

HIST SOC 01
813 SCHOOL ST.

STUENKEL FARM - ALLIS CHALMERS

MATTESON COMMONS -

KAMPE/ON VOLLMER STANDING TREES / ORIGINAL VAULT

SECTION I

MATTESON HOUSE (MARDON) | HOTEL
(CONCRETE / ORIGINAL TRAIN TRESTLE)

EARLY SETTLERS

Strategically located at the junction of the Michigan Central, Illinois Central, and Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railroads, Matteson was first surveyed in June, 1855 by N. D. Ellwood of Joliet and Jacob Rich of Richton.¹

Seven years before their survey, Frederick Illgren had purchased forty acres of land for \$50.00 or \$1.25 per acre in the southern section of the village. One year later in December, John Lewis, Tom Dyer and Julius Wadsworth bought 480 acres of good top soil in the village.²

In 1856, one year after Matteson was surveyed by Ellwood and Rich, Matteson still was a relatively small village. Due to this smallness Charles Ohlendorf ran unopposed for the office of village postmaster and of course won. Besides being the village's first postmaster, he was also the village's first merchant. His house once stood where Ecker's Royal Blue Store is located today.³

NEXT TO
SEND IT ANYWHERE

Another prominent settler to the area was William Arnold whose father had decided to move to Chicago, where he had helped build the first school house in that city. He moved to Matteson in 1849. However, Arnold's father did not move directly from Chicago to Matteson for he first settled on a farm near the Fox River. Leaving the Fox River area, he moved to the village purchasing land located north of the Elliott farm on Butterfield Creek.

ELLIOTT ELECTRIC PARK
ELLIOTT GEMETERY
2900 -

1ST FARM SCHOOL
+ SEIDEN PRAIRIE SCHOOL +
VOLLMER RD. W. OF CHURCH

1019 ELLIOTT CT. - FARM
RD.

OLYMPIA FLDS.

Not able to shake the dirt completely from his boots, William Arnold, besides being township supervisor for several years, devoted part of his time to that of being an auctioneer. During the fall and winter seasons, he practiced this trade in and around the Matteson area. Later he built the Farmers' Hotel which he later sold to the Dettmering family.⁴

Coming to Matteson in 1828 was Henry Merkler. He arrived in America at the age of twenty-one having been born in Igerwifr, Germany, a town near Strasburg. He arrived in America on August 24, 1828 and began work on the first American built steam railroad. Soon tiring of traveling between Washington and Baltimore, he quit his job and traveled West as far as New Landcaster, Ohio, arriving April 16, 1831. Staying only long enough to capture or be captured by the heart of Eleanor Hemmsion, he left New Landcaster, with his bride, and continued to move westward, arriving in Matteson the same year. He purchased land in Rich Township, settling on a farm just east of the village. Eleanor died in 1854 leaving him with four children. Realizing that they would need a mother, he married Christina Schilling in 1855. From this second marriage, his family increased for Christina gave birth to six additional children.⁵

Arriving in Matteson in 1869 was James Freeman Dana Elliott. Born in New York in 1824, he left the Empire State and, with his father moved first to Massachusettes, than to Pennsylvania, and finally New Hampshire. Deciding that farming was not his "cup of tea" he headed west, arriving in Chicago in 1838 where, at the age of fourteen, he was employed by Cook and Roster of the Masion House.

For about ten years, he fluctuated between hotel employment and employment on steamboats. At twenty-four, feeling that he had learned enough about hotels and steamboats, he decided to go into the lumber business which eventually led him in 1852 into the formation of his own business in lumber and grain. Probably one reason he decided to go into business for himself was his marriage to Harriet Chivelle who had come to Chicago with her family from Boscastle, England in 1848. From this union were born seventeen children, eight of whom were still living in 1884.⁶

