

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

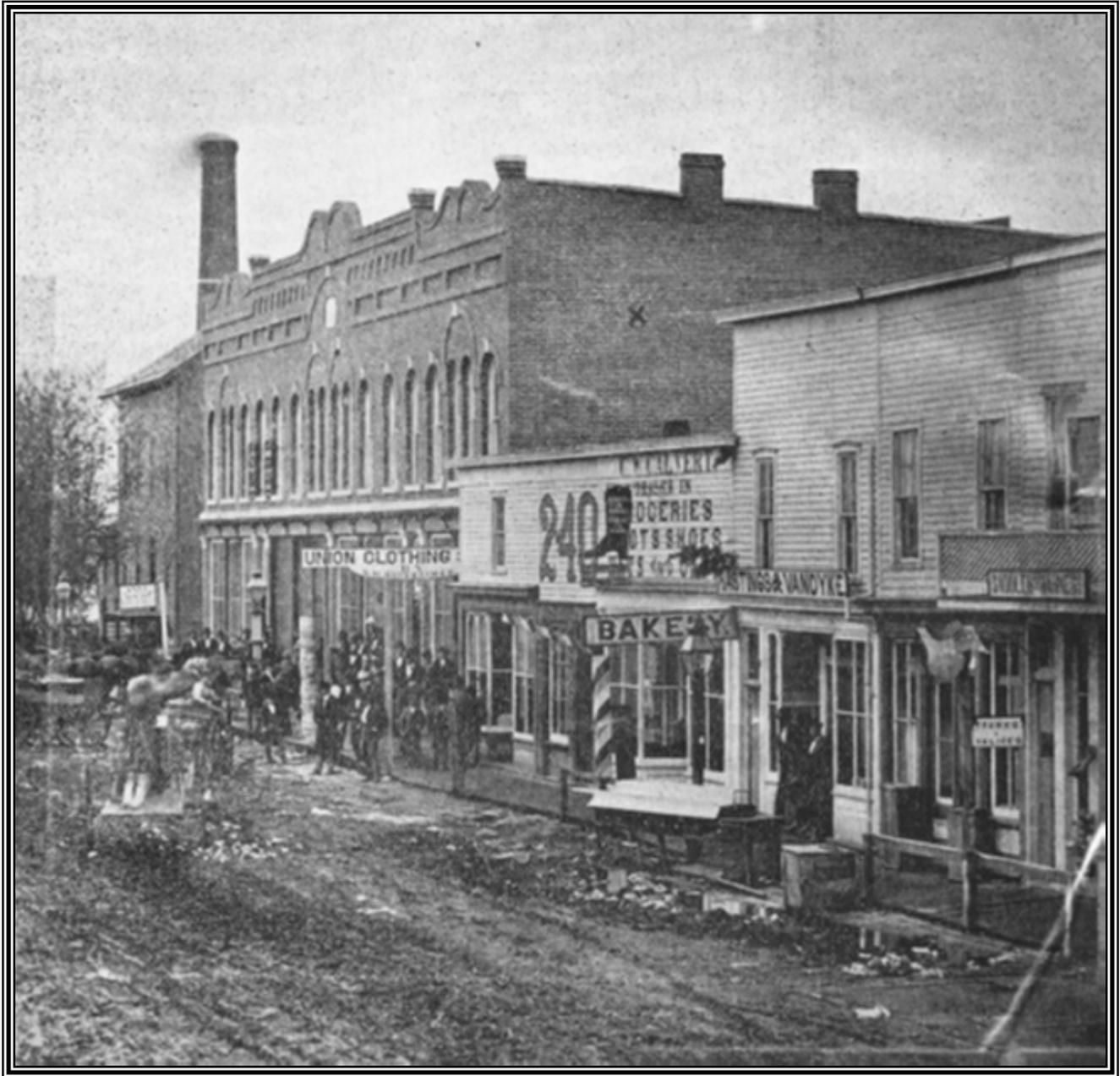
THE LECTURE CRAZE was inaugurated in Tuscola in October, 1870. The active ones in the community were William P. Cannon, James Trowsell, Henry Niles and several women. There were about fifty subscribers in all, who proposed to give money devoted to literary entertainment in Tuscola. John B. Gough gave "London" at the Opera House January 17, 1871. There was a total of 450 tickets sold for \$316. Mr. Gough was paid \$200. March 8, 1871, Miss Anna Dickinson gave Joan of Arc. They had Robert Collyer in his "Clear Grit" lecture. Mark Twain gave a lecture in December, 1871. Mrs. Scott Siddons, Laura Dainty and other readers presented lectures as well. There were also several musical experts. There was no financial profit, nor was there any expected, but the spirit of the endeavor was very credible and many of Tuscola's citizens were gratified with an experience in literary matters they might not have had otherwise.

