

Those Gentle Voices Calling

(This is a cemetery reenactment pageant. Each of the speakers lines may be adapted to local presenters needs or the pageant may be staged as a purely fictional event. It is staged during the day light hours and requires no theatrical lighting or make-up. It is strongly advised that no ghostly make-up be used: the actors should look as healthy as when each character was alive. The speeches are delivered on the grave site of the dead person being represented. Props are a stool, a pitcher of water and a glass. Black umbrellas with lavender streamers and black balloons may be used as décor at each site. Costumes appropriate to each character's period may be used or the women may be dressed in all black with face veils ala 1940's fashion, and the men in dark suits with black arm bands and neckties. The musicians are dressed similarly as are the "docents". The audience in groups of twenty is lead through the pageant by a docent. When the first group is at the second station of the event the second group of twenty, led by a docent, begins at the first station. Ten docents are required to keep the pageant moving at a brisk pace. For groups with access to horse drawn vehicles, flavor is added to the event by having the audience gather away from the cemetery and be driven in small groups to the cemetery in the buggies and wagons. In this case, as each group of ten or twenty arrives, they disembark and a docent leads them on foot to the first station. The vehicles return to the gathering site for more spectators. Alternately, the audience gathers at the cemetery entrance and groups are lead as indicated.

STATION ONE:

(A choir of ten singers is arranged inside the entrance to the cemetery. They are dressed as the other performers are or in choir robes. A man with his back to the gathered spectators leads the choir in a hymn. He is the only character dressed all in white. After the choir sings one chorus of the hymn, they begin again humming. The man in white turns to the gathering and over the humming says:)

St. Peter

(to audience) I am the keeper of the gate. We're glad you could come and visit us before your time. Helps if I know you before hand; makes the passage go quicker. You know, the holiday coming up used to be called Decoration Day. Folks would come out here to Glenwood to put flowers and flags on the graves. Some would make it like a picnic. Children would run around over the graves. The sounds of laughter would fill this space with the happiness of young people, unafraid of the dead, who got to know their ancestors by seeing their markers and hearing the older folks tell stories about their exploits and feats of daring-do in the great war or crossing the mighty Mississippi in a raft or just walking five miles to school everyday in the snow and rain. Doesn't happen much anymore. People got too busy to visit us regularly. And the problem is, as the poet said, "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it." So, we're going to remind you today of some of the things that everything today is built on: the good and the bad and the people who did it, for better or worse, and what they learned because of it. And how Collinsville came to be and the people who founded it and lived in it and loved it and used it. Maybe you'll learn something today, too. Something to tell your children so that they can tell theirs. Here in this ag-ed , hallowed glade are buried simple folk, no great kings or queens or presidents . Simple folk whose quiet lives here on the edge of the Great American Bottom were heroic in their own way as they battled the elements, fought for social justice, fed their hungry and felt the joy and happiness of birthing and dying and existing against whatever odds nature could lay before them. Here then is Glenwood and its residents in their own words: (He gestures off to the graves. He turns back to the choir) Ok, big finish now (he says to the choir as the voices swell loudly to the vocal conclusion.) (After the song. To the crowd) The docent will lead you to station 2 now.

(As the onlookers move on to the 2nd station, off in the distance we can hear the throb of a tympani's "boom -pause- boom - pause - boom" creating a hypnotic dirge which happens every 15 minutes of each hour that the pageant continues. The spectators reach Station Two and the docent gathers them closely to the actor so that there is a great intimacy between them and the performer)

STATION TWO:

