

The Manierre Family in Early Chicago History.

By George Manierre.

My father, after whom I was named, was born in New London, Connecticut, on July 15, 1817, and died at his residence on Michigan avenue, Chicago, May 21, 1863. He came to Chicago in 1835, when the population of the city was 3,265. He was of Norman-French extraction, his first American ancestors having come from Normandy to this country in 1680 with a colony of Huguenots. His great-grandfather, Louis Manierre, settled in New London in 1785. My father was among the foremost men in the early history of Chicago. He was prominent in civic, educational and political matters and in everything referring to the improvement of the city. He was intensely interested in anti-slavery. In 1854 a negro was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act, and under my father's protection was discharged. For this service the colored people of Chicago gave him a silver cup. He was one of the organizers of the Union Defense Committee and took a very prominent part in the beginning of the Civil War. He was one of the organizers of the Law Institute and Library, of Lincoln Park, the Chicago Historical Society, the Republican Party, and the Young Men's Association, afterwards merged into the present Public Library. His death was deemed a public calamity, and all the members of the bar in a body, all the officers of the courts, the mayor and common council and prominent men were at the funeral at the Second Presbyterian Church, northeast corner of Washington Street and Wabash Avenue. The body was escorted from the residence to the church amid the tolling of the city bells, and the hearse was accompanied by citizens to Division Street. The court house was draped in mourning, as were all public offices. All the city courts, both State and Federal, adjourned out of respect to his memory. He was a true friend, a sound politi-

cian, a just judge and a careful and profound lawyer; one in the long roll of eminent men who made Chicago. He was an upright gentleman and a man of strong character and filled many offices of public trust, which he did not seek, but had thrust upon him. Scrupulous fidelity distinguished his discharge of all trusts committed to him. As a judge he was a great magistrate, and as an exemplary citizen he benefited the State.

My mother, Ann Hamilton Manierre, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, October 23, 1823, and died in Chicago June 8, 1900. She came to Chicago in 1840. She was a daughter of the Honorable William Reid, a barrister of Glasgow, Scotland, whose ancestor fought with his tenants at the battle of Bothwell Bridge June 22, 1679, under the flag "For God, King and Covenants," and inherited through him the estate of Kilbryd. She was married to my father in Detroit in 1842. In 1876 she built a house at No. 1928 Calumet Avenue, where she lived until her death. This house was built on the scene of the Indian battle that took place on the morning of August 15, 1812, when the troops and settlers left Fort Dearborn and were attacked by the Indians.

I was born February 5, 1845, in a brick house standing in the middle of the quarter block on the southeast corner of Adams and Dearborn Streets, now opposite The Fair. The grounds were filled with trees, shrubbery and plants. When I was a year old my parents moved to a house owned by Dr. Charles V. Dyer, on the northwest corner of Monroe and Dearborn Streets, where the First National Bank Building now stands. My parents resided with Dr. Dyer during the period that my father was building a two-story frame house on the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Jackson Boulevard, now occupied by the Stratford Hotel, and here the family remained until the Chicago fire. This house stood in a large lot. Currant bushes grew all along the fence. There were in the yard two arbors covered with grapevines, two large cottonwood trees, garden plants and shrubbery. Large locust trees were in the front and on the south side of the house and these trees extended to Wabash Avenue.

In the early years of my life, woods commenced at Thirty-first Street, extending east of State Street to the lake and on the north side to Waukegan from the lake to the river. In the early days the river emptied at Madison Street. The Cottage Grove cattle yards were located near Thirty-ninth and State Streets. Trees grew at the corner of Grove and Todd Streets, owned by my father, and along the river, and Hubbard's Trail to Danville passed in front and near the river. I remember when I was about 14 years of age, shooting quail in a lot back of our house, and wild pigeons on the trees surrounding it. Pigeons (now exterminated) flew over the city by millions, and the quantity of wild fowl game to be seen in the spring on the Lake, the Calumet Lake and River and pigeons in the woods south of Thirty-first Street, was enormous. Since that time probably only one-quarter of the wild fowl game remains. On the west side, around Bull's Head in the spring there was fine shooting. Prairie chickens were quite plentiful and ducks and snipe were easily found on the prairies. In those days there were many song and other wild birds about the city. Whitefish were seined in large numbers from the River to the Calumet. In 1878 I became a member of the Tolleston Club, near where Gary is now located, about thirty miles from Chicago, where the shooting was always good. On the western plains, buffalo (now exterminated) ranged in enormous numbers.