CHAUTAQUA CLUB met at various residences around Tuscola. Their interests were in history and lighter forms of literary writings. Some of the leading instructors and students were Rev. Lockhart of the Christian Church, Rev. Louther of the Methodist Church, H. C. Carroway, W. R. Johnson, W. H. Lamb, John Chandler, McKee, Miss Mack, Miss Carroway, Miss Niles and others. They spent a considerable sum of money in furthering the worthy objects of the association. Their motto being "excelsior."

MUSICAL TALENT was of the highest order in Tuscola. The "Glee Club" consisting of James Higgins, first tenor; Harry Johnson, second basso; A. M. Woody, second tenor, and M. P. Woody, first basso, comprised a quartet, which was the pride of Tuscola. They were all active businessmen of Tuscola and spent much of their time not only entertaining, but also teaching music to their fellow citizens. They appeared in "Pinafore" December 1879, at the Opera House. Dr S. T. Spees appeared as "Sir Joseph," M. P. Woody as "Deadeye," Johnson as the "Captain," Higgins as "Ralph," A. L. Sluss, "Boatswain," "Josephine" was given by Miss Alice Atherton, "Cousin Hebe" by Miss Ida Thayer and "Buttercup" by Carrie Atherton. Mrs. John J. Jones provided the music. Henry Niles painted the scenery. Mrs. Daggett is another worth mentioning for her musical talent. She taught music to many of the younger generation.

THE FIRST BRASS BAND was instituted in 1860 by the old settlers. The original proprietors were James Davis, William T. French, Henry Niles, W. R. Johnson, A. M. Woody, Simon Bassett, Col. Taggart and A. P. Helton. They played for weddings, parties, dances, prayer meetings, revivals, county fairs, etc., and in 1861 went to Mattoon with the first recruits of the Twenty-first regiment boys, where they created quite a sensation. Niles was the bandleader, but was succeeded by other expert musicians to which he gracefully yielded. In those days, brass bands were scarce here and many had never seen or heard one. When it performed at the county courthouse for the first county fair, the rush to see them was so great that they were forced to play outside. The band declined for a few years because some of its members moved away for business reasons. It was revived again in 1884, for several years under the leadership of Clarence Uhlen.

THE FINE ARTS had a credible showing in Tuscola in the latter part of the 19th century. Carl Uhler, a newspaperman and Lincoln Smith, a youth of Tuscola, were quite talented in painting portraits of local men.



This was Sale Street in 1872. This is the earliest known photo of downtown Tuscola. The large brick building is known as Union Block. It was only about a year old when this photograph was taken and was the only building on the block to survive the fire of 1873. The frame buildings to the right were torn down in an effort to stop the fire. The city had no fire apparatus and the only defense against a major conflagration was to tear down buildings in its path. At the far end of the photo is the J. M. Wamsley Mill which stood where the Dollar General Store is now located. A faint wisp of smoke can be seen coming out of the mill's big chimney. The Wamsley Mill was destroyed by fire in 1877, but was rebuilt in the same location.

Sale Street was a muddy mess when it rained making travel almost impossible. It was paved about twenty years later. The sidewalks were wooden boards instead of the present concrete.

“THE FIRE”

In the early years, fires slowed the progress of business in Tuscola. The buildings were wood frame structures and the men who volunteered to fight fires were impeded by the lack of fire fighting equipment. In 1866, the livery stable of Alf Thayer, on Main Street, north of Sale Street, caught on fire. Henry Niles had just moved his drug store, and joined Davis, with his stock, on the north side of Sale Street, near Main and didn't have any insurance. If the volunteers who came out that night to battle the fire hadn't done an exceptional job, the whole north side of Sale Street would have gone up in smoke and flame. This fire cost Mr. Thayer fourteen horses and his property.