C Collins Lot

1760-1849

WM. COLLINS

9 Oct 1760
19 Apr 1849

(Grins) I hope it wasn't too much of an inconvenience gettin here. I scratched me out some notes here so I wouldn't forget nothin'. Saint Pete said, "Don't forget nothin'" – you don't argue with him. Surely is different now than it was in 1817 when my sons first got here. Oh, they wasn't the first. No! Ole John Cook has that honor. He was the first settler in 1816 when he entered land, built a log cabin and made improvements. But my sons, Augustus, Anson, Michael, Fredrick and William B –named after me- they made the first businesses here. They had a distillery, a grist mill, a saw mill, a tan yard, a store, and a shoemaking shop. They turned a nice profit with these and even, why in one of the early books about Collinsville, my sons was called "a noble band of Brothers". Ain't that pretty! Oops! Our school teacher back East, we was originally from Litchfield, Connecticut, woulda slapped us silly for sayin' "ain't." So, "aren't" that pretty. Dang, that ain't right either. Anyway it don't matter much out here on the Middle Border. Forgive the cussin'. I was born in 1760, and was in the Revolutionary War. We got King George outta here and back where he belongs. After that I learned a trade and when my sons come out here, I decided to follow 'em and settle on this rich land here in the west right here in this great alluvial bottom. You ain't never seen nothing like it in those first days. Charles Dickens came through the Bottom in a wagon and he said the mud was up to the wheels and they was nothing but pigs and chirpping frogs. But that delicate Limey missed all the beauty: they was shypokes and blue herons and prairie chickens, and passenger pigeons clouded the sky. Great oxbow lakes filled the whole Bottom; you know, those are left over pieces of the Mississippi. Horseshoe Lake is a oxbow that is still here. Sometime the river would flood and the waters would come up all the way to the Bluff down here at the Bluff road. My distant cousin, Ol' Daniel Dove Collins' house is still standing over on Main Street. It has some beams in it from an old paddle wheeler that got hung up near the bluff during a flood and was left there, high and dry, when the water receded. We hustled us right down there and got some of that good wood to make his house with. You can see the wood in the beams if you go in there. I think they gonna open it to the public soon. By the way, I ain't, dang, the only Revolutionary War veteran buried here in Glenwood. They is one other: Benjamin Johnson.

I was with Colonel Meigs' Connecticut Regiment and fought in one battle when I was just a lad of seventeen. It was the battle at Guilford, Connecticut, where I shot a Hessian mercenary and saw his broken arm fly over his shoulder. I was 58 when I got to Collinsville in 1822. But I was strong still and had my trade. We called Collinsville Unionville in those early days. In 1836 when Horace Look, Joseph Darrow and my daughter-in-law went in to lay out the town plat they was told that there already was a Unionville in Illinois and why didn't they call it Collinsville. And, by dang, after a little meetin', Collinsville it was! So, by 1837 the town was platted and on the map!

Tarnation, I had some good times. I chewed a lot a tobacco and sure did enjoy my whiskey until my sons saw the dangers of alcohol and destroyed the distillery business. Tarnation!! And Dang! And that was the end of that smooth, fine stuff they made so much money off'n. One time, I was about 85, I remember that the old Reverend Joseph Lemen was extolling my virtues as an upstanding fellow... well, I broke right down and cried. Everybody thought it was because I was touched by the good Reverend's praise of me. But not so, he got me thinking about all that good whiskey that my sons dumped off into Quentine Creek (Pause for laugh)—you call it Canteen Creek now, but it was named by them old French trappers that went through here years ago. Them trappers named every thing after what they thought the Indians was sayin' like the Kaskaskia River. They called it the Aux Kawkaw in their Frenchy way so that is why it is still called the Okaw. Ain't that funny. I oughta tell you one story about frontier justice: One day a sum of money was stole from my sons store and strong suspicion pointed a finger at an employee of theirs named Blodgett. After a meeting with the family and other towns people it was decided on the evidence that Blodgett was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Ol' Blodgett was blindfolded, led at night to a hollow by the creek and tied to a tree. He was given a chance to confess and disclose the hiding place of the money. He refused and was given ten blows with a hickory switch. He was again asked to confess and again refused and was thrashed again. He writhed and twisted under this torture. He at last yielded an' confessed his crime and the whereabouts of the money. The money was retrieved, and not content with his punishment, the good citizens of Collinsville decided he should be remanded to the custody of Aunt Eliza Collins who undertook to be his nurse and spiritual counselor. She pleaded and cajoled and prayed Blodgett into changing his ways and becoming a true penitent. I am sure this was worse punishment than the lashes he received. (He chuckles) This here (pats it) is my stone. Wasn't that good of 'em to give me such a big one. People do that as a

tribute, but the real tribute is being remembered. My name on your lips makes me alive today!

And I thank you for it. Anyway move along with you. That fella (points to docent) will show you the way!

