

# THE MAROA POST

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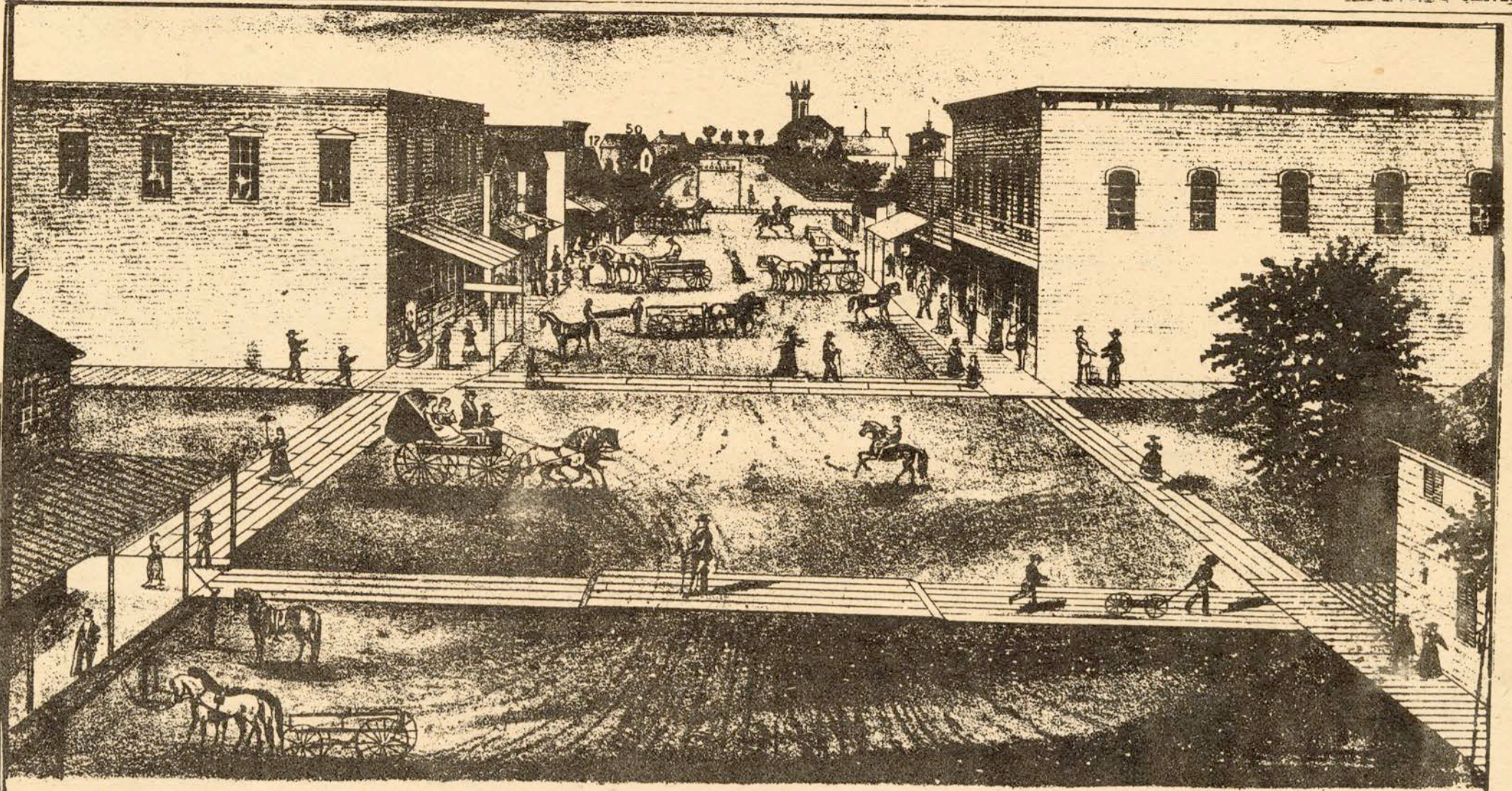
PART TWO

and The News-Times  
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NINTH YEAR, No. 21