In 1890 one of Dana's children, Moses, built an amusement park in the village. Unable to plant pine cones in the park as his father had done earlier along Route 30, he nevertheless made the park the talk of the area. The park was located North of Route 30 between Main Street and the Illinois Central tracks and contained a dance hall, restaurant, bowling alley, a merry-go-round and various other concession stands designed for family entertainment. The gate to the park had stood where Kedzie intersects Route 30. North of the gate was a path which led into the grounds. On Sundays as many as 30,000 persons visited the park. Many of these visitors, besides coming from the village and surrounding areas, boarded the Illinois Central in Chicago and traveled to the park. As Dettmerings provided the food and the drinks, a good time was had by all.⁷ During the winter months, Dana preferred to reside in Chicago rather than on his 400 acre farm in Matteson. Regardless of where he lived, he had several friends who were involved in politics, such as Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. He journeyed with Douglas during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. In appreciation, Douglas presented Elliott with a large silk American flag in a

AMUSEMENT
PK.
*

silver case. His friendship with Lincoln began when he lived in Lincoln, Illinois during the 1850's. Several times he invited the distinguished American to partake of an evening meal at his home. Dana's daughter, Nettie, who became, before her death, Mrs. Ira McCoy of Chicago Heights, would recall the times she had sat on Lincoln's lap after the evening meals had been finished.⁸

Another friend of Dannas was a man whom he helped finance to a seat in the United States Senate, John A. Logan. If for no other reason, he is to be remembered for his introduction of the bill which established Memorial Day, which honored the dead of the Civil War.

On September 20, 1889 Charles Grosche came to Matteson. He did not make the journey from Germany across the Atlantic alone however. His older brother, Gus, had returned to his German home for a family visit. While there, it was decided that Carl should return with him to Hobart, Indiana where Gus had taken up residence. When Carl left Germany, he was sixteen years old. Upon arriving in Hobart, Carl worked for an English farmer nearby who renamed him "Charles." After working in the Hobart area for 2½ years, Gus, who was a butcher by trade, settled in Matteson and, through the help of Henrich Dettmering Senior, began his own butcher shop. Gus sent his brother a telegram asking him to leave Hobart and come to Matteson. "I took the Donkey, (a one-car train which ran from Dyer, Indiana to Joliet passing through Matteson), and (arrived) the next day with my trunk," he recalled.⁹ Their store was located at the southwest corner of Locust and 216th Street. Today the Grosche family is still one of Matteson's prominent families.

Two other settlers of note were Benjamin Butterfield and Henry Mahler. Benjamin Butterfield came to the village

from New York in 1834. He served as the village's first collector of Rich Township in 1850. In his honor, the Village Elders named the creek which passes through Matteson Butterfield Creek. Henry Mahler came to Matteson in 1850 and purchased a quarter section of land located at the Northwest corner of Sauk Trail and Route 54. His farm is still owned by the Mahler family and, when owned by Henry, was noted for its cheeses.

Other early settlers to the predominantly German community were: John Fox who, in 1856, erected a house and wagon shop; Henrich Stuenkel, a German immigrant who brought his wife and eight children and purchased 160 acres of land west of the village. Mr. Stuenkel built and managed the first hotel in Matteson. As his children grew and married, they remained in the village, settling on land near the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church built in 1852. Still standing, the church remains at Sauk Trail and Cicero, three miles west of Matteson.¹⁰

SECTION II

EARLY GOVERNOR AND NAME OF VILLAGE

The Village of Matteson received its name from the tenth governor of the state, Joel Aldrich Matteson who served from 1853-1857. The governor's father, Henry, was born in Ulster County, Ireland in 1646. In 1666, Henry Matteson left Ireland and came to America, settling in what is now Rhode Island. From Rhode Island, he moved to Jefferson County in the state of New York where, in 1808, Mrs. Matteson gave birth to a son whom they named Joel. Living with his parents till the age of twenty-five, Joel broke his family ties and began traveling west, purchasing farmland in Kendall County, in Illinois.² As the panic of 1836 began, Joel sold his farm and moved to Joliet where he entered politics, becoming first a justice of the peace than a state senator for four years. Rising rapidly in state politics, he became noted for his financial and executive abilities and was elected Governor of Illinois in 1853.³