STATION THREE:

2 Dec 1814 -
11 Jan 1892

E 13

D. D. Collins

1814-1892

I finally get to say it out loud: "Consarn it! How I hate it that the Veterans of Foreign Wars tore down our old homestead on Vandalia Street." You know we built it to last. It had solid brick walls and brick inner walls with massive stone underpinnings. Some rooms had fourteen foot ceilings. It burned down once and we built it right back up. Too bad you are too young to remember when it stood there, a proud reminder of the fine and noble past of our fair City. My name is Daniel Dove Collins and I was born in ~~17~~-1814 I should clear something else up also: I am the nephew of the Collins Brothers who founded Collinsville. There has always been some confusion during the 20th century about this. But I came here because my uncles swore to the beauty of this place, the richness of the bountiful soil and the abundant wildlife. And it surely was. My father and old Uncle William were brothers. And further Uncle William's namesake was called William B. to avoid confusion. So that puts that to rest. Now my cousins gave this land that you are standing on to be a cemetery and also the school land over there and the land that the City Hall is on. These are all Collins legacies. Now, besides the old homestead on Vandalia, my very fruitful farm was all the land of what was once Collinsville Township High School, about 75 acres, but has been sold off to a religious organization and will now be forgotten as a beginning place for this city. Anyway, I was born on the Penobscot River in a town called Oldtown just outside Bangor, Maine. I moved around a lot and after working on the Erie Canal got to Chicago. A congregation there needed a church and I agreed to build it. It was right across the street from where Marshall Field is now located. Well, when the church was completed the congregation did not have the money to pay me. They offered me the land that Marshall Field now stands on. I looked around and saw the swampy conditions and decided the land was worth nothing. I donated my work to them and left for Collinsville and greener pastures. Don't laugh. Tears are more appropriate for such a foolish fellow. I

DOB 2 Dec 1814
DOD 11 Jan 1892
(77y 1m 9d)

opened a store when I got here in what is now Caseyville and built a comfortable little Greek Revival house on Main Street in Collinsville for my new wife, Elizabeth Anderson. The house was at the corner of Main and Center streets where the old Will Rogers Theatre was. As Main Street grew the house was moved down to its present location across the street from Bernice Larimore's old restaurant and next to what used to be the dress factory. You ought to come back to see it sometime. Its open today if you want to have a peek. I got the idea for Greek Revival from all of that kind of architecture that was going up in St. Louis. You did see the old Cathedral over there, didn't you? Course my house wasn't so grand.

In 1843 I built the first Presbyterian Church as my tithe for the congregation. I was a god-fearing member. Church activities were a major part of our social life. By 1850, the mud roads that ran from Collinsville to St. Louis were so treacherous that a team and wagon could sink out of sight when we had a good rain. We built a Plank Road running from what is now the Belt line and going along through town on what is now Main Street and to the Ferry in what has become East Saint Louis. We built it as a toll road. We called it the Collinsville Plank Road Company and got us a charter from the court house in Edwardsville. The toll gate was at what is now Anderson's Pond. WE had us spies out to catch anybody using the plank road without paying the toll. We made a lot of money before a law was passed in 1888 outlawing all such tolls. Our profitable enterprise was cut short and the streets went back to mud filled morasses. Things changed quick after that and this was the beginning of macadamizing and bricking some of the local streets and roads. Getting back to me, I was an Associate County Judge along with Harry K. Eaton who was a full judge. And that is why to this day they call me "Judge" Old Eaton is somehow a relative of Annie Eaton Babbs who you will hear from later on your trip across these Stygian shores.

I also served on the school board. We were then called Directors of Education. I began my tenure on the board during the Civil War and was a director when the first freed Africans became African Americans and began to move into this County. I was also the first highway commissioner in this county. And I want it made very clear that I lived and died a faithful democrat.

Well, that's it. It was a good life up here on the very rim of the Great American Bottom. Winter's were mild, summers were hot, and the gossamer strands of Indian Summer floated through the air. We were innocent and happy then in this bountiful Eden in the middle of a heaven called the United States of America. Thank you for listening to me or lending me your ears, as the bard would say. Right that way (He points to the docent and turns his back to the crowd)

19 Dec 1835-
19 Jan 1920

E. 16

ANGELINE BEIDLER

1835-1920

Please, step this way...Welcome! Welcome!