MAROA, ILLINOIS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1954

PRICE 5 CENTS



EAST PART OF SOUTH STREET, MAROA, ILLINOIS.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| No. 1 G. J. Schenck—First building erected in Maroa. Where Presbyterian Church now stands. | No. 23 M. Friedman—Dry Goods and Clothing.   | No. 34 Smith Bros. & Leavitt—Groceries and Post Office.                        |
| No. 2 Thayer & Kent—Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, and Shoes, Crockery, Glassware, etc.     | No. 25 Cox & McLade—Groceries and Meat Market.   | No. 35 R. E. Andrews—Dry Goods, Clothing, Hats and Caps, Boots and Shoes, etc. |
| No. 10 C. F. Emery—Banker.   | No. 26 J. S. Clough & Son—Furniture and Undertaker. A good Hearse always on hand.          | No. 36 Rogers & Collins—Dry Goods Merchants.                                   |
| No. 17 J. H. Crocker—Hardware dealer. Crocker & Co.—Bankers and Grain dealers.             | No. 27 J. A. Bogle—Furniture dealer and Undertaker.  | No. 40 Presbyterian Church.  |
| No. 19 Beatty & Persinger—Saddles, Harness, Whips and Saddlery, Hardware, etc.             | No. 30 Austin & Gault—Drugs and Medicines, Paints, Oils, Books, Stationery and Wall Paper. | No. 50 L. Tozer, M. D.   |
| No. 21 W. H. Hartman—Stoves and Tinware.   | No. 32 Camp & Grady—Groceries, Hats and Caps, Boots and Shoes, etc.                        |  |

## Railroad Located Present City

It would be impossible to trace the history of Maroa over the past 100 years without not one but many references to the Illinois Central Railroad. The building of the railroad brought Maroa into being and throughout the years that have come and gone since its founding, Maroa has felt the influence of the Railroad as it developed from a pioneer settlement to the thriving city of today.

When the Illinois Central Railroad was chartered and its construction began, in 1851, Illinois had but a few white settlers, and these were scattered mostly along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and Lake Michigan—the only dependable sources of transportation.

The 366-mile route of the Illinois Central between Cairo and Chicago did not pass through a single settlement of more than 100 inhabitants and passed near only three settlements of any importance — Jonesboro, with 584, Urbana, with 210, and Bourbonnais with 1,710 people.

The most important city in the state was Galena, in the northwest corner of the state, which came to be known as the "First American Klondike" with the development of the lead mines there.

At the time of the Galena "lead rush," Illinois was dependent for transportation upon river boats and crude wagon trails, both of which were slow and undependable in winter or wet weather.

An example of this was a trip which Col. Roswell B. Mason, chief engineer of the Illinois Central, made from Cairo to Chicago in 1852. His notes of the journey began: "Leaving Cairo November 18, we reached Vandalia on the 23rd. A trip of 140 miles took five days.

He goes on, "The road was so bad it was thought nearly impossible to get through. It is no wonder there were few takers willing to buy government land at \$1.25 an acre."

### DREAM BEGINS

The impetus of the lead boom, however, brought to a head the demand for better transportation

in the state—railroad transportation. Men of vision began to dream of a railroad running from the banks of the Mississippi river, opposite Dubuque, Iowa, through Galena all the way down the length of the state to Cairo at the southern tip. But building such a railroad across the Illinois frontier did not inspire potential investors, especially since it was the longest railroad ever to be conceived.

Through the efforts of such statesmen as Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas and Sidney Breese, a land grant bill was passed in Congress, and thus the Illinois Central became the first land grant railroad. Government lands were turned over to the state, which in turn gave title to the railroad for a right-of-way and for development.

### I. C. CHARTERED

The Illinois Central was chartered in 1851 to build a railroad through the center of the state, with a branch line to Chicago, a total distance of 705 miles. At the time there were only about 100 miles of crude railroads in the entire state.

The building of the Illinois Central was one of the great engineering miracles of all time. Under the direction of Colonel Mason, labor to build the railroad was recruited from the eastern seaboard and from Europe. Rails were shipped from England. Sup-

plies were brought in from the eastern states. Ties and bridge timbers were brought from northern Michigan.

Despite outbreaks of sickness that threatened the whole project, the work proceeded rapidly.

