



*George Helm's pony team and wagon  
which was used in the 1890's.*

## 6

# *“Any Rags, Any Bones, Any Bottles Today?”*

## Special Memories of Early Barrington

When Edward Lamey landed in America in 1853 in pursuit of his sweetheart, Julia Byrne, all he knew was that she had come to America the year before with her family and settled in Chicago.

The twenty-five-year-old determined Irishman made his way to Chicago and then took up a vigil on the steps of each of the Catholic churches after mass until he found his Julia coming out of Saint Mary's Church.

They were married at St. Mary's in May of 1854 and came to Barrington to live in the summer of 1855. They built a house at 328 East Franklin. Although it was small by today's standards, it was considered palatial at that time. Dwellings of the day were of logs, and the Lamey house was the first house of milled lumber to be built in Barrington Station.

The first Catholic masses in Barrington were offered in that house.

\* \* \*

Walking was more than exercise or recreation in the early days of the midwest. It was a means of transportation, and for many, their prime method.

John Catlow, Sr., and Mr. Boeck, both of Ela Road, used to walk every day to Rand (what is now Des Plaines) to work all day on the

railroad bridge and walk home again at night after a hard day's work. Others walked daily to Cary to work in the gravel pits.

Ed Groff's father, as a young man, walked to the south side of Chicago every Saturday afternoon to see his girlfriend and walked home again Sunday afternoon to be ready for work the next morning. He took along his white shirt wrapped in brown paper and carried his shoes tied over his shoulders. When he got near the city, he would put them on and don his white shirt.. (He married the girl).

Men often walked to Chicago to meet friends or relatives coming from the east or from Germany to settle here. On such occasions Mrs. George Waterman said that it looked as though half of Chicago closed up and came down to the river to welcome the newcomers and hear the news and shake hands.

John Landwer, Henry Elfrink, Lambert Meiners, and Barney Elfrink used to walk to Chicago to work on the Illinois-Michigan Canal. — A. L.

\* \* \*

There used to be a rag picker come along the road. He would call out, "Any rags, any bones, any bottles today?" And he'd buy them and pay you a little for them.

There was a peddler, Jake Horowitz, who came and had thread and tea and coffee and all different little household items that women might need, and you could even have dress goods. It was kind of a big thing in our life because he usually gave us gum.

Watkins and Raleigh were medicine men that would come around. My mother always bought vanilla and lemon extract, and then we bought the big box of salve that was for man or beast — and it really did a good job. — H. A. H.

\* \* \*

In August, when I was five years old, my mother wasn't feeling very well so Granddad and Grandmother came over. Since it was a rainy

day, they wanted my sister, brother, and me to play in the barn with Granddad keeping us company.

Several times when we wanted to go back to the house, he wouldn't let us. After a spell, my dad came to the barn and told us to go to the house and see what they had. I thought all this time that Grandmother sure must have made up a batch of candy, and I had an appetite for it then.

When we got in the house, they said to look in the cradle and see my new-born brother. I was a bit disappointed, as I had expected something quite different. I said, "Where did you get him?" and Dad told us they found him in the cornfield. I asked how he knew he was there, and he replied they had heard him crying. I said, "There may be more of them there," but they assured me there weren't.

I remember a young friend of mine who wanted to know how he ever got into this world. His mother told him a crow laid him on a post, and the sun hatched him. He believed it for a long time. We believed anything our elders told us. — W. H. K.

\*

\*

\*

One day in the early fall, the teacher glanced out of the window and saw a band of covered gypsy wagons coming with two horses pulling them and a number of horses tied behind. The teacher was very frightened, and so were we, as we were always told never to trust gypsies as they might kidnap you and hold you for ransom or make you work for them.

As they drew nearer, the teacher and we children grew more frightened, and sure as shooting, they stopped right at the school. The teacher had the door locked by that time.

The gypsies walked over to the pump and began to fill their buckets and vessels and then proceeded on their way again. The teacher would not let us go home for awhile for fear we might catch up to them.

Usually, a gypsy band would camp next to a creek at night so they could water their horses and tether them against a fence. Wherever they



*The "Ghost in Blue". James Alfred Davis, Jr., eighteen, was killed by a confederate scout in the Civil War on April 17, 1862.*

*The James S. Davis home where heavy footsteps were heard on the porch at same time their son, James Alfred Davis, Jr., was killed in the Civil War. House was on Franklin Street between Hough and Cook.*



stayed for a spell, some of the farmer's chickens, a calf, or a lamb might disappear. The county sheriff usually would make them move on if they stayed longer than two days.