Lake Street was built up from State to Franklin Streets in 1837. In 1838 there was a ferry at State Street and the Tremont House was at the corner of Lake and Dearborn Streets. In 1840 there was a market house in the center of State Street, near the river and north of Lake Street. In 1842 the Common Council passed a law to keep the hogs out of the street. I remember often seeing droves of sheep, hogs and cattle pass our house on Michigan Avenue. The Second Presbyterian Church was located in 1842 in a one-story shanty at 116-118 (81-85 West) Randolph Street, owned by my father, and this building is now standing at Sixteenth Street as a station of the Illinois Central Railroad. In 1842 the first

water works were built. The first shipment of coal was by vessel in 1841.

In 1845, the date of my birth, Fort Dearborn was standing as rebuilt in 1816. I remember the buildings well. At this time the population was 12,088, and now at this date, 1911, it is 2,185,283.

In 1845 there was but little piling in the Chicago River. There were no steamboats, gas, electric lights, reapers, cables, telegraphs, high buildings, water or sewer systems, railroads, canals, omnibuses or horse cars. There was no regular mail or sidewalks up to that date. Jackson boulevard, where my father afterwards had his residence, was regarded as out of town. All produce brought into Chicago was brought in by wagons or sail boats. All those who kept cows at that time had them driven by boys out to near Twelfth street, where there was wild prairie grass, and at night they were driven back to their respective homes. All the land west of Chicago and to the Pacific, north and south, except about a dozen scattering towns and villages, was wild land at this date, roamed over by wild Indians and buffalo in countless numbers.

In 1846 the Common Council first inaugurated a system of levying special taxes for street improvements by the adoption of a plan advocated by my father, for planking or other improvements of the streets. The Mexican War was fought from 1846 to 1848. Between 1846 and 1854 it was quite common for runaway slaves to pass through Chicago on their way to Canada. I remember my father taking a suit of his clothes and dressing a runaway slave in the rear kitchen of our house on Michigan avenue and Jackson boulevard.

In 1848 the Illinois and Michigan Canal was completed from the Chicago River to Lockport. In this same year a breakwater was placed on the Lake shore. A storm in 1851 took many feet away from this breakwater, which was located only a few feet from the present line of Michigan avenue. Bridges were built at Clark, Wells, Randolph and Monroe Streets between the years 1848-1849. All roads leading to and in the city previous to 1855 were dirt roads, with a few plank roads, which were built between the years of 1848 and

1854. All communication with other towns was held by way of sail vessels on the Lake and by wheel vehicles, the mail being brought in that way. The first railroad entering Chicago was built in 1849.

The Chicago Gas Light and Coke Company built their gas works in 1850. Two years later the Illinois Central Railroad adopted its present route along the lake shore and all other railroads now in Chicago came thereafter. After the Illinois Central built its track in the lake on piling, a basin was left between Michigan Avenue and its tracks, and in this basin in the summer people found pleasure in rowboats and in the winter in skating. One of the principal amusements of my early life was skating in this basin running from Randolph to Twelfth street. This piling was where the tracks are now located. I have often seen from the windows of our home ships broken to pieces and lives lost on the breakwater built east of the railroad to protect its tracks. Before the railroad was built I remember going down to the beach with my nurse to see a sailor who, in a shipwreck, had been thrown up on the sands nearly in front of my father's house.

In 1850 State, Clark, LaSalle and Wells Streets were planked and sewers made of oak planks running through the center of these streets from the River to Randolph street, and the River received all drainage.

Isaac Cook, postmaster in 1853, had his office on the ground floor of 84-86 (116-122 North) Dearborn Street, owned by my father. This was removed in 1855 to a building that occupied the northwest corner of Monroe and Dearborn streets, now occupied by the First National Bank building. The cholera of 1853 made quite an impression on my youthful mind. The second court house was built during this year, and it was while standing near it, as a small boy, I saw a riot take place between a mob and the police on account of the closing of the saloons on Sunday.

In 1854 the city was supplied with water. Before that, most of the water was obtained from wells and water carts. At my father's house we got our drinking water from a well in the yard.

I remember the big snow storm in 1855, when the snow piled up in enormous heaps all along Michigan Avenue. In this year the first steam fire engine was used, hand engines having been used in the city prior to this date. In 1856 new sewers were put in the streets. I remember the awful tragedy of the sinking of the Lady Elgin off Grosse's Point, on September 8, 1860, and the bodies and wreckage strewn along the lake shore.