During 1854 construction moved northward from Cairo. It was during the spring of this year when the first steam locomotive seen in "Egypt" was shipped to Cairo via Ohio riverboat.

Little No. 5, a woodburner with its traditionally well polished brass fittings, thrilled the hearts of the early settlers as nothing ever had. As proud engineer Levi Goodale rolled his little engine northward, pioneer families came from miles around in ox-carts and by foot to witness "the amazing spectacle of a locomotive belching forth smoke and cinders and steam as it sped along at the 'terrific speed' of 15 or 20 miles an hour.

Completion of the main line of the railroad in early 1855 touched off a tremendous celebration over the state.

The Chicago branch of the charter lines was completed in 1856, thus completing the project which caused one Chicago newspaper to comment, "Very few of those who contemplated . . . dreamed of its realization in their day."

Many of the workmen who built the railroad bought land and settled. After them came thousands of people to take advantage of good transportation and the rich, untilled soil.

### FOSTERS COAL INDUSTRY

Besides fostering the coal industry, the Illinois Central played a direct role in stimulating coal production in Illinois when it began experimenting with coal as a locomotive fuel.

Wood had been used exclusively as fuel up until this time.

In July, 1855, Engineer Travers ran an engine 25 miles out of Centralia on 500 pounds of coke made from Du Quoin coal by Cornelius Stovin. The first two locomotives used in these experiments were the "Lucifer" and the "Pluto," built by the Mason Locomotive Works and fitted out for the purpose by Master Mechanic David Oxley at Centralia. These locomotives were used in experiments to pull passenger trains between Chicago and West Urbana (Champaign) the following year.

In experiments with the "Lucifer" it was found that for 254 miles of operation it required \$31.75 worth of wood when it was used as fuel, as against only \$9.25 worth of coal. These experiments were so impressive that the Illinois Central ordered 36 coal burners in 1856. The coal-burning locomotive was established as the power of the Illinois Central and other railroads.

The Illinois Central, being a north-south railroad, was one of the most important transportation arteries for the Union forces. Some 112 miles of the main line between Centralia and Cairo was single track and known as the "needle's eye." In charge of operations on this line was a young man by the name of Marvin Hughitt, who later became president of the Chicago & North Western Railway. In 1862 he made history.

One of the most important battles of the Civil War was that at Vicksburg, Miss. Shortly before this great action, Union and Confederate forces were jockeying for position in the lower Mississippi region. A sudden order went out

from the Union side to concentrate forces and supplies at Cairo, Ill., within 48 hours.

Realizing the importance of the movement, Hughitt took over the dispatching job of moving the special troop trains through the "needle's eye." For thirty-six hours he stayed glued to his telegraph instrument while the parade of trains carrying troops and equipment rolled south. Exhausted, he started home only after he knew every train had safely arrived in Cairo. The order was not over, however. On his way home a messenger overtook him. New orders had been issued making it necessary to move all the trains back through Centralia to a new destination.

Marvin Hughitt went back to his instrument and for another 36 hours moved every single train safely through his territory again. For 72 hours, Hughitt had been on duty. His feat reached the ears of President Lincoln and the nation.