I haven't welcomed people in so long. I miss this so much. My name is Mrs. Beidler. Angeline; but you may call me Mrs. Beidler. I was born here in Collinsville in 1835. You may have passed by my home, just down there on Church Street. Frederick and I built that home in 1879, after our first home, on Beidler Street, was destroyed by a cyclone. When we built the home, we weren't planning on it being a hotel...Beidler House, or Beidler hotel, many called it... but it just turned out that way. We had no children until we adopted our daughter, and I guess we felt the need to fill that big empty house. We took in travelers and young men who came here to work before they got married. You see, they would come in to town on the train just down the hill and walk right up to my house. We had rooms for them and also cooked a fine meal. Housed some pretty famous men in this town: William Burroughs, Louis Lumaghi, James Yates, James I. Dilliard, and the list goes on and on.

My husband was a minister and a scholar. Frederick was well known all over this area. He preached in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri. He served as a commissary sergeant in the Civil War, until he fell ill. You see, he and some of the others in his regiment were poisoned by the enemy. They put poison in the flour. As sick as he was, the Army still wanted to keep him. Finally, I couldn't take it any more and I went to visit Mr. Lincoln himself to ask for my husband's release. People made such a fuss over it, my visit to the president, but really I was just doing what I had to do, going straight to the top. They wanted to talk me out of it, but I said at the time, "If I want a goose I get him by the neck. If I caught him by the tail, the feathers might pull out." I can describe Abe Lincoln just as everyone else does, because it's so true: he was long, lean

and lank. His hair stood straight up on end, because he was always running his fingers through it. Very odd looking man, but he had a big heart and kindly signed the papers to discharge my husband.

You hear a lot about how prim and proper everyone was back then. Well, I'm here to tell you, it's just not true! The women in this town had quite a time keeping things in order. I was the head of the W.C.T.U., the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Many a woman would come to me, devastated because her husband did not bring home his pay, but took it instead to one of the local saloons. This happened more often than you think. Well, you all may think that charity groups in town should help take care of families in that situation. But think about who really holds the responsibility for the problem. I went straight to the saloon keeper and made him buy shoes and food for that family. After a while, saloon keepers would think twice before they took all a man's money in one evening. We fought to outlaw alcohol altogether, and, two days before I died, Prohibition passed. I was very proud that I helped accomplish that, but I've heard rumors over the years that Prohibition has been repealed. Well, if that's true, I wish you all the luck in keeping this town in order. Imagine it being legal again to drink whiskey and cavort around!

I was known for wearing black shoes, black bonnet and dress, and I carried a black umbrella. Some probably thought I was touched, but I maybe I was just ahead of my time. I attended the Collinsville Academy and was a schoolteacher before I married. I did a lot of things other women wouldn't do. I was the first woman to run for the school board. Those were tough days for a woman. You pretty much had to break out of the rules of etiquette and fashion and femininity and take action to get things done. People looked at you funny and some would talk about you and act like you were crazy, but that's what it took. You can't worry

about what people think of you at the time. There's plenty of people that spent their lives worrying about what everyone else thought and none of them are out here now with any good stories to tell, because they don't have any.

Well, that's all I have to say at the moment. Be sure to take a look at the hotel down the street after you leave here, and think of those days. It actually became quite an impressive thing to tell someone you dined at the Beidler Hotel. We didn't just take in anyone. We had lovely dinners and striking conversation every evening. We were famous for our fried chicken. Since you can't get it anymore, I'll give you the recipe so you can have the experience of the Beidler dinner in your own home. It was very nice to meet you. Please take a recipe and then join the young man, who will escort you over to listen to the next enlightening story.

