

# Old Tavern - Hotel Spans 130 Years of Area History

By LOUISE MICHALEK

It was the spring of the year and the lumbering covered wagon creaked to a stop at the intersection of the old Sauk Indian trail and the Military road. This seemed a good place to stop, so in a grove of trees at this crossroads in Northern Illinois, Adam Brown ended his westward journey.

The year was 1833, and Brown had started out several weeks before with his wife and their only child, Christopher, from Elkhart, Ind., where the couple had been married three years earlier. Both had been brought up in Preble county, Ohio, on the western boundary of the state. He had been born in North Carolina in 1805 in Guilford county; it was in Tennessee that Phoebe Myers was born in 1809.

"Western fever" was a common ailment that hit both young and old in those days, and Brown fell victim to it, as had his father before him.

IN 1833 the Northern Illinois counties beckoned settlers, because the threat of Indian attack in this section of the state had disappeared when the Indians were removed to west of the Mississippi river as part of the settlement of the Blackhawk war the year before. This opened the virtually uninhabited northern part of Illinois for pioneers to locate farms and communities.

This crossroads six miles west of the Indiana border held so much attraction for Brown that he remained there for the rest of his life. Here he farmed and ran a country inn until he died on March 8, 1895.

There were no settlements between Brown's farm and Mokence for several years after he arrived in the area and only scattered farms between his farm and Joliet. He did have neighbors to the north along the Military road, which also had served Gurdon S. Hubbard as a trail between his fur-trading post in Bunkum and the shipping point in Chicago for more than a decade.

Absolem Wells and his family had arrived at Thorn creek and the Military road only a few weeks before Adam. Then, in 1835, several inter-related Scotch-Irish families arrived to claim farm lands between the Brown and Wells' farms.



Historic Burgel house, the third tavern to stand on the northwest corner of Chicago road and Sauk trail, South Chicago Heights, is being torn down to be replaced by a contemporary ranch style Sinclair gasoline service station. The two-story red

year. On September 8, 1833, he filed claim for 160 acres in Section 32, buying it for \$1.25 an acre from the government.

On November 29 of the same year he purchased 160 acres in Section 31 and 80 acres in Section 29, and on the following day he purchased 80 acres in Section 33. The price was still \$1.25 an acre, and he then owned 480 acres of land in what is now Bloom township at the cost of \$600.

Brown planted the first orchard in the precinct in 1840, but his hotel, or inn, at that time, according to a pioneer who stopped there on his way from Chicago to Mokence, was nothing more than "an old Pennsylvania wagon box." However, the chronicler of that account did say that a log cabin soon replaced the wagon box, and later a substantial frame building was erected. The first frame barn in the area was one built by Brown.

PIONEERS EN ROUTE west were allowed to stop and camp in Brown's woods or in the old Indian camping ground of neighbor John McCoy, a mile to the west. At first the pioneers were bound for other sections of Northern Illinois, then for Iowa

brick building was once known as Brown's Corners hotel, and served as an overnight stop on the Vincennes trace, a military road, and the Sauk Indian and wagon trail. The first inn at that location was built in the late 1830's.

the village of Thorn Grove to the north changed its name to Bloom, an anglicized version of Bluhm, after Robert Bluhm, an Austrian martyr esteemed by the new settlers.

Jim Henry McEldowney made regular trips past Brown's, driving the mail coach between Danville and Chicago. There were two stores in Bloom on the Military road, which by that time was called Chicago road.

ADAM BROWN's family was growing up. He and Phoebe had nine children, Christopher, Lovina — the first white child

born in the area arrived soon after the Brown's settled here — Elizabeth, George, William, Sarah Augusta, Mary, Phebe and Adam, Jr.

When Lincoln called for volunteers during the Civil war, George and William Brown, along with George and Milton McCoy and other young men from the area, were among the first to answer President Lincoln's call for volunteers.

Railroads made their appearance in 1852, when the Illinois Central began operating. A year later, the Joliet and Indiana line, later known as the

Michigan Central, began operating trains through the town of Bloom. Then in 1869, Brown sold some of his land to the Chicago and Danville railroad, which nearly paralleled Chicago road for many miles. It wasn't long before he could see the woodburning engines chugging along just east of his inn.

There were other roads in Bloom, but those traveled most were still the Indian trail and Chicago road. Farmers taking their produce to market or going to pick up mail and the latest news at the post office, found the two roads better than

nothing.

CHURCHGOERS, too, drove east on Sauk trail to the church at Strassburg if they were Catholic, south to Crete to the Congregational or Methodist churches if of those denominations, and north to the little white church in Bloom if they were Presbyterian.

Brown could watch them all, for sooner or later they would pass his inn. His family was

growing up and some of the children were married. The first break in the family came with the death of William in 1884. Sarah Augusta had married Civil War veteran George Henry Wilder of Crete township in 1869 and lived nearby on the Wilder farm, on east Richton road. Phebe married Fremont Holbrook, son of one of Bloom's pioneer settlers.

Mrs. Brown died in 1892 at the age of 82. She had shared with

her husband for 59 years "the trials and hardships of pioneer life, as well as the joys and comparative ease of an advanced civilization," her obituary said.

Three years later, lacking but 10 days of his 90th birthday, Adam Brown died at his home, having lived there 62 years. Surviving were eight of the couple's nine children, 17 grandchildren and 10 great

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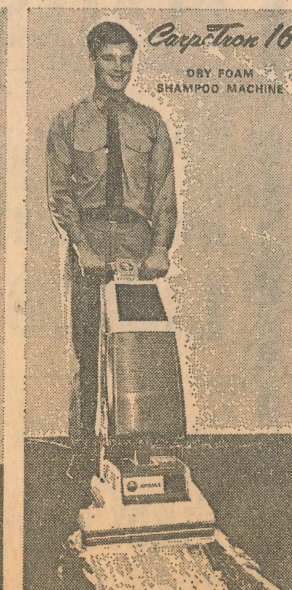
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In 1838 Brown was the first purchaser of land in the south suburban area, then known as Thornton precinct, under the federal pre-emption act of that

— pronounced with the accent on the "o" — and later for the gold fields of California.

The traffic eastward during the decade before the Civil war was apt to be at night. Many's the night Brown also heard the McCoy farm wagon as it creaked along the trail eastward to Indiana. He knew that in the back of the wagon, covered with hay, would be hidden one or more runaway slaves from Missouri, being passed from the McCoy farm to the next station on the "underground railroad" across the border into Indiana, with the hope of their reaching Canada and freedom.

So many Germans had moved into the area that in 1849 the lit-

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