### NEW BUSINESS

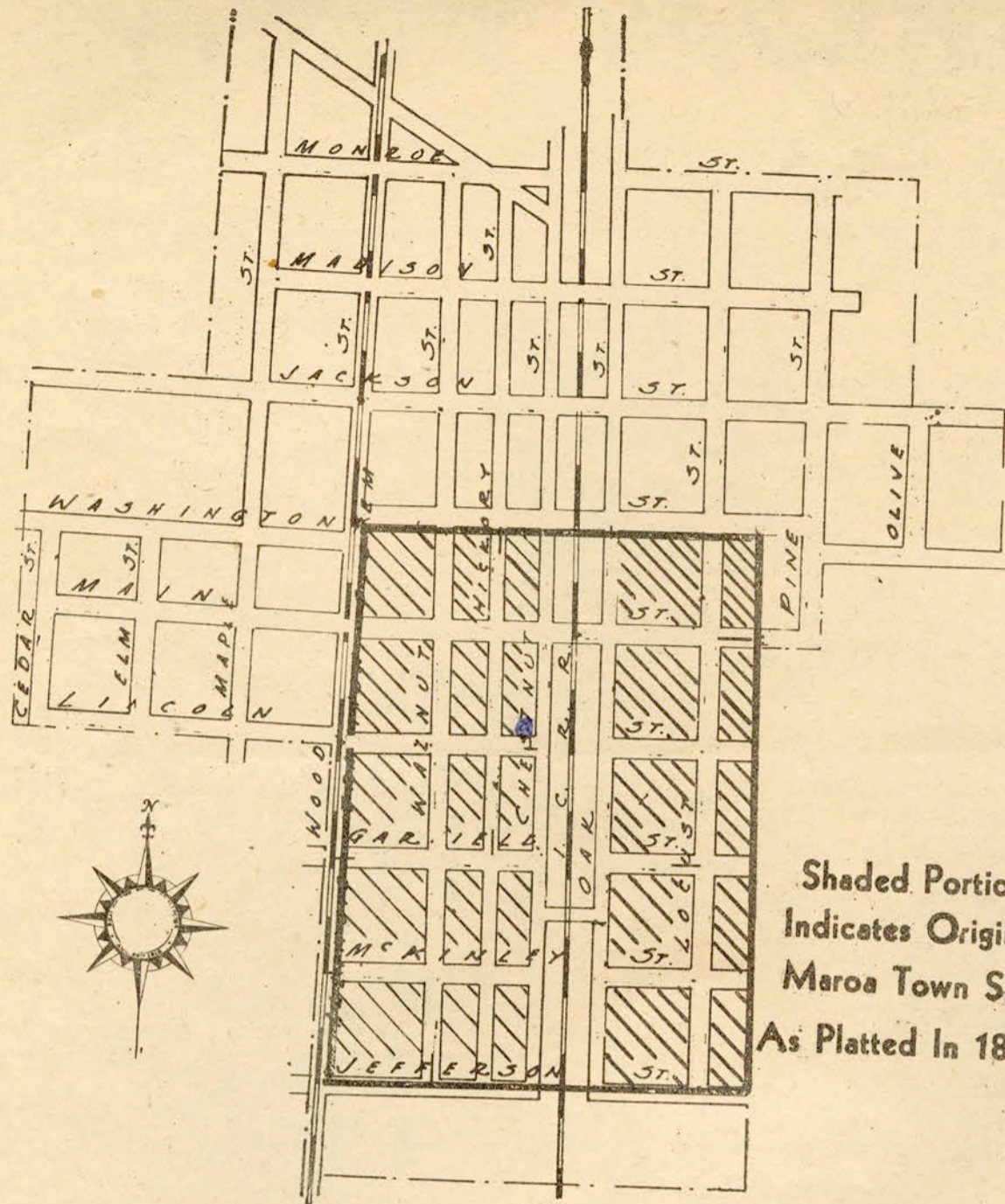
A great deal of attention was being paid to the growing fruit business, too. This business suddenly rose in importance when two years later, in 1866, Parker Earle built some ice chests and made the first refrigerated shipment of fruit from Cobden to Chicago. This shipment of strawberries was the first refrigerated shipment of fruit ever to be made.

Service was irregular as can be evidenced by the standard remark uttered by Benton's first station agent, Frank Trott. When Trott was asked when the train would arrive, he'd look down the track and remark, "Pretty soon now; here comes Barney's dog." The conductor on the old train was "Smiling" Barney Blaney,

# MAP of MAROA 1854 to 1954

The Republicans of Maroa built a huge bon-fire in the open space east of F. K. Bohrer's blacksmith shop last night, and had a grand jollification meeting over the victories in Ohio and Indiana. Speeches were made by J. R. Hoover, W. H. Williamson and John H. Crocker.