I remember one dark night when, out of curiosity, I crept up close to them when they had a fire cooking their meal outside, and I listened to them playing a banjo while they sang. — W. H. K.

\* \* \*

Do you have a family ghost or a ghost story? Is there something that has been experienced by a witness known by you to be reliable or otherwise established as one who respects the truth? Such a person was my maternal grandfather, Herbert Benton Davis. Born in Barrington,



Illinois, in 1852, he was a sweet, uncomplicated, principled man with unswerving dedication to the truth in all its forms.

Grandpa was the youngest of the eight children of James Sullivan Davis and Parintha Lawrence, both born in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, in 1807. They were married in 1828 and shortly thereafter started west on a ten year journey to Barrington, Illinois, with extended stopovers in New York and Pennsylvania while Parintha had children and James plied his trade as a carpenter to earn money to continue the trip.

The last two boys were born in Barrington, then a country town thirty miles northwest of Chicago. By the time the Civil War started, James, the carpenter, had become proprietor of a thriving lumberyard, and had built a large, two-story home for the family on a lot on the outskirts of Barrington.

The stage is now set for Grandpa's account of the appearance of our beloved ghost in blue. It is the evening of April 17, 1862. Nine-year-old Herbert is in the parlor with his parents. Mother is sewing, the Father is working on his account books, and they are talking about the war and their sons who have been soldiers for almost a year.

James Alfred, eighteen, the youngest son, is called "Alfred" to distinguish him from his father. Young Alfred is in Tennessee with the 19th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, part of an 8,000 man force under Major General Ormsby Mitchel.

Grandpa remembered clearly that it was about dusk when their conversation was interrupted by heavy steps on the porch. His wife, sitting in a rocker by the window, looked out and cried joyously, "Why, there's Alfred home from the war!" She ran to the door, followed closely by her husband and Herbert. She threw open the door and rushed out onto a silent, empty porch.

Several weeks later a letter arrived from Captain J. W. Guthrie, commander of Company C of the 19th Illinois, and a friend of the Davis family. It read, "I regret to inform you that on April 17 your son, Private James Alfred Davis, was shot and killed by a Confederate scout

while on picket duty just east of Tuscumbia, Alabama.”

Later, in the summer of 1862, one of Alfred’s boyhood friends and a comrade-in-arms, visited the Davises while on furlough. He said that in the deepest penetration of the South to that date, General Mitchel had been sent into Alabama with orders to destroy tracks and burn bridges of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad between Huntsville and Tuscumbia. They had lost to Grant at Shiloh.

Alfred’s friend said they had marched the forty miles from Fayetteville, Tennessee, to Huntsville on April 10 and 11, then west along the railroad to Tuscumbia, arriving on April 17. The regiment had experienced only light resistance during the march. He said Alfred, the first and only fatality in Company C, was shot on the day they arrived, about dusk, the favorite time for snipers, since they could still see but not be seen. It was about dusk on April 17, the exact time and day that Alfred had appeared on the Davis porch in Barrington.

Did it really happen? Grandpa was there. Grandpa said it happened, and Grandpa never lied. I believe it happened, because I knew Herbert Davis, but you’ll have to judge for yourself. — D. M.

\* \* \*

Probably the majority of the Civil War soldiers we learn of around here were enlisted men or were volunteers, as they were called. It was common practice, though, at the time of draft, for a man to pay several hundred dollars for a substitute to go for him. While some made no secrecy of it, others have tried to have it forgotten.

When Abraham Lincoln called for more volunteers, and Illinois, far exceeding the quota, responded in the slogan, “We are coming, Uncle Samuel, three-hundred-thousand more,” many of our young men said, “Let’s join up for three months. It’ll all be settled in that time.” They were in for four years. —A. L.

