

Carr Family Story

Submitted by RICIGS member Ruth Evans

The threshing barn on the former Carr farm is rare. It is located just south of Rock Island's Saukie Municipal Golf Course. The farm belonged to William Carr, one of Rock Island County's earliest pioneers. William and his brothers, Peter and Benjamin, settled near the banks of the Rock River, today's 38th Street, in 1828-29. One of William Carr's homes survives as "the little stone house".

Not only is the barn old -- built in 1848 -- 12 years before the start of the American Civil War -- but it is a threshing barn, constructed for the specific and single purpose of threshing and storing wheat. Threshing is the act of separating grain from its husk, and in the days before mechanization this was done by hand, with a farmer actually beating the husks with a flail or stick. The grain, such as wheat, fell to the floor and was collected, and the chaff blew away. The barn was a three-bay, swing-beam threshing barn. The floor is wood planking with three distinct areas, or bays, inside. One bay was for threshing and the other two were for storage of the grain or the wheat bundles as they were brought in from the fields. Threshing barns originated in Europe and were built in northern Illinois from the time of settlement through perhaps the 1860's.

The family of John and Sarah (Wolliver) Karr departed New Jersey about 1805, arriving in Marietta, Washington, Ohio about 1807. John and Sarah and their family, Elisha, Peter, William, Jemina, Benjamin, James and David loaded their belonging in a flat boat. Elisha's wife Mary (Scott) Karr and their 3 children, Julie Ann and twins James Harvey and Elizabeth were in the group. Also included in the boat was Peter's daughter, Elizabeth. Peter's wife, Sarah, died in Ohio. These pioneers floated down the Ohio River and poled up the Mississippi River. Sometime after this the name was changed from Karr to Carr, except for John, Sarah and Elisha.

After arriving in present day Cass County, Illinois, John and all their sons purchased land. Peter was given a land grant on 3 July 1828 in Morgan County, Illinois, signed by President John Quincy Adams. It is said that they needed money to pay the required amount of \$1.25 per acre, so William, Peter, Benjamin and James walked to Galena, Illinois to work in the lead mines at \$10.00 per month.

William and Peter located in what is now Rock Island, Illinois in about 1828. The only people living there were the Sauk and Fox Indians, and the soldiers at Fort Armstrong which had been established in 1816. William and Peter began a ferry service across the Rock River at what now is called Carr's Island. William began to

amass a great portion of the northern Rock River bank by homestead, deed and mortgage. His first home was a log cabin built in 1828 on the bank of the Rock River near the foot of today's 38th Street, but in 1844-1845 he had "the little stone house" built from sandstone quarried on the farm. The outside dimensions of the original two-story structure are about 18x18 feet, and contains one room on the first floor and one upstairs.

Peter and Benjamin arrived in present day county of La Fayette, Wisconsin in 1826. They settled in the north end of the town of Benton, at what was then called "Buzzard Roost", but by 1829 it was known as "Meeker's Grove". They were farmers and miners. Between 1835 and 1849, there were flush times in the mining portion of the town of Benton. Mineral was plenty and prices generally ruled high. The more prominent mines then operated in those times included "Buzzard Roost", owned the Carr's. All of the mines were immeasurably fruitful and enriched their owners and workers.

Black Hawk was not a civil chief, but was an influential leader of the Sauk tribe. He was born in 1767 near the junction of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers in the village they called Saukenuk. He was well acquainted with the Carr family. Saukenuk (Rock Island, Illinois) was the center of the Sauk's universe. They raised corn, melons, squash and other foods in the summer, then in winter they moved west to Iowa for hunting game. In the spring they returned to Saukenuk. One spring they returned to find white men and families living in their lodges, building fences across their fields. William Carr was among those who took away by armed force the land long occupied by Black Hawk and his people.

The Black Hawk War (6 April to 2 August 1832) wasn't so much a war as a four-month series of skirmishes as Black Hawk and his band of followers moved through Illinois up into Wisconsin. The last battle, at Bad Axe, Wisconsin, on the Mississippi River, wasn't so much a battle as a massacre. Amazingly, Black Hawk slipped away, saving himself while his people were slaughtered and scattered.

Eventually Black Hawk settled not far from Fort Madison, Lee County, Iowa, and died in 1838 of natural causes and was buried. His body was dug up by a grave robber, the bones cleaned and wired together and put on display. In 1855, the building in which they were stored burned to the ground, the bones with it.

The war with the Sauk and Fox Indians, including Black Hawk, prompted enlistments from Benton, Wisconsin, and among them was Peter Carr. They formed a portion of the company commanded by Captain Hall, furnished their own guns,

horses and camp equipment and went into camp at Blue Mounds, Wisconsin. Peter was prominent in the war and was appointed to Colonel.

Although the Carr name has largely faded from memory, there is still the Carr Cemetery located at 44th Street and 45th Avenue in Rock Island, Illinois and the bridge built during 2005-2007 over the Rock River joining Rock Island and Milan, Illinois.

In a newspaper poll asking the public what to name the bridge, the winning entry turned out to be Carr's Crossing. Peter and William Carr were Quad-City development pioneers. However, some veterans groups made themselves heard after the election, at the offices of elected officials. That led to the compromise. The bridge is officially known as Veterans Memorial Bridge at Carr's Crossing.

John and Sarah (Wolliver) Karr, Elisha and Mary (Scott) Karr are buried in Karr Cemetery, Cass County, Illinois. Peter's first wife Sarah (unknown) Karr is buried in Ohio. Peter's second wife, Jane (Jamison) is buried in Illinois City Cemetery, Illinois City, Illinois. Peter Carr and third wife Sarah (Burnham) Carr are buried in Carr Cemetery, La Fayette County, Wisconsin. William and Eliza (Tureman --1st wife) Carr are buried in Carr Cemetery, Rock Island, Illinois. William's 2nd wife Mira (Mayhew) is buried in Carr Cemetery, Rock Island, Illinois. Jemina Carr and husband John Wagner are buried in Carr Cemetery, Rock Island, Illinois. Benjamin Carr (never married) is buried in Carr Cemetery, La Fayette County, Wisconsin. James and Mary (Reavis) Carr are buried in Avon Cemetery, Avon, Fulton, Illinois. David and Julia (Wells) Carr are buried in Karr Cemetery, Cass County, Illinois.

Peter was my great great great grandfather. He was born in 1797 in New Jersey. His oldest daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1822 in Marietta, Washington, Ohio. She was my great great grandmother. Elizabeth married Adolphus Dunlap on 27 August 1840 in Edgington, Rock Island, Illinois. Elizabeth died 7 January 1906, and Adolphus died 20 July 1889. Both are buried in Chippiannock Cemetery, Rock Island, Illinois. My grandparents were Lucy (Dunlap) and David "Dave" McAfee. Lucy and Dave are buried in Wapello Cemetery, Wapello, Louisa, Iowa. My parents are Eloise (Corey) and Mathew McAfee. Mathew is buried in Wapello Cemetery, Wapello, Louisa, Iowa. Eloise is still living. My name is Ruth (McAfee) Evans.