From evidence gathered, Matteson was a capable governor. He reduced the state debt by \$7,000,000 as well as having reduced taxes for the people of the state. He increased the railroad mileage through the state from 400 miles to 3,000 miles.⁴ However, he did make one mistake. He became involved in the canal scrip fraud

SECTION II

EARLY GOVERNOR AND NAME OF VILLAGE

The Village of Matteson received its name from the tenth governor of the state, Joel Aldrich Matteson who served from 1853-1857. The governor's father, Henry, was born in Ulster County, Ireland in 1646. In 1666, Henry Matteson left Ireland and came to America, settling in what is now Rhode Island. From Rhode Island, he moved to Jefferson County in the state of New York where, in 1808, Mrs. Matteson gave birth to a son whom they named Joel. Living with his parents till the age of twenty-five, Joel broke his family ties and began traveling west, purchasing farmland in Kendall County, in Illinois.² As the panic of 1836 began, Joel sold his farm and moved to Joliet where he entered politics, becoming first a justice of the peace than a state senator for four years. Rising rapidly in state politics, he became noted for his financial and executive abilities and was elected Governor of Illinois in 1853.³

From evidence gathered, Matteson was a capable governor. He reduced the state debt by \$7,000,000 as well as having reduced taxes for the people of the state. He increased the railroad mileage through the state from 400 miles to 3,000 miles.⁴ However, he did make one mistake. He became involved in the canal scrip fraud

which caused him much personal suffering.

About \$400,000 in canal scrip had been issued by the Illinois and Michigan Central directors in 1839 in demoninations of \$50 to \$100. With the exception of about \$716, all the scrip had been redeemed by 1843 after the bonds were sold. The remainder of the scrip, rather than destroyed, was stored, along with some blank checks, and promptly forgotten. However, Governor Matteson did not forget and, just before leaving office, proceeded to redeem \$107,450 worth of the canal scrip and \$10,000 worth of the unused checks. In 1859, two years after Matteson had left office, the fraud was uncovered by members of the state senate. The senate appointed a committee to investigate the late governor's misdeeds. The committee discovered that the governor, in the redemption transaction, not only had been given state bonds, but had received, unlawfully, about \$250,000 from the state treasury. In an attempt to explain his way out of a difficult situation, Matteson stated that he had purchased the scrip from various persons at different times. Asked to name names, he became very evasive and conveniently "forgot" names and places of residence. As the evidence procured by the committee was conclusive, legal action was taken against him in Sangamon County. The decision of the court was that Matteson was to turn all his real estate holdings over to the state in order to cover the financial losses incurred as a result of his fraudulent dealings. No further legal action was taken though he still owed the state \$27,000.⁵

One year before Joel Matteson became Governor of Illinois, the Illinois Central laid track through the village. To handle the actual construction of the road, the railroads board of directors hired Roswell B. Mason

as chief engineer. His selection by the board was a wise one for Mason had been the engineer and general superintendent of the New York and New Haven railroad.⁶ Later he served as Mayor of Chicago during the Chicago fire of October, 1871.⁷

As the railroad moved southward, the various towns and depots along the rightaway were named in honor of important people either directly or indirectly connected with railroads or with the railroad industry. In 1853, when the Illinois Central reached Matteson, Colonel Mason named both the depot and the village Matteson in honor of the newly-elected governor of the state. Besides, who could overlook an ex-railroad contractor?

¹Chicago Heights Star, August, 1948.

²Notes taken from the History of Will County by Ella Schmeckbier, p. 1.

³Ibid.

⁴Elimer Ott, "A History Brief," (April, 1971), p. 2.

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶Howard Gray Brownson, History of the Illinois Central Railroad to 1870 (Urbana, 1915), p. 343.

⁷John F. Stover, History of the Illinois Central Railroad (New York, 1972), p. 182.