\* \* \*

In 1898 another great event was the coming of the telephone service

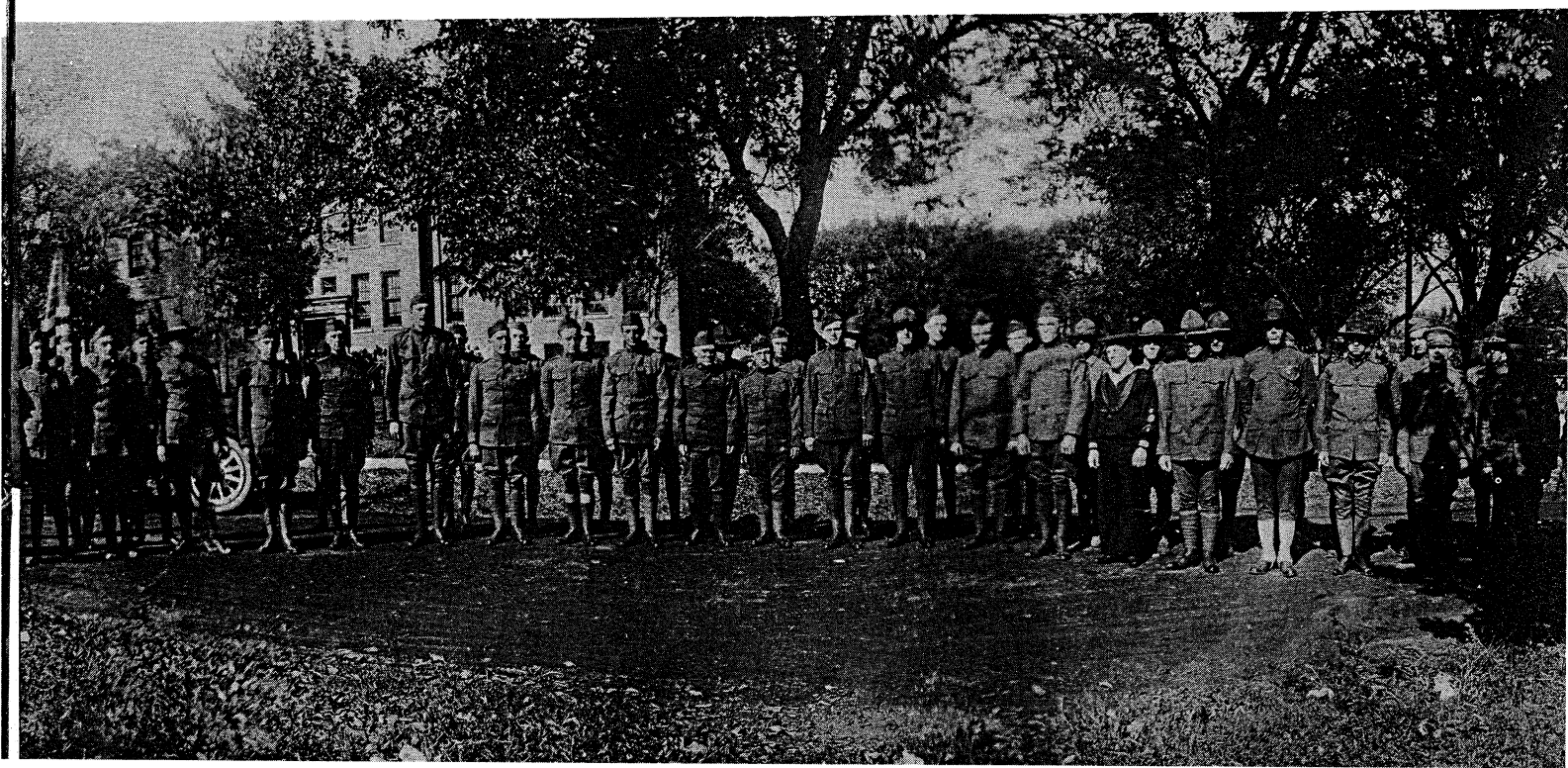
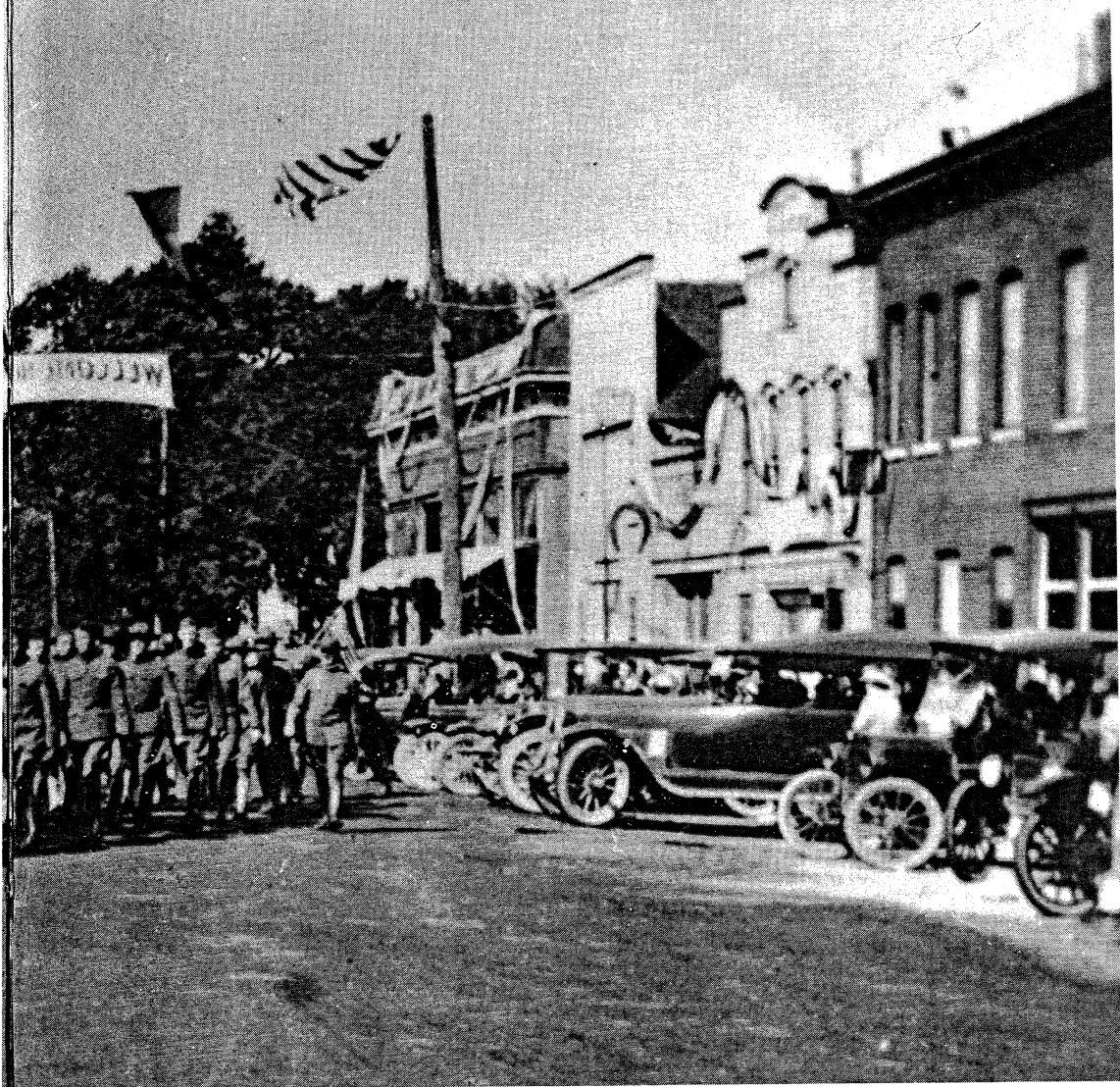