Hotel card with chicken recipe on back

H 988

17 June 1857
29 MAY 1948

ANNIE BABBS
1857-1948

I am so glad you all could come to see me. I ain't somebody like the others you are visitin' with today. I just was here for all my 91 years. I never had nobody to tell my story to. When you're dirt poor as we always was, nobody much cares how you got that way. My name is Annie Babbs. My daddy's great grandparents came to America as indentured servants. They came from England somewhere, I ain't sure where in England, though. It was in about 1760, I think. They was mighty poor folks and was treated like slaves by those what held their indentures. Any way, they came into Virginia and after their indenture was worked off the family, little bits by little bits, moved into the Appalachian hill country. They was in what is now Knox County and Greene County in Kentucky before they moved into Southern Illinois. They came into Illinois at what is now Old Shawneetown, then it was just Shawneetown and it had the first bank in Illinois in it. It was such a good bank that the Village of Chicago way up north asked it for a loan, but the good bankers at Shawneetown told Chicago that it would never amount to much up there in the swamp land and that they could not take the chance of lendin' em the money. (She laughs) Wasn't that a mistake? If you all ain't been down to Old Shawneetown, ya oughta go. They is lots a good things to see there. Anyway, they lived in Shawneetown in a tent for a year, fishin' in the River to get enough to eat; it is now the Ohio River; it didn't have no official name in those days, I think. Saint Peter, over there (gestures to him), asked me to give you each one of my great great grandmas recipes for turtle mulligan that they made when ever they caught an old soft shell turtle. Here is some; jes pass 'em around or take one when you leave. I better get on with it. Ole Saint Peter said we best not take too much a your time. So, here I go. Well, we come up through Shawneetown and settled for a little bit in Tamaroa down by Pinckneyville. Oh, I forgot: all my maiden relatives is named Smith, Allen and Eaton. (in a stage whisper) The Allens is another long story that you would be interested in. I had a kin name of Barbara Allen. She got herself mixed up with a witch boy and had his child who was born a ogre because witch boys and humans cannot mix. They is a ballad that is still sung in the hill country about them two and their sin. I am talkin' so soft because Peter don't like this story much. (full voice) There is some more of us Smiths and Eatons buried here, but I'm not sure where. Couldn't afford no stone and lots a records was lost in the fire at Captain Wickliffe's store, in 1858. I forgot to tell you that I was

born June 17, 1857 in Pinckneyville just before we made this last move to up here

around Collinsville, and I lived to May 29, 1948. (She preens a bit) That's pretty good. 91 years of age. I see you all cranin' to see if that is on my stone. Well, I ain't got no stone either. They buried me here in the right plot, but no stone. Cause of no money. My children who was still alive, Elzie (He is really George Elsworth Babbs, and Ben (he is Benjamin Franklin Babbs), Lizzie, (she is Elizabeth Ross Babbs) and Icie Villar Babbs. Now just don't ask me why they is all named after famous people except Icie Villar. She was named after my dear childhood friend who died afore her time. Where was I? . . . Oh! Yes! Well, I married John R. Babbs. He is buried right here. He has got a brand new stone that Doris and the Civil War people got for him cause he fought in the Civil War and his old stone was wearin' smooth. He was a postman here in Collinsville. None a my children ever got married, except Icie Villar. Jim and Ben fought in the World War I. They got the mustard gas and they lungs was never the same. They have these stones here.(points to stones) Lizzie was a little bit slow. She and Jim was triplets but one died of the consumption when he was eight; his name was Alva after Thomas Alva Edison. -It wasn't no consumption. It was asthma. Most all my children had asthma but they didn't call it that then. This come through the Babbs line. We Allens and Eatons and Smiths was sturdy as old mules.

Me and John moved around here a lot. When he died in 1914, the boys was working for the Vandalia Railroad. When they got back from the world war I, they got their jobs back. Thank the lord cause they got a pension for it when the depression came. They all retired early from the railroad but what with the depression, we decided to move to a farm in the Johann Addition north of town. Well, the boys couldn't work it because of the asthma. I did have a garden patch of table vegetables. And every year we had chickens and a couple of hogs to slaughter and cure. Peter, he calls me Lady Bountiful cause I am always talkin' about food. Well, that is all you think about when you are most hungry most of your life. Anyway he said I should give you a receipt for a long time Collinsville good eatin' favorite. Well, I got two: One come here with the wagons movin' west and the other is jes always been here. Chicken and flat dumplin's: all you need is water, flour, salt, the roots of some Queen Anne's Lace which is wild carrot, and the chicken; the other is for bacon, new potatoes, a mess a pole beans and some water. This is poor folks food, but mighty comfortin'. You can take those receipts, too, when you leave. - You know I never lived in a house with running water, electricity or a bathroom. -

Oh! Lordy. Then we had the World War II. One day, in 1948, I was so tired I just went to bed and never got up. Died in my sleep. I recommend it as a

good way to die. I hope none a you struggled as hard as we did jes to eat. But it was a good life. I laughed and cried jes like rich people . And I loved and birthed like them, too. And that's all that's important after all, ain't it? The world is made up of the little people who lives quietly, and do the work that some more fortunate don't wanna do. I never did nothin' to remember, but I tried to be good and I never gossiped except a little. Well, thank you for comin' to see me. And if you ain't made 'em, you try my receipts. Now you just move along with the nice fella who brought you all.