SECTION III

TRANSPORTATION

In the history of Matteson, three railroads have played a vital role in the growth of the village; the Illinois Central, the Joliet Division of the Michigan Central (now the New York Central), and the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern railroad. Of the three, the most important has been the Illinois Central. The Illinois Central, incorporated in 1851, was the first railroad in the nation to be constructed under a federal grant, receiving two and one-half million acres. However, the land was not a gift to the railroad for the land was granted on condition that the new company must, within a six year period, construct 705 miles of track from Cairo to Chicago and from Centralia to Dunlieth, located on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River opposite Iowa. On December 23, 1851 ground was broken and construction was begun. By 1852, tracks had been laid as far as Matteson. By September 27, 1856 the Illinois Central reached from Cairo, through Centralia to Dunlieth, Illinois. Thus the Illinois Central had completed its 705 miles one year before the expiration date as specified by the original land grant. Its two and one-half million acres made the road not only the largest

in the United States but in the world as well.¹

Continuing to move southward, the Illinois Central soon passed the Illinois border, reaching New Orleans in 1873. Ten years later, it had sole ownership of trackage from New Orleans to the still growing metropolis of Chicago. Thus not only did the Illinois Central open the rich prairie land of Illinois to agriculture and economic growth, but in the decade between 1850 and 1860, the thirty-one counties surrounding the railroad increased in population by 150%. In contrast, the population in the rest of the state increased by only 52%. As part of the 150%, Matteson welcomed the Illinois Central.² A major reason for the acceptance of the railroad by the people of the village was that Matteson was a rather small community in 1852 and the road would serve the dual purpose of bringing people to the village as well as transporting goods to the larger city markets.³

The first ticket agent hired as the Illinois Central passed through Matteson was D. L. Holden. Mr. Holden came to the village in 1865, having fought for the Union as a member of the Illinois Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He rose in rank from that of a private to that of a regimental sergeant.⁴ After serving as ticket agent for a number of years and having been accepted by the community, he ran for the local school board and was elected serving from April 5, 1879 to April 5, 1883.⁵

Besides the Illinois Central, the Joliet Division of the Michigan Central (New York Central) played an early role in the development of the village. The Michigan Central tracks passed through Matteson in June, 1853, one year after the Illinois Central had laid its tracks through the community. Thirty-three years

later the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern railroad laid track near the southern boundary of Matteson.

Because the Illinois Central and the Michigan Central roads intersected, the first running North and South and the second East and West, it was decided to have both use the same depot and to have one ticket agent. However, both railroads decided to employ their own freight agents.⁶

Due to the crossing of the Illinois Central and the Michigan Central railroads, Matteson grew at a rapid rate. When the Illinois Central tracks were raised over those of the Michigan Central, Matteson's rate of growth began to decline.

A few feet north of the depot was a two-story wooden switch-house. In cold weather, both levels were heated by two pot-bellied stoves. On the upper level the stove was located near the desk which faced the tracks. The switchmen stood a few feet from the desk and switched trains by manually operating approximately thirty-five levers. They worked two 12 hour shifts and usually brought their own lunches as both lived in Matteson. However they could cook on the stoves if they so desired.⁷

The Illinois Central provided commuter as well as transportation for the grain and dairy products produced by the farmers of Matteson and the surrounding vicinity. One problem existed in that commuter train service consisted of two trains a day each way. One arrived from Chicago around 9:00 in the morning with the other arriving around 4:30 in the afternoon. The downtown 'loop' was the 12th Street Station not the present Randolph Street Station.

Matteson's transportation story would not be complete without the "Little Train that Could," the

Dinkey. A one-car train attached to the rear of the Michigan Central trains, it ran from Joliet to Dyer, Indiana carrying passengers as well as some freight. Besides the Dinkey was a street car line which ran from Joliet through the heart of Matteson to Chicago Heights. This street car line ran on a viaduct over the top of the Michigan Central tracks.⁸

¹Paul W. Jaenicke, "Matteson and the Iron Horse,"
(Matteson Historical Society, 1977), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Interview with Mr. Robert Harrison, Trustee for the
Chicago South Suburban Mass Transit District.