In 1856-1857 there was a change of grade in the whole builded city. On Lake street, which was the principal business street of the city, the grade was up and down throughout the entire length of the street. There was a ferry at Lake street, Clark street and Dearborn street. I remember crossing the river on a scow boat, pulled backward and forward with a rope. In 1856 there were eighteen omnibuses in the city and in 1857 there were ten public schools. In 1857 the Chicago harbor was improved. In this same year the portion of the north side near the lake became so objectionable by reason of tramps living upon it that their houses were torn down by a mob and they were driven away from that location. During this year the express companies came into the city.

The first city railway was built on South State street in 1859. In 1860 I was with my father in the wigwam on the southeast corner of Lake and Market streets, the site of the old Sauganash Hotel, where we saw Lincoln nominated.

When I was a small boy my father and mother went by stage from Chicago to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where my mother's father, William Reid, had located, and he was one of the first three or four settlers who built at the head of the lake. The roads were often heavily mired, and I remember my father and the driver taking stakes from a snake fence and putting them in the mud for my mother to stand on.

I remember seeing near his house in a large tree the remains of a canoe that held a relative of Big Foot, an Indian Chief, after whom the Big Foot prairie was named. My grandfather's house was located near where the electric railroad depot now stands and was immediately in front of the hill

on which was the old Indian burial ground. I remember as a boy digging Indian relics out of this hill.

One of the pleasures of my early days was visiting my Uncle George W. Snow's farm, located near where the station Deering now stands; also his house, which occupied the north end of the half block on the southwest corner of State street and Jackson boulevard. There were no sidewalks leading to his house; only a foot path on the grass along the side of the road. I used to go out and visit Dr. Dyer and family, who lived near the corner of Fullerton avenue and Clark street. This was then all wild country, covered with oak trees.

I remember in the early days hearing Stephen A. Douglas speaking from the porch of the Tremont House; also going with my father to the Metropolitan Block to hear Frederick Douglass, the negro, make a speech, soon after he had escaped from slavery.

Before the fire the walk on the east side of Michigan avenue was principally a dirt path, with banks sloping to the water, with an opening in the first breakwater, where water carts could back up at Van Buren street. We used to go in swimming at Twelfth street. In a family drive to Grove and Twentieth streets, where my father owned some property, the roads were so bad that we were often stalled before we got there. A foot path led to property on the southwest corner of Madison and Sangamon streets, also owned by my father. This was surrounded by prairie.

I remember well when the cemetery was located where Lincoln Park now is. It was afterwards removed to Grace-land cemetery. A monument that stands today on my father's grave was made by a marble firm located on the northwest corner of Adams and Clark streets, where now stands the Merchants' Loan and Trust building.

From Chicago to Lake Forest and beyond there was a prim-aval forest and the Lake Forest Academy was located east of the track and in the midst of these woods. Everything was very primitive, game being very abundant in the woods and on the prairies west of the railroad track.

The fire which occurred October 19, 1857, entailed a great loss of life and property. Starting on South Water street, it spread to the north side of Lake street, between Dearborn and Clark streets, which was at that time in the center of the business district. It showed the helplessness of the volunteer fire department as then organized by citizens. About a year afterwards a paid fire department was organized, with steam fire engines. This was the commencement of our present fire department. I remember well the horror that this fire spread over the city, on account of the great loss of lives of its citizens, who were doing volunteer service as firemen, using the old fashioned hand engines. It was while carrying out goods from a burning building on Lake street that some twenty-five citizens were caught by the falling walls. This fire was one of the most disastrous that Chicago has ever known.

From 1846 to 1856 my father and his partner, George W. Meeker, had their law offices on the second floor of No. 100 Lake Street (new number 54 West), near the above building. I remember as a small boy often visiting these offices.

During the Chicago fire in 1871 I saw many buildings on fire on the principal streets of the city, and after remaining in my father's house until the roof caught on fire, I went out in a boat on the lake, where I remained until night, and then went south to Twenty-fourth street to meet my mother. After the fire I was among the first to commence taking debris out of the sites of our buildings that had been burned down, and Twelfth street today is mostly filled up with debris that was taken from these buildings under my direction. I was among the very first to start new buildings. The Sherman House and Tremont House were standing in their present locations at this time.

I have always been interested in books and have a large collection on the early history of America and of classic literature. Among the first books I remember reading are "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Rollins' History."

