

# BIRTH OF YATES CITY

The Village of Yates City, Knox County, Illinois was surveyed into blocks and lots by Elias T. Byram, County Surveyor of Knox County, on October 20, 1857. Prior to this date, the land was merely farm land, and it belonged to William Babcock, Thompson Maple, Rufus H. Bishop, Bostwick Kent, James Burson and Henry Burson. They, on that same date, by proper legal release, dedicated to the public all the streets, alleys and public squares included in said Village.

As nearly as I am able to learn from the County records, the first outline of the village contained six hundred and forty acres, being all of Section Eleven in Salem Township. The center of the village was, as related in the prologue, the center of Section Eleven in said Township, which point became, by the surveyor's plat, the center of the intersection of Main and Union Streets as we know them today. At this point, the surveyor buried a stone which is now covered by the concrete slab on State Route No. 8, which was built through the village in 1925. This fact we have always regretted, as it is now impossible to exactly locate the stone. It was set by the surveyor as a starting point for all surveys that have been made since, and will continue to be made hereafter when property owners find it necessary to have surveys made of their properties.

Yates City was first incorporated as a Village in 1869 under a special charter issued by the State of Illinois, but it was reorganized later on under the general village act of the State (the date of which I am unable to ascertain).

Yates City was named after Yates County, New York. This was the former home of the Babcocks, owners of some of the land on which it is located.

While the original Village, as previously stated, was spread over the whole of Section Eleven, only a part of it was platted into blocks and lots. Since then it has been much reduced in acreage by the action of land owners outside

the village plat, who, by proper legal action, withdrew their land from the original village in order to avoid having to pay village taxes.

As far as I have been able to ascertain from any available records, there is no mention made of the population of the village at the date of its first incorporation in 1869. However, according to a county history printed in 1886, its population at that date was about 1,000. This number has been greatly reduced. The last census (1950) indicated a population of about 620. This is accounted for by the fact that in those early days there were many families who had from three to twelve children. Today, while we have more houses in the village, the number of children in the various families does not exceed more than three or four (with a few exceptions perhaps).

My first memory of the village began in 1877 when my father, L. A. Lawrence, moved here from his farm in Elba Township, where I was born on September 13, 1873. Like all small towns at that time, the roads were dirt, the walks boards (where there were any at all) and nearly everyone kept a cow and a pig or two. All the homes were surrounded by fences. Transportation was by foot or by horse drawn wagons and buggies and, in the winter, by bobsleds and sleighs. The business streets were lined with hitching racks. Every home had either a post or rack to hitch horses to, and many had some sort of built-up step on which to get into and out of the wagon or buggy, which was quite high above the ground.

The tremendous changes that have been made in the village in the past one hundred years, in buildings (both public and private), in sidewalks and roads, means of transportation and communication (which changes are still continuing), need not be entered here as they are apparent to all. But it does make one wonder what changes will still be made in the next one hundred years.

—A. J. Lawrence