*Marching home again in Barrington in 1919 after World War I.*

*One sailor and forty-four soldiers in front of Hough Street School about 1918.*





for Barrington. All phones then were of the crank variety. They were brown wooden boxes on the walls with stationary mouthpieces and cranks on the right side of the phone boxes.

When you wanted to make a call, you first had to listen to see whether one of the eight other parties was using the line. ("No fair staying on.")

Then you signalled the operator by turning the crank, and you waited. The operator would crank you back, and your phone rang. You picked up the receiver and told the operator the name of the party you were calling.

The operator, or "Central" as she was called, contacted your party by cranking, and the other party answered by first ringing back the operator who told him you wanted to talk, and he once again hung up and cranked. This rang the caller's phone.

They both could then pick up the receivers and hold conversations, but the crank turning wasn't over. After you finished talking, both parties would have to crank once more to signal the operator they were through. Some folks in Barrington said it just wasn't worth all the trouble.

The first switchboard in the village had only eight lines and was located in Edward Lamey and Company's two-story, wooden building on the southwest corner of Cook and Railroad streets with telephone number "one." — M. S.

\* \* \*

About 1910 a telephone line was installed, and we got our first phone. When "Central" was off duty, my mother would make an appointment with a neighbor lady to lift the receiver at a certain hour so they could visit. — R.M.

\* \* \*

The first kerosene lamp in a Barrington home was in 1857. People were afraid to use them in their homes at first, fearing they would

explode and cause a fire.

The first electric plant was built in Barrington June 16, 1897, in a wooden building at the end of Harrison Street. Lights were hung across the streets at every intersection and a block apart up longer stretches.

Carbon arc lights were installed in the business district, but the arc lights did not give a steady glow. Later the current was changed from direct current to alternating current.

They would shut off the electricity at the plant at 11 p.m. and turn it on again in the morning. With all its faults, the electric was a Godsend to the community over the kerosene lamps and lanterns. — M. S.