The largest and most notable fire to take place in Tuscola happened on the evening of March 11, 1873, and is referred to as “the fire.” It originated in block A on north Parke Street between the Hudson Lumberyard and Sale Street in a grocery store. The general alarm was communicated to all by a large explosion of gunpowder kept in that store. The blast spread the flames in every direction in the block and the intense heat soon leaped across Parke Street, and eastward along Sale Street and the north side of North Central Avenue.

Commercial Block, located on the north side of North Central Avenue (where the Community building now stands) was a large three-story brick building and was the finest building in town. It contained several stores, the First National Bank, a large city hall with a stage and seating capacity of 800. The third story contained the lodge room of the Masonic society, whose apartments had been finished in fresco in the best style of art. Everyone had hoped to check the fire before the block was reached, but the fire got into the back windows on the third floor. When it was realized the block would have to go, the bank men piled everything they possibly could carry, including the valuable law library of Joseph Cannon into the fireproof vault. Three days after the fire the vault was opened and the contents were not burned.

The other destroyed buildings were of wood, but contained a large quantity of merchandise. Mr. Trowsell removed his large stock of watches and jewelry and stored it in a freight car nearby. During the fire when the flames crossed Parke Street, the volunteers did the only thing possible – they tore out buildings with axes, crowbars and ropes. They were able to stop the fire on Sale Street just west of the newly constructed brick building called the Union block. On North Central Avenue, they fought the fire in the same manner – pulling and dragging down buildings until the fire had nowhere else to go and burned itself out. In all about 30 buildings were destroyed in the conflagration and the loss was estimated at \$150,000, partly covered by insurance.

Several valuable firemen who had “sworn off” from fires until the city had purchased apparatus, “pitched in” and proved very useful to the impromptu fire department. These men included Ike Jewell, James Trowsell, the Ervins, Henry Niles and Major Conover. One of the workers commented that his hair and eyebrows were singed off in the fire.

Another notable downtown fire, prior to the purchase of fire apparatus took place in October, 1881, on the north side of Sale Street. It destroyed a two-story building, one of the first in Tuscola built in 1859, where Dr. Wheeler kept a boarding house. This fire also destroyed a large one-story building and the law office of Bundy & Wolverton. The remainder of Sale Street was spared because it was detached. The other side of the street being in great danger from the intense heat of the fire was kept safe through the hard work of the firefighters.

There has always been a spirit of appreciation for the volunteers who so bravely fight our cities fires. It was no different for early firefighters. In 1879, Henry Niles' residence caught fire from the chimney. When Mr. Niles asked a contractor for the bill for repairs, he was told it was already paid. In recognition for Mr. Niles services' in fighting fires, a collection was gathered to pay for his repairs.

CITY OF TUSCOLA 1875

DOUGLAS CO. ILL.

Situated in & comprising 534.716 Acs of R. 1 E. drawn from the records

Published by W. R. Brink & Co.

Scale: 400 feet to 1 Inch.

1875.

