started at three o’clock and it got over with at four o’clock. We were well occupied in those days, and that’s why the people that are living today that went to school then have brains, and they’re intelligent people. The people today are not getting this because they don’t pay attention!”

Harold also told us of a woman, Mary Cronin, who was a teacher on School Street and played the organ in the Holy Name Church for forty years. “You know where they have that building in back of Ferris-the Crop building-well there used to be a

grand and glorious public school there, and in the school, there used to be a teacher, Mrs. Cronin, who for thirty-five or forty years played the organ in the Holy Name Church.”

While interviewing Mr. Riordan, we discussed disciplinary problems in public and parochial schools. Harold feels as though there isn’t enough discipline in the schools today. “Any of the parochial schools are not what they were when I went to school. When I went to school they had nuns that you got discipline from. You obeyed them when they spoke. You know many years ago, when I went to Holy Name, there was a boy standing out at recess, and he saw two nuns coming from the convent, and he put his two hands behind him. He had a snowball. One of the nuns saw it and she called him over. They were very relaxed and they told him to drop it. He dropped it. They told him to go into the classroom. He went into the Classroom. When recess was over they had a half an hour conference, and the nun said, “How many times have you been warned, ‘there’ll be no throwing snowballs in the playground of Holy Name for fear you’ll break a window?!“ Well she said “Master Dunagin, you’ll remember the snowball you picked up today, because not until the snow is all over, will you see recess in a hurry.” Well two weeks went by, and he was kept in every week. We only had recess in the morning. One morning his father came to the school and he challenged the nun. She said, “you’ll be the boss of your son at home, get the discipline out of him you can, and if you can’t, it’s too bad for you. But we get the discipline in our school. When our children are in our school, we’re the boss; we’re superior; we tell them what to do, and it must be done, and that’s the way we do it at Holy Name.” You know when you’re young and silly, and you don’t know what you’re doing, you should do as you’re told. That’s what you go to school for-to get an education.”

Family

We asked Mr. Riordan to tell us a little about his background, other than education. “Well I’ll tell you, it might sound funny to you, but the most valuable possession I ever had was my poor wife. I couldn’t have anything more valuable than that.”



Harold Riordan

Photo by Laurie Plasse



Harold Riordan with his Granddaughter, Mary Frisbie.

After we moved from Springfield Street, we moved back to the block on West Street. There my poor wife was taken ill with sugar diabetes. During this time I had to work two jobs in order to afford the hospital bills. I'd work at Sickles from seven a.m. to four p.m., and then I'd go to Pioneer Folding Box Co. from five p.m. to ten p.m. I did this for nine years until my wife passed away on June 7, 1956.

Harold was married in August of 1924. His wife Helen (Simko) Riordan, was twentyfour; he was twenty-seven. When they were first married,

they lived on West Street. Later they moved to School Street, where Harold fathered three children: Catherine, Jack, and Mary. Shortly after, Harold was forced by the board of Health to move his family. The Board of Health condemned the place, stating that it was a fire trap for three young children, a man, and a wife. The Riordans found a vacant apartment on Springfield St., above a shoemaker, next to where the CoinOp Laundramat is located now. They were there for four years.

"Finally I Retired"

Harold started work at the age of eighteen, where he was employed at the Excelsior Needle Co. for three years, and when the taxes went up, the Company moved to Torrington, and changed its name to the Torrington Needle Company. "I had to travel back and forth for four years." Before retiring, Harold had several other places of employment, that he told us about. "After I worked in Torrington, I was employed at Spalding's. I worked for Macnamara in the Golf Club Department, and I worked in the Bending Room for Bob Chubby. Then I moved on to Sickles where I was doing janitorial work for fourteen years. Then, before I retired, I worked at Sample Durick in Willamansett for ten years. Finally I retired in 1965."

Center & West Street

After Harold retired, he resumed his residence on West Street. We asked him if West End Corner was there at the time, and he replied, "Oh no! They had a restaurant there; and you know where they have they call it Pirog? Rachel Asselin's husband runs it. The Bon Fire is up a little further from it. Well they had a little store there, and next to that they had Mr. Canter's meat market for years and years and years. And then, next to that, they had a little confectionary store Mary Canthlet used to run the store. She had hair ribbons, bobby pins, shoe strings, spools of thread, stockings, aprins, and all kinds of things that a little confectionary store would have. And if you keep going up West Street, towards Hampden there's a gas station there now there used to be a German fellow who lived there with his two sisters, and one of them was a school teacher, and they had a little candy store there."