The first school I went to was located on the northeast corner of Madison street and Wabash avenue. The second

was Mrs. Brown's, in her residence at the northwest corner of Michigan avenue and Van Buren street, now occupied by the McCormick office building. In 1857 I went to the Garden City Institute, 69-71 Adams street, H. O. Snow principal. I also attended Bruce's Classical School. I attended Lake Forest Academy from 1859 to 1863, and afterwards went to Yale College, where I was graduated in 1868. In 1869 I was graduated from the Law School of Columbia College, and after graduating remained a year in the office of Scammon, McCagg & Fuller. After leaving them I went into the real estate business and in 1886 formed a partnership with Henry Dibblee, which lasted until his death in December, 1907. During this time we had charge of the real estate of Marshall Field and this charge has continued with me to this date.

When I was at Yale the old buildings with the old fence were all standing and immense elm trees surrounded the college square. There was no football and no baseball, but boating was supreme. Glyuna and Varuna were the principal boating societies. The Senior year had its commodore and the other years their lieutenants. Rood's, Bradley's, Moriarty's and Wood's were the principal places of resort for food and drink. Secret societies had their drummers up to Senior year. In Sophomore year was had the burial of Euclid and the students' books were taken in a hearse to Prospect Hill, where they were burnt in a big bonfire. Junior year had its wooden spoon entertainment. Visits were often made by students to the Judge's cave. Linonia, and Brothers in Unity were the principal literary societies. Rushes and hazing were carried on each year.

I was married February 9, 1876, in Trinity Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, to Ann Eliza Edgerton, who was born at Hicksville, Ohio, on June 4, 1849. My wife's father, Alfred P. Edgerton, descendant of Richard Edgerton, Original Proprietor, Norwich, Connecticut, 1659, was born at Plattsburg, New York, January 11, 1813, and died at Hicksville, Ohio, May 14, 1897. He was one of the foremost business men of his time, an early pioneer in Northwest Ohio, and was most prominent in financial and political matters, both State and

National. My wife was a member of Farmington School, Connecticut, 1863-1867, and is a member of the Colonial Dames of America.

Our first child, Jeannette, was born at Fort Wayne, Indiana, November 6, 1876, and died at Hicksville, Ohio, November 9, 1877, at her grandfather's house.

Alfred Edgerton Manierre was born August 13, 1878, at 1928 Calumet Avenue. He was graduated from Yale College in 1902 and was married March 20, 1907, to June G. Parkinson, who was born in Chicago April 16, 1881. Their daughter, Barbara, was born at 110 Bellevue Place on August 24, 1908.

Louis Manierre was born at 1928 Calumet Avenue September 23, 1879. He was graduated from Yale College in 1901 and afterwards was graduated from the Northwestern Law School. He afterwards went into the real estate business with his father, under the name of Dibblee & Manierre.

Arthur Manierre was born in Evanston on April 29, 1881, in a house located on the northwest corner of Sheridan Road and Haven street. He was graduated from Yale in 1903 and married December 20, 1906, to Eleanor F. Mason, who was born December 17, 1883, and he died at Henrotin Hospital October 7, 1912.

Samuel Wheeler Manierre was born at 11 Astor Street on December 12, 1882, and died there March 7, 1883.

Francis Edgerton Manierre was born May 16, 1884, at 11 Astor Street. He was graduated from Yale College in 1907 and afterwards went into the real estate business with his father under the name of Dibblee & Manierre.

In 1859 I was elected a life member of the Young Men's Association, which was the predecessor of the present Public Library.

In 1894 I was elected Life Trustee of the Field Museum of Natural History. Was elected Patron "for Eminent Service to Field Museum of Natural History" in 1908. Was elected Life Trustee of Newberry Library in 1899. I received degree of Master of Arts in 1893, conferred by Yale College.

I am a member of the Chicago Club, Chicago Historical Society, Mid-Day Club, and the Saddle and Cycle Club, and a Governing Member of the Art Institute.

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Note.—This article was not written for publication. It was prepared by George Manierre II “for my boys,” as a family record. Mr. Manierre, an old friend and schoolmate, permitted me to peruse it one day, when calling at his office, and recognizing its great historical value, I solicited and obtained a copy for the archives of this Society.—W. T. Norton.

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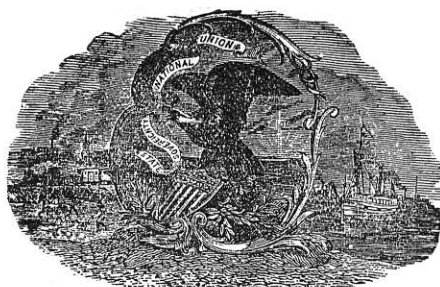
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