Drawn by H. C. Niles Surv^r



TUSCOLA BUSINESS PROPRIETORS IN 1875

Joseph P. Ackerman	Plasterer and Contractor
Newton Anderson	Carpenter
Mrs. Elizabeth Beach	Proprietor of the Beach House
Thomas Bundy	Attorney
Harvey Bassett	Physician and Surgeon
James Barth	Manufacturer and Dealer in Cigars and Tobacco
W. Boyce	Photographer
Bright & Jones	Merchants
C. W. Calvert	Manufacturer and Dealer in Boots and Shoes
E. B. Cannon	Physician and Surgeon
Charles D. Crafts	Surgeon Dentist
J. M. Cox	Tinsmith
Thomas Conner	Boardinghouse and Drayman
Mary A. Chandler	Milliner and Dressmaker
W. B. Dryer	Druggist
Samuel Daggy	Furniture and Carpets
J. H. Ervin	Livery, Sale and Feed Stable
J. A. Field	Physician, Surgeon and Druggist
F. M. Friend	Bookseller and Stationer
John H. Finegan	Agent Singer Sewing Machine Co.
John H. Furnold	Printer
J. L. Goff	Manufacturer and Dealer in Tombstones and Monuments
S. W. Guthrie	Butcher
H. Griswold	Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots and Shoes
E. Hudson	Lumber Dealer
A. P. Helton	Insurance and Loan Agent
L. Johnson	Contractor and Builder
J. L. Jordan	Livery and Feed Stable
Joseph Kornblum	Dry Goods and Hosiery
A. S. Lindsay	Publisher of Journal
O. B. Lester	Editor of the Gazette
W. H. Lamb	Banker
Lawson Brothers	Dealer in Stoves and Tinware
Lester & Johnson	Proprietors of Tuscola Flour Mills
Wm. S. Martin	Physician and Surgeon
J. M. Maris	Grocer and Dealer in Boots and Shoes
James Mossgrove	Tinsmith
Peter Olson	Carpenter
J. C. Parcel	Attorney
M. W. Perkins	Dealer in Agricultural Implements
Pike & Trowsell	Jewelers and Musical Instruments
James L. Reat	Physician and Surgeon
J. M. Smith	Merchant
E. L. Smith	Attorney
D. G. Smith	Barber
Jacob F. Stuchell	Carpenter and Builder
Alf Thayer	Proprietor of the Central House
John G. Uhler	Carpenter and Builder
A. G. Wallace	Real Estate and Loan Agent
A. M. Woody	Grocery, Union Block, Corner of Main and Sale Street
G. W. Wicks	Mill Works and Miller

EXCERPTS FROM *THE SATURDAY JOURNAL* 1878

* About 7 o'clock **John W. Boyer's** residence, on Daggy Street, a square and a half east of Main, in this city, was discovered afire in the roof. The neighbors promptly ran to his assistance and in a short time extinguished the flames. Most of the roof was burned off and the ceiling burned through in places. The flue is on the outside of the house, and doesn't project above the roof, and it is supposed that sparks from the flue were blown under the shingles and ignited them. The schoolhouse bell sounded the alarm to our citizens, but nobody but the immediate neighbors knew where the fire was until it was extinguished. Loss covered by insurance. **Mr. Boyer** returns his thanks to his neighbors for their timely and efficient assistance in saving the house and his goods from destruction.

* **C. H. Land** has purchased the patent rights to the territory of Douglas and Coles Counties for the sale of the cheapest and best gate hinge ever invented. The hinge costs only \$1 and will last a lifetime. He has one on exhibition at the west end of Sale Street, and invites everybody to inspect it.

* Stung by Bees – Thursday about noon, **H. P. Perkins**, who lives a short distance west of Tuscola, was stung three or four times by bees. He went to the house, bathed himself in saltwater, and had an apoplectic stroke, which for a time threatened his life. **Dr. Martin** went out and restored him to consciousness, and at last account, he was able to sit up. The community narrowly escaped losing a valuable citizen.

* Mare Stolen: On last Saturday night, 8 years old, belonging to **P. S. Sharp**, of Brazil, Ind., was taken or escaped from **Lester's** stable in this city, and a liberal reward is offered for her recovery. About two weeks ago, **Mr. Sharp** and his wife came to this city in a buggy, on a visit to **Mrs. Sharp's** relatives, **R. J. Foster's** family, and kept the mare in **Lester's** stable, from which the animal mysteriously disappeared. She is spirited and a good traveler, and highly valued by her owner.

* **Gowin** threatens to wallop us if we mention that he was indicted for stealing butter from **Griswold's** store. Of course fear of getting whipped prevents us from telling that **Gowin, Taggart's** particular pet, did steal the butter and was indicted therefore.

* A colored woman was divorced last Wednesday afternoon, and married to another chap the same evening, in this city.

* A large steer on his way to slaughter, ran into the Central House Thursday afternoon, and slobbered over things a short time ere he was dislodged.

* **Minor Wambley**, after living in single cussedness for something less than a thousand years, went and got spliced to **Miss Mary Robinson**, Chicago, last Sunday, returned home, and never told anybody.

* **Hon. J. G. Cannon** was in the city on Tuesday, looking much happier than the chap who bragged he was "going to spike that Cannon."

* **L. J. Wyeth** has moved to Tuscola, leaving his son to manage the farm. He lives in the house formerly owned by **W. H. Lamb**, in the southeastern part of the city. The Journal extends a hearty welcome.