Exchange Street - 25 years ago

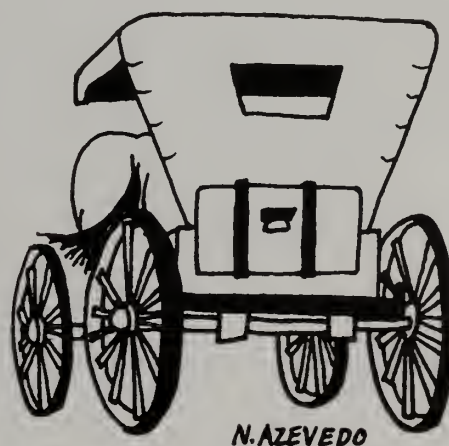
Harold remembered Exchange Street the way it used to be about twenty-five years ago. "They had horse and buggies way down on Exchange Street, before you get to the West Springfield Bridge, and they had a big water fountain for the horses." When asked if anything was done to preserve the Fountain, Harold replied, No. They tore it down, I'd say about fifteen years ago. The horses have to puff their own wind now. Of course today there aren't many horses left on the road; horses are out on the farms today."

"Further up Exchange Street," Harold told us, "Where now are Woolworth's and The Liberty Bakery, and those stores in there, there used to be a parking lot for Sickles. Then across from that (Where Bob's Bakery is now), there was a man's clothing store, Nanti's Clothing Store. Then, where

they feed the elderly people now, there used to be a dry goods store, it was a beautiful dry goods store; Minnie Griffin owned it for years and years until she died. Then right across the street from that, they had Gaymont's Drug Store, and Harry Hill's Drug Store. And then at the very end of Exchange Street, Micky Ferris' father had a store. He sold clothes, tin pans, tea kettles, tea pots, and coffee pots. He had any kind of a thing in that store, and boy did he make business! When people came out of Dwight Mills on a Thursday night, you should have seen them flock in there. They'd buy work pants, dress pants, and shoes. Then the women would come along, and they'd buy coffee pots and tea pots. He had everything! I don't know how he found them.

A Sad Moment

Harold concluded the article by telling us what he thought of crime today, as opposed to when he remembered Chicopee about fifty years ago. "Back in my day they had a slew of police officers, but, not like they need today. Because today you can't catch up with the people. You're not safe in the streets today. In broad daylight, people will jump out in back of you, and whack you over the head for no reason at all: You know about fifty years ago, you could go to bed at night: In fact, I knew a woman, Mrs. Cronen, that never locked her door. She used to say, "You workin' for me. I'm poor. I've got nothing...and she never bothered locking her door. She's dead now, the poor woman."



The Boy with a Golden Arm

by *Ann Marie Starzyk.*

On June 9, 1924, Chicopee rolled out the red carpet for Tommy Wright runner-up for The National Marble Championship. The Championship was held in Atlantic City, N.J., where a large group of spectators intently watched the contestants "shoot it out." Tommy was defeated in four out of seven matches by marble superstar George Lenox from Baltimore, Maryland. This, however, did not deter Chicopee as well as Springfield from giving young Tommy Wright a terrific welcoming. Tommy returned on the 7:20 train from New York, and was astounded at the tremendous reception that awaited him in Springfield. After a short parade was given down Main Street and Court Square, Tommy and his mother Bridget Wright were escorted to Chicopee in a Rolls Royce touring car donated by The Rolls Royce Company.



TOMMY WRIGHT

At the sight of Tommy's auto coming up West and Center Streets, the Paderewski Band struck up a melodic serenade. It was estimated several thousand children and adults cheered and applauded as Tommy rode through Chicopee with his Girl and Boy Scout escorts. Mayor Grise and the Reverend John F. Conlin delivered two very enthusiastic welcoming addresses from the City Hall steps. Thus ended another terrific episode of our fine City Unity!

Note: Information in this article was found in the Chicopee Public Library files.

CHICOPEE CENTER 100 years ago . . .

by Stephen R. Jendrysik.

Have you ever wondered how old the buildings are in your neighborhood?

How old is the house you live in?

What's the oldest house on your block?

What did Chicopee Center look like 100 years ago?

Well here it is

This amazingly accurate etching is a prized possession. The map was lithographed by the D. Bremner and Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and published in 1878 by the firm of Galt and Hoy of New York City. We found it being used as shelf paper in the old vault at the Chicopee Savings Bank.

The careful restoration work was done by the Cornell Galleries of Springfield.

Since I have lived in the Chicopee area all my life, I must confess a certain fascination for this interesting relic. Recently my good friend Ken Kostek of Chicopee Public Schools Tele-Communications Department enlarged portions of the map.

On the following pages you are challenged to identify and locate those buildings and landmarks of Chicopee Center, which are now over one hundred years old!



Photo by Ken Kostek.