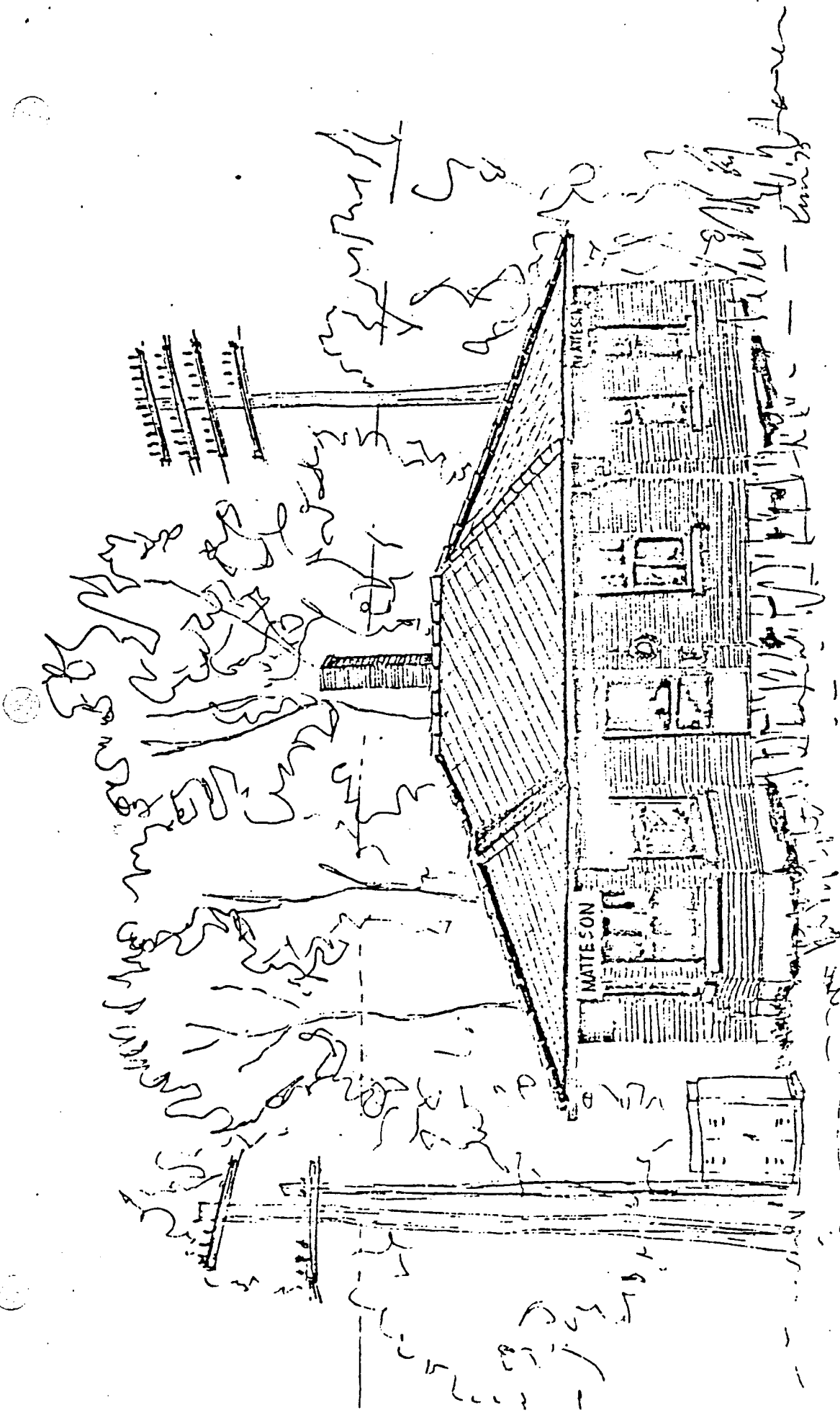
⁴_____, Matteson Pow Wow to Know How 1855-1955,
(), p. 9.