**FROM THE MAROA NEWS**  
FRIDAY, OCT. 15, 1880



Shaded Portion  
Indicates Original  
Maroa Town Site  
As Platted In 1854

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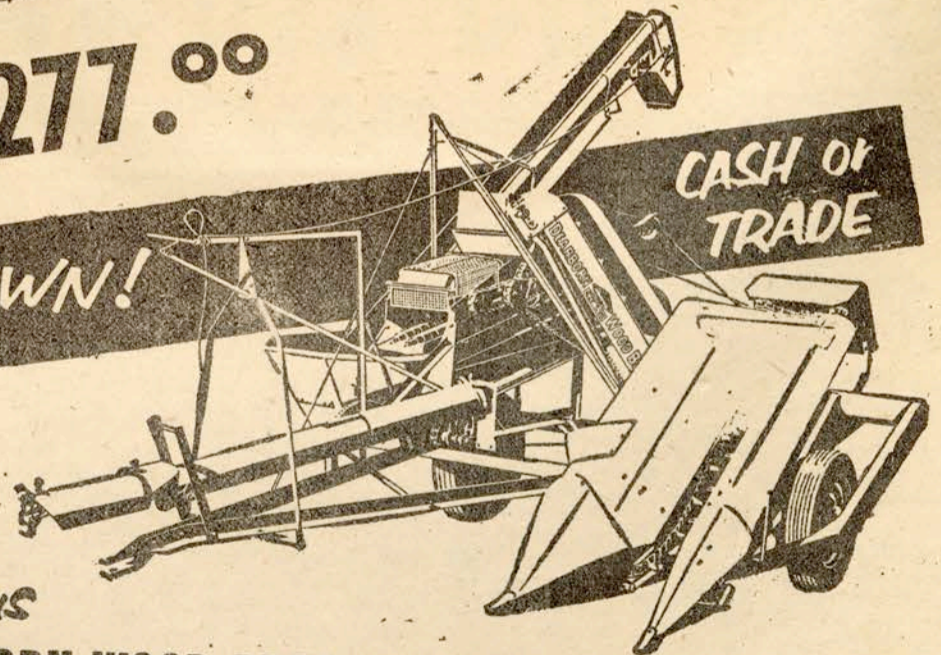
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# Description of Maroa Area As Found by First Settlers

At such an occasion as the centennial year it is natural to look back and wonder what our homeland was like before our ancestors put the ax, plow and steam shovel to it and destroyed its natural condition.

What occurred here as the first white man traversed the area was not recorded, consequently we can only speculate and rely on a few writings to conclude what it may have been like. The following description is based primarily on the State Geological Survey

Had we handled the chain for the first survey of the county we would have seen an area which was approximately three fourths woodlands and the remainder prairie.

Other characteristic vegetation encountered and named by our forefathers were "barrens" and "post-oak flats."

The forests of the county were of two types, the bottomland and post-oak hills.

The bottomland supported a rich heavy timber of swamp white oak, pin oak, burr oak, black oak, scaly-bark hickory, ash, black walnut, hazel, etc.

The post-oak hills were covered with a heavy growth of timber consisting of black oak, post oak, black jack oak, hickories, hackberry, elm, etc.

The better sites along the upland streams were covered with white, northern red, and black oak, and hard maple. It seems that the original woodlands were very similar to what they are today, except that they were more extensive and contained larger trees.

The prairies occurred on the best soil on the higher ground between the streams and were flat and gently rolling. Since several of the typical prairie grasses of central Illinois are not found in this area at the present time, it is doubtful if they ever occurred here. Therefore it is probable that our prairies differed in many respects from the usual prairie picture.

Our prairies consisted of tall grasses of the blue stem, drop seed, panic and many other grass families, and numerous herbs such as goldenrods, asters, and sunflowers. Our prairies, not unlike those farther north, would probably hide a man on horse back as the common description goes.

Surrounding the prairie in a narrow belt were the post-oak flats. They were level stretches of upland sparsely timbered with post-oak and interspersed with black-jack and young post oak. Many of the prairie grasses and herbs were found scattered throughout the flats.

The barrens occurred on the poor soil of the low hills and ridges and were characterized by a dense growth of tall grasses and herbs. They were destitute of timber or had only a few scattered trees. Groves of trees occurred occasionally in both the prairie and post oak flats in the poorly drained depressions.

The mammals and birds were much the same as they are today except that a few have been destroyed while others have become more numerous. Those most obviously missing are the Indian, buffalo, lynx, turkey, grouse,

and passenger pigeon. A few prairie chickens remain and deer and beaver have been reintroduced.