D429

1894-1952

Ralph "Skinny" Dugger

One night I was asleep, well, some people call it "passed out", on the stoop of Louie Cavicchia's tavern, at Main and Morrison, you know, across from the hotel and the furniture store. It was pourin' down rain. Two doors down, Mackie's bookie had just closed. You ever been to a book? Well, it's just off track bettin', but it ain't sanctioned. I had a half drunk bottle of "sneaky pete" in a brown paper sack that I was usin' for a pillow and to protect it so I could feel if anyone tried to steal it. I was mindin' my own business there, not hurtin' anybody. . . Oh, I am sorry. My name is Skinny Dugger. Ralph, really, and I died in 1952: too much liquid sustenance and cigarettes. I think it was mostly the cigarettes that done me in. We didn't know how dangerous they was then. I was sort of pickled in the "sustenance". Anyway, I am to tell you my story as a lesson. That's why they dredged me up here while I was sleepin' soundly and dreamin' of that time on Louie Cavicchia's stoop which I will tell you about later, maybe, if there is time. But first, I gotta tell about the past and all my genealogy and I am not to forget the soddie house. So, I won't. Or risk eternity with out a little "sustenance". --They call it Nectar up here; still it's 100 proof! To get on with it: Great-great-great Granddad, John Dugger, who was born in 1749, fought in the Revolutionary War, and with his wife, Fannie and their kids moved from Virginia to bounty land in Tennessee. Leonard, Fannie and John's second son moved from Tennessee to Madison County, Illinois. A Phillip Searcy travelled with them and married Leonard's youngest daughter. They had a daughter who was the first child born in Madison County, exclusive of the native Americans, who had a helluva lot of babies before we ever got here.-- Are you following this? It is very complicated, almost like the "Begats". Keep listenin', we're almost up to me! Leonard's brother, James married Kisiah, and they had a boy named Andrew Jackson Dugger, known as "Jack". He had a son named George Whitfield Dugger. And that was my Father. See there, that wasn't so bad, was it? Ol' George, my dad, served in the Civil War - he enlisted into the 2nd Illinois Cavalry at Smithton, about 20 miles south of here. After the War he was a Indian Scout and he drove a stage coach.-- Sounds like fun but it was hard work. -- Dad returned in due time and married Jane Bradshaw, my mother.- and they are right here by me (he points to their stones)- Dad and Jane decided they should head for the new territories out West. With a grubstake from Dad's dad, my granddad, they outfitted a Conestoga wagon and headed West along the Missouri River. Jane

Summer 9/8

was pregnant, sorry ladies; Jane was "with child" at the time. This was in 1869. The trip was very rough. They branched off onto the Little Missouri River and got to somewhere in the south part of North Dakota. By this time winter was upon them. The wind howled about their ears and they couldn't cross the Rockies. Besides, Jane's time was due. They found an abandoned Soddie there, just above the river, and decided to try to spend the winter. Now you are wonderin' what a soddie is. And I am gonna tell you. It is dug squares of sod piled one a top the other to form four walls. A roof of branches is peaked up over the walls and sod is laid on them. Two layers. In the summer the roof grass of the soddie was green, but in the winter the soddie was all brown with the dead grass and black from the sod of the layers of the walls. Usually, the soddie was about 10 by 10 feet, and was damp all winter from the moisture in the sod evaporating from the fire built inside to keep them warm. And here, Mom had her first child who was sickly and died. Dad had his big old blunderbuss rifle from the civil war and would get them prairie dogs and rabbits to eat. They didn't have nothing green to eat all that winter, but they had flour and dried beans, corn meal and two bushels of apples. They also had some big yellow onions and a big slab of salt preserved fat back. Water they had lots of cause the snow was everywhere and almost over the roof in the back.. There was two oiled cloth windows, one on each side, to give them some light during the day. There was an old iron cook stove with a pipe chimney that went up and out the side of the soddie. The floor was packed dirt. Dad would make the beans dish they had all that winter every once in a while and that's when he would tell us the story of their winter in the soddie. The way you make it is in that stack of recipes out by St. Peter. It's pretty good if you don't have to eat it everyday! To get on with it: They finally could see the end of winter and it had been a bad time - two people, and one of 'em pregnant again - 'scuse me ladies- with child again, can sure get on each others nerves in a 10 X 10 dark ,damp place for four months. Any way, it was a sleety , March night and come a knock upon the soddie door. Dad opened the door and in comes a stranger who wanted a place to sleep for the night. Company was welcome to break up the feelings of "cabin fever". So Mom served up some of them beans an' prairie dog, and the stranger sat down to eat. There wasn't no coffee but dad had brought along some sassafras root so they had that for tea. And then the stranger pulled out a bottle he had in his saddle bag and they all had a good snort - see that's where I get it ; makes me thirsty just thinkin' about it- from that bottle. Even Mom, dad said. Well, the stranger told them that they should turn around and not go on into the further West cause the Indians was becoming hostile and they would surely lose their lives if they tried to go it alone through that territory. And then they all slept: on the dirt floor. Next morning they had some more beans and the stranger wished