Photo by Ken Kostek

The Dwight Mills

Organized as the Dwight Mills in the 1830's, the Company was at a peak in the 1870's. The Mill manager lived on School Street on a city block owned by the Company. The property now belongs to the Polish American War Veterans, South of School Street, the Dwight Mills owned row housing on Cabot, Perkins and Dwight Streets. Today how many of the row houses remain?

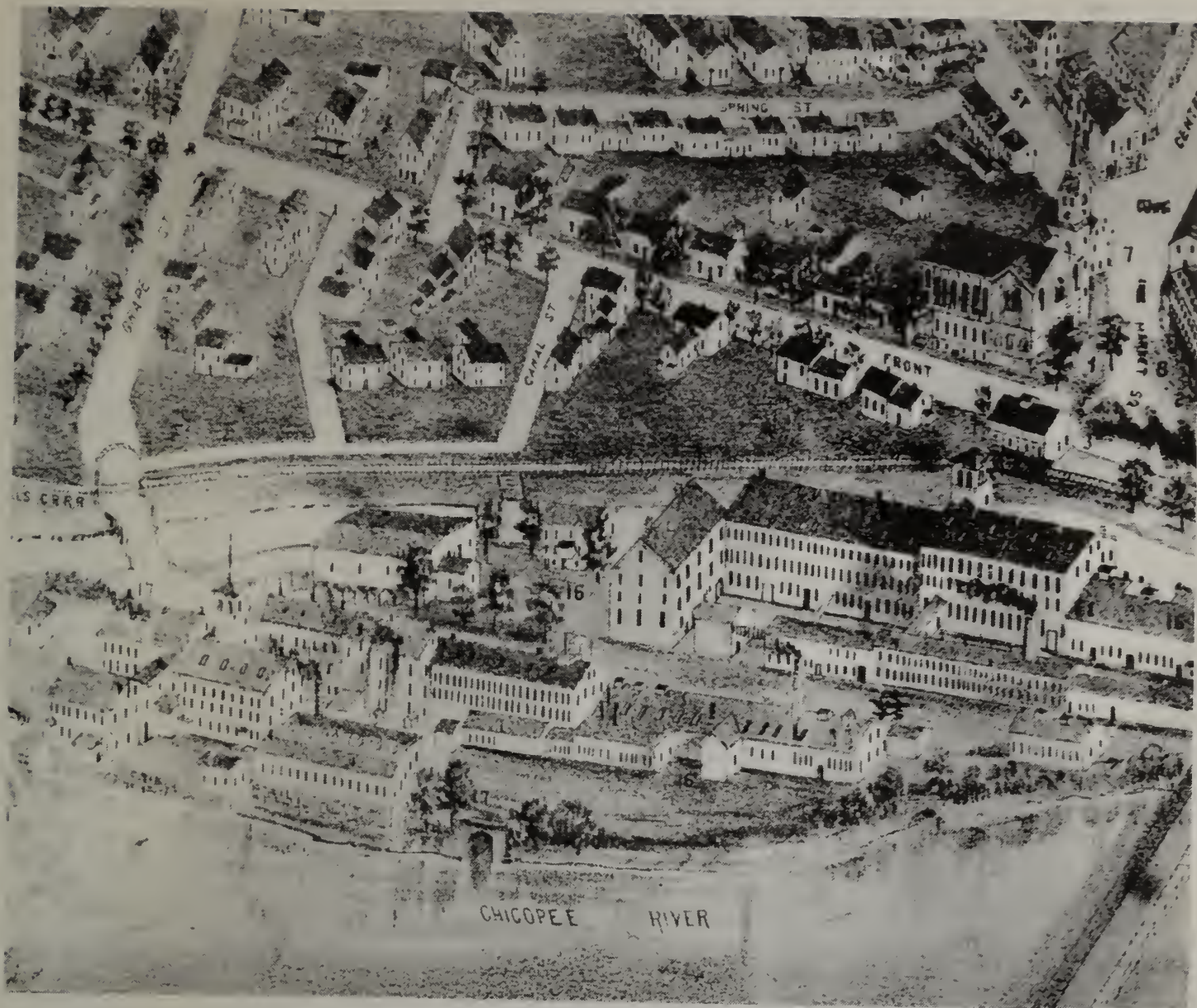


Photo by Ken Kostek

The Ames Company

Organized in the 1820's, the Ames Works#16, world famous maker of swords, had fallen on difficult times in the 1870's and had leased a portion of its facilities to the Gaylord Company #17. Today the complex houses the LaValee and Ide Co. Note the bridge and walkway at the front of Canal Street. On Front Street how many of the homes remain?



Market Square
 The City Hall, The Cabot House and The Universalist Church dominated the Square in the 1870's. There was also a railroad station#3 right on the Square. What are those long narrow buildings behind the row houses?