All in all, our forefathers found a fairly rich and bountiful land which has supported their children well for over a century and with proper management and care will continue to support many future generations.

## J. A. Morgan Was First Child Born in Maroa

Did you know that Maroa's first citizen was born in Maroa just 101 years ago in 1853. He was J. A. Morgan. Later he was in the General Merchandise business. He has five living grandchildren that most of us know. Harry Morgan and Harriett Pulliam still live in Maroa. One grandson, Curt Morgan is in business in Decatur.

Mr. Morgan built the house that still stands on the Northwest corner of 3rd and Walnut, 3 blocks south of the Presbyterian church.

## Blacksmithing.

Having secured a first class blacksmith, I am

Now Prepared

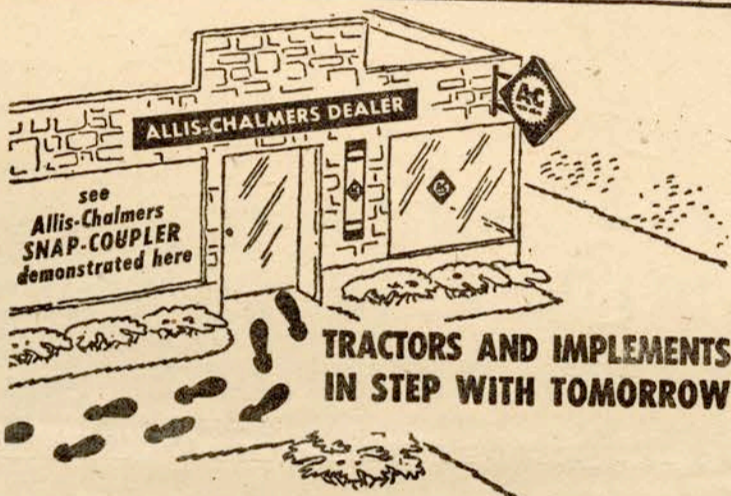
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FROM THE MAROA NEWS  
FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 1881



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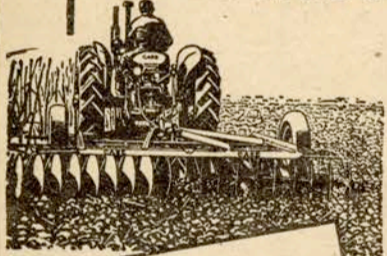
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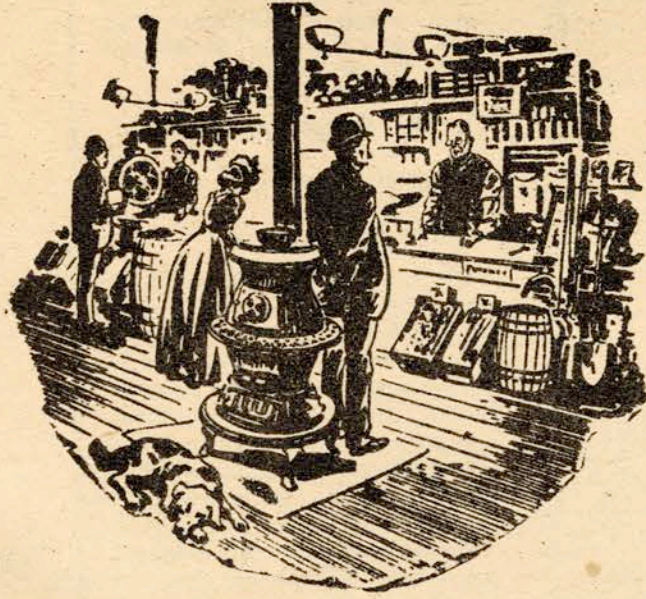
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# Congratulations to Maroa

We want to extend our best wishes on the occasion of Maroa's Centennial. We hope that the old adage "The first 100 years are the hardest" holds true and that the best of everything is yet to come to Maroa.

Electricity has been furnished in Maroa since 1892. The increasing use of low-cost electric service has done much to aid the growth of the communities served by this Company, and to increase the standard of living for each member of these communities.

You can be assured that, as your uses for electricity increase, we will continue to match these needs with additional facilities to meet all your requirements. Electricity saves time and effort every hour of the day, and every day of the year.

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