them well, tipped his hat to Mom and told them his name was Buffalo Bill Cody and he hoped they would take his advice and head back the way they come. And he left. And they did. Right back to Madison County , Windy Hill, Collinsville, Illinois where I was born, later , in 1891. I could tell you more about the soddie time but you heard all that I am required to tell so, I will get back to me conked out on the stoop of Louie Cavicchia's saloon. It was 1943. I had just finished paintin' Louie's front window with a tempera Christmas scene. And I was dreamin' of jingle bells mixed with the battles ragin' on with Germany, when an ol' 1939 Packard come tearin' down Main Street and back fires right there in front of me. I woke up with a yell and tore down the street screamin' that we was havin' an air raid. Abe Mann and Sid Hiken come outta their store where they was workin' late and hollered , "Where? Where?" An' all the kids who was at the Greeks havin' a Ice Cream soda after seein' Bette Davis in NOW VOYAGER at the Miners' Theatre, come tearin' outta there and followin' me, screamin' "Air raid! Air Raid!". Finally, the kids knew it was just a joke and they started a conga line down Main Street, chantin' "One, two, three, La Air Raid" Well, John Law comes along and he was a big killjoy, I won't say his name, and rounds us all up and puts us in jail for disturbin' the peace. Hell, I was just tryin' to protect the peace! I slept it off in jail in the basement of the City Hall. The kids parents had to come and bail them out. And that's the story! So, you get a move on there over to see old Hadley. Your leader will show you the way. (He produces a brown sack with a bottle in it , holds it up and says) Cheers! (He sits)

1842-1915

NW
Row 2

James Henson Rhoads

17 Jan 1842 - 1 April 1915

Howdy! Howdy! I never thought I'd see it. Never. All a you folks comin' here to listen to me say somethin'. I am afraid to begin. Because it looks like things ain't changed much. You all bein' white (if there are black persons in the group he adds: "except you folks over there, but they is more a them than us." he chuckles.). Ain't it a fine day. You know you all are over here on the black side a the road. Did you know that: all us black folks is over here. Near our church. But I'll tell you about the church later. They is ~~eleven~~⁵ of us black soldiers who served in the Civil War buried right here in Glenwood. You know, we was fighting for our lives so all of us that could, joined up right away. We most of us had sisters or brothers or children or wives. I didn't; I stayed unmarried all my life. It was touch and go times for us. Oh. . . I am forgetting myself. I am James Henson Rhoads, spelled R-h-o-a-d-s. I mighta spelled it wrong but that is how I spell it so that is how it is spelled. Everybody tried to make it Rhodes, R-h-o-d-e-s. But it ain't. See, I was a slave. Had two masters: first was ol' William Countsman and then he give me to his son Samuel Countsman. I was born in Montgomery County, Maryland right outside of Washington, D. C., sometime about December of 1842. Nobody much kept proper records of our birthdays and my mama had to jus guess at it for me. She died when I was ten, I think. She was a good Christian lady and taught me my religion. When my mama died Ol' William put me to work as a farm hand, so I was in the fields most every day. I did learn to read some and how to write my name because I wanted to and because Elizie, who took me in, could read and write a little. I learned mostly at night when we come in from the fields. I learned from scraps of the Washington newspaper that we saw sometime. This was a terrible time for slaves, everybody, I guess. Maryland was and wasn't a slave state. Seems that the industrialist wanted to be North and the Plantation owners wanted to be south. Well, it was all solved when eleven states became the confederacy and Maryland was not one of 'em. I ran away to Camp Benedict in Maryland and volunteered into Company I of the 7th U.S. Colored Infantry. I was gonna fight to be free. I didn't know nothin' about commerce or industry or nothin' else. I only knew I was a slave and my mama been a slave and everybody I knew was held in bondage to work for some other person's good. Mr. Abe Lincoln said I could be free if I would fight and I was determined to fight or die. Better dead than the way it was for us. I knew if I ever got outta this alive I would go to that great place that was Old Abe's home. I knew it was Springfield in some free state named Illinois. We fought