Photos by Ken Kostek.



The Patch

The Irish immigrants first lived here, followed in the '70's by the French Canadians. Polish Immigrants lived here in the '90's. The open area between Spruce and Chestnut was a ballground in the 1870's; today it still serves the area as a park. Number 6 on the map was Chicopee's most famous hotel. Can you name it?



Springfield Street

Photo by Ken Kostek

In the 1870's, important community leaders lived on Springfield Street. The Federated Church, which is perhaps Chicopee's most distinctive Church building, was then called The Second Congregational. Two of the most interesting houses on the street are the Stearns and Robinson Houses. Can you locate them?



Photo by Ken Kostek.

Holy Name Church

Chicopee's oldest Catholic Church dominated South Street in the 1870's just as it does today. Today Chapin Street offers six restored one hundred-year-old homes. In those days, Fairview Avenue was called East Street, while Nonotuck Avenue was Cross Street. Can you locate the Blaisdell House, The Gaylord Home and the Chapin Tavern? All were on Springfield Street in the 1870's, and are still there today!

. . . Our Contributors:



Ann Marie Starzyk, A CHS junior and newly appointed editor for Skipmunk, wrote the feature article on our city library.

Betty Gwiazda is a '77 graduate of CHS and has done many of our borders and much research for SKIPMUNK MAGAZINE.

Mary Ellen Conway graduated from CHS in '76, and printed our recipe pages for this issue.

Ken Kostek works for the Chicopee Public Schools Tele Communications Department.

Debble Morin sketched our front cover, she is a talented artist, and we appreciate her work.

Stephen R. Jendrysik, a local historian, heads the Bellamy Association and teaches at Chicopee Comprehensive High School and STCC.

John Kozlowski, was a student at Westfield State College when he wrote his article.

Lori Piela, is a sophomore and new addition to our Staff. She is presently heading our publicity effort.

Kathy Nowakowski, the treasurer of SKIPMUNK, also works on interviewing and writing.

Elaine Robinson, is an English teacher at CHS and has helped our writers tremendously with her excellent literary criticism.

Mia Robinson and **Teeter Olivo** helped with the lettering and artwork of most of the borders in our magazine.

Stephen Olivo currently resides in North Chester. He has shown great concern and hope for restoration of the past by initiating SKIPMUNK MAGAZINE in our city. Without his optimism, ideas, strong support, and leadership, much of Chicopee's past might have very well remained unnoticed.

Laurie Brzezowski a senior at CHS who has contributed much of the artwork for this and past issues.

Theresa Gill is a junior at CHS and will be majoring in Art and English after graduation.

Nancy Woodard, a member of the English Department at Chicopee High, serves as SKIPMUNK'S grammatical consultant.

Jane Babachicos, an English teacher and excellent drama coach at CHS, contributed our recipes.

Mary Frisble is a new editor of SKIPMUNK and is involved with bookkeeping, soliciting patrons, subscriptions, and just about everything else.

Sarah Ogozalek and **Karen Wegrzyn**, are stepping down as our first editors. Their leadership, enthusiasm, dedication, and perseverance have helped make SKIPMUNK MAGAZINE a success. We thank them.

Ellen Soja is a new editor of SKIPMUNK, and has put much hard work into making it a success.

Claus Kormannshaus sketched our birch tree emblem which has appeared in each issue. He is presently an art major at the University of Massachusetts

Mary Peters is a junior, and one of our writers and interviewers. She is also making many of the costumes for the upcoming production of MACBETH.

Jill Hastings is a senior at CHS and is talented in art. She also helps with the design of the magazine in Graphic Arts.

Harold McCall, for whose cooperation and patience we are grateful, is the Graphic Arts teacher at CHS.

Laurie Socha, a junior at CHS is involved with the typesetting.

Robin Skawinski, A junior at CHS is also involved with the typesetting.

The Chicopee Center Public Library, particularly **Dolores Allen**, **Rita Thormeyher** and **Doris Bresnahan**, get our final and most sincere thanks for devoting time, patience, and many words of encouragement to the SKIPMUNK staff.

The Way We Were

On July 2, 1875, Chicopee Falls Savings Bank opened its doors for business and received its first deposit of \$150. On August 3 - 34 days later - the bank received its second deposit . . . \$5.00!

The bank was located in Chapin's news and confectionery store on Main Street, with Mr. Chapin himself as the entire banking force.



The Way We Are



In 1967 Chicopee Falls Savings merged with Mechanics Savings to become Falls Mechanics Savings Bank and in 1969 the name Community Savings was adopted.

Today, we're 15 offices strong, with assets of over \$368 million.

**Community
Savings
Bank** 
Serving Hampden
& Hampshire Counties
536-7220