

HOMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS -- DELAVAN, ILLINOIS

After a successful pre-Christmas tour of nine Delavan homes in 1990, the Delavan Restoration Society was formed. This year, eighteen homes will be open for visiting from 3 to 8 p.m. on Sunday December 8. There is a fee of \$5 and they will also have a horse and buggy to transport you to the various homes. Delavan is located on Route 122.

VETERANS' DAY

From 1921 to 1954 Armistice Day was observed in the United States, commemorating the November 11, 1918, signing of the armistice ending World War I. The United States Congress and President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1954, established "Veterans' Day", to "honor veterans on the 11th day of November each year" -- honoring all veterans.

When John Chapin and his brothers were in service in World War II, their father wrote weekly letters to them, and after his death his sons collected his letters - fifty-five of them - and had them published in one volume. John (who is a past president of our Society) was kind enough to share this part of one of his father's letters. We thought you would enjoy this story about a veteran of a day long past.

G.A.R. VETERAN. Something I read the other day about a G.A.R. veteran reminded me of the experience I had with one of the old comrades at the time of their last Encampment, which was held in Springfield in 1940. This was 75 years after the close of the Civil War and the G.A.R. ranks were then pretty well thinned out, nevertheless there were several hundred of the old veterans from all over the country in attendance at their final Encampment, although many of them had to be helped about by relatives or nurses.

One day during the Encampment I was waiting for the elevator to return to my office when an old veteran approached me. He was in full uniform and answered in every respect an artist's requirements for a typical veteran, being tall, lean and well seasoned, and while quite old he still had remarkable vigor and quite a bit of the old fire still in his eye. He approached me with the announcement "I want to find a lawyer. I need a lawyer to do some writing for me". I told him that I was a lawyer and invited him up to the office. Upon our arrival he presented a resolution in his own handwriting which was fairly legible and while I was trying to read it he proceeded to explain that our present army (this referred to the draft army then in training) was not sufficiently democratic. "Why, in the Civil War", says he, "Any soldier could go right up to a general, even General Grant, and make a complaint, and that's the way it ought to be now". His resolution was concerned with bringing that kind of democracy to the present army. He wanted me to polish it up a bit for him and put it on the typewriter. I found that it was already shining with polish. The old man's language was in a class by itself and I decided that I could better serve him by merely reducing what he had written to typewriting. While his resolution was being copied I visited with him and finally inquired as to what particular emotion or conviction it was that had caused him to enlist in the Federal Army as a boy of 15. This apparently was an inquiry he had had to answer before and he was all prepared for me:

"Well, Sir, I'll tell you", says he, "we were living on a farm in West Virginia, and the armies got to fighting around there and the shot and shell were falling on our farm so thick that it wasn't safe to be there. I always was a damned coward and I said to myself 'You better get in the army and do the shooting instead of fooling around here milking cows and being shot at'. So I and some of the neighbor boys went down and enlisted. At the enlistment office there was a long line of recruits

and an agent offered me \$200.00 to go in as a substitute for one of those city slickers but I says 'No, sir, I don't want to be a substitute for anybody. Let them rich boys do their own fighting and I'll do mine'. They put us in the cavalry - I guess that was where they were needing men most just then, with the rebels up and all over our valley. We didn't get much training in those days and it wasn't long before we were right in the action against those Johnny Rebs that were raising hell with the Union supplies. One day we were marching through some woods when our Captain got word that the Rebs were right on the other side and he ordered us to skirmish. Everybody dismounted and all the fellows in my squad handed me their reins and told me to hold their horses. They scampered off through the woods after the Rebs. I was just a boy and they allowed I was too young to shoot. Well, sir, after our fellows scampered away those horses started neighing and pawing and you could have heard them for half a mile, and I said to myself 'This horse holding business is dangerous'. There I was with all them horses right where I could make a good target, and the other fellows were out there in the woods crawling on their bellies as safe as could be. Well, sir, I always was a damned coward and now I was scared to death, and I made up my mind right then that the next time I was going to be out there with them other fellows doing the shooting where it was safe and let somebody else do the horse holding.

"So back in camp I started to practice shooting out in the woods. There was plenty of ammunition for everybody to practice if they wanted to but I seemed to be the only one that wanted to practice. The other fellows were all card players. I never saw the like. They played cards all the time. Just as soon as they could get to camp they had to play cards. They could hardly stop long enough to eat for their card playing. I was brought up a Methodist, didn't believe in card playing in our house and I never cared for 'em, so while them fellows was playing their cards I was out there practicing shooting. It weren't long before I could knock the eye out of a squirrel in the top of a tree and when our Captain saw what I could do with a rifle he said I didn't need to be a horse holder any more. After that, when there was fighting going on I was right in there on my belly with the rest of 'em and it wasn't long before I could out-shoot them all. I always was a damned coward and so I just kept on practicing shooting. Them card players thought they didn't need any practice but they weren't as good as they thought they were and the Johnny Rebs knocked those card players off one by one. Yes, sir, before the war was over the Rebs got every one of those card players. Here I am attending the Encampment and I'm 92 years old. There aren't so many of us Civil War Veterans left any more. I've seen most of the comrades that are here in Springfield and I ain't seen nary card player. No, sir, the Johnny Rebs got all of them".

By this time the resolution was typewritten and the old gentleman began to gather up his hat and cane to take his leave. Talking all the time as he regained his feet and made his way to the door, he thanked us most profusely for our help and presented me with his card, which had on it "Charles Wingrove, Clay Center, Kansas". Shaking hands with me and with Miss Stewart, who copied the resolution for him, he said "Yes, sir, now you can tell your folks you shook the hand of old Charles Wingrove of Clay Center, Kansas, who fought for Old Abe and the Union in the Civil War, who most likely would have been killed on his own farm while doin' chores if he hadn't of been such a damned coward, and who probably would have been killed anyway if he'd been a card player. Yes, sir, I live out at Clay Center, Kansas, and if any of you ever get out my way I want you to be sure to stop and see me. Anybody in Clay Center can tell you where to find Charley Wingrove."

NEWS OF NOTE

A long-time SCHS member, Lorene Radford, was the guest of honor at an open house at the YWCA on Sunday, October 13, when her 95th birthday was celebrated by family and