Seven

in skirmishes and battles at Chaffin's Farm and Russells's Mills and Fair Oaks. We was in the Appomattox campaign and I don't know where else, in Virginia and South Carolina and as far as Florida. I got this terrible burn on my chest from a musket shot that just graze me and tore up my skin but did not penetrate to my heart. And this here burn on my jaw is from my own musket that blew up in my face when I tried to shoot it at Chaffin's Farm. I never knew where we was. It was all mud and rain and trains and never a good wash and never enough food. We fed ourselves most of the time with chickens that ran loose and squirrels; one time we butchered a runaway hog and had us a feast. Then on the 13th of December in the year of our lord 1865, I was discharged. We had won the war. We was free. Glory! We was free!! My wounds was healed and I headed back to Washington. I wanted to find somebody I knew. Something that I could hold on to. I was scared. Every where I went on the way back there was misery: the white folks was mostly burned out and the black folks, who had nothin' to begin with, was now livin' by the roads in tents and in ruins and in tumbledy down shacks along the railroad tracks. I got back to Washington in the end of 1865. It was a mess. Black slaves was free but had no place to go. Misery everywhere. I heard the call and felt I could do the mos' by preachin' the good word. I stayed there until 1869 and tried to help. I preached and studied THE BOOK. I done some good I guess. I did find some other Countsman slaves. Two of 'em was goin' off to Illinois to get some kinda work, where there was less people with nothin' and no place to go. And that give me the idea that I did not have to stay in Washington. I could head out. I could go to Illinois, too. So, first I preached in Orange, New Jersey; then I went off to Danville, Illinois; then over to Springfield, Illinois. Wasn't bad there, but it did not feel like home. Then I got in touch with the Countsman black folks who had moved to Collinsville. Here I came. I was free from 1865 but I was never free of the poverty and shacks. Nothing had changed but everything was different. No body wanted us anywhere, but in Collinsville nobody paid us any attention. We was free to be invisible. And there was room. It wasn't like there was city slums. There was air to breathe, free of the stink of need that was the black folks lot in the cities. I was the pastor of the flock in Collinsville at the Wilkerson Chapel, A.M.E. The Church was right over there (He points) across the road in that empty lot. Later we moved over on Summit Avenue.. You know, most of us what was slaves never got over bein' slaves. So, in Collinsville I had me a one horse wagon and I made some kinda money haulin' junk and helpin' white folks to move things. The church could not pay me a livin'. And I got old. Old before my time. It was the weight of the past bearin' down on me. I finally got a pension from the government for my military service when I couldn't drive my wagon no more and couldn't preach. I had the indigestion and

couldn't keep nothin' in me. The gov'ment give me a 20 dollars a month pension until I died. And after I died, they give me this tombstone here twice: once when I died in 1914 and then this new one which they gave cause the old one wore out.

I was the pastor of the A.M.E Wilkerson Chapel Church most all my life and tried to be a good shepard. You know I never had enough money or anything else to be bad. Well, that's it. Here I am in this quiet spot in this quiet town, next to the land my church was on, far away from Maryland where I began and where my mama, god rest her, lays her head: Never once to be free, never once to see me free. I died free but I never stopped bein' a slave, a god fearin' slave. Now you run along with the leader over there. He knows where you go next.