⁵Board of Education Minutes, (April, 1879-April, 1883).

⁶_____, Matteson Pow Wow to Know How 1855-1955,
p. 18.

⁷Interview with Kay Gresche Matteson Resident whose
brother-in-law was a railroad switchman.

⁸_____, Matteson Pow Wow to Know How 1855-1955,
p. 21.



MATTESON RAILROAD DEPOT

¹Board of Education Minutes, 1860-1900, pages not numbered.

²Notes from meeting of Matteson Historical Society, October, 1978.

³T.P. Zander 1876; P.H. Warner 1879; Frank G. Breyton 1881; L.D. Wilson 1881; Mr. Whitney 1882; D.L. Holden 1883; Board of Education Minutes, 1860-1900.

⁴Board Minutes.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷_____, Zion For A Century, (Louisville, 1978), p. 10.

SECTION V

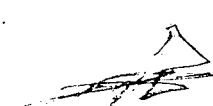
FIRE DEPARTMENT

It was not difficult, in colonial America, to distinguish one fire department from another for each fireman had his own individually designed fire bucket. During these times, the fire companies were called quite frequently for most buildings were made of wood. As towns grew and expanded, wood continued to be the chief construction material.¹ Matteson was no exception for not only were the buildings constructed of wood, but so were the sidewalks and picket fences which surrounded the homes of the villagers. At a meeting of the village board held in August, 1894 the members voted for the formation of a village volunteer fire department. This department was formed on the 20th when thirty-four men volunteered to form the unit. The fire department was formed none to soon for five months after its formation, Matteson had its first large fire. At one o'clock on Sunday morning the bucket brigade was called out to fight the fire at the Michigan Central tracks as the roads coal shed had caught on fire. To fight the blaze, water was pumped from wells and ditches with a hand-pump manned by the wives of the firemen. Besides the coal shed, a carload of kindling wood had also caught fire. Both the coal shed and the railroad car were totally

destroyed. The estimated loss to the Michigan Central was \$500.00.²

Realizing that the bucket type of fire fighting was inadequate, the village purchased, in the summer of 1894, a hand-drawn chemican and water hand pumper from the Howe Pump Company. Later, in 1896, a hand-drawn hose cart and hook and ladder unit was added. This unit was kept in a storeroom next to Dettmerings Tavern until the new frame village hall was built. This "fire engine" was later improved when Art Mahler hitched his tow truck to the fire department wagon and towed it to fires. Though sold in 1957, the unit had to be repurchased in 1967 due to pressure applied by both the firemen and people of the village.³

When a fire occurred in the village, the townsfolk were notified by a large bell, similar to the type used to call farmers from their fields by the first person who reached the bell. This individual would, besides ringing the bell, shout "Fire!" and everyone would run to the blaze. In 1897, when the village hall was completed, an alarm bell, with a rope attached, was rung in the belfry. How many false alarms took place by youngsters who gave the rope a tug or two is unrecorded. Also, a large dinner bell was placed on the main corner of the village and was used as an alarm. This bell was discarded in 1927 when a siren was placed on the water tower. Dating from 1927, a button, located in the village hall, activated the siren and fire phone in Dettmerings as the firemen spent much of their time at the tavern. When the village hall was torn down in 1949 to make way for the village's present hall, the bell was placed at the northwest corner of the new village hall lot, approximately where the northwest corner of the original hall had stood.⁴



¹Lt. E. Wilkens, Fire Prevention Your Best Protection,
(-----, 1978), Introduction.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., Introduction.

¹Lt. E. Wilkens, Fire Prevention Your Best Protection,
(----, 1978), Introduction.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., Introduction.

SECTION VI

VILLAGE GROWTH

Charles Ohlendorf was Matteson's first merchant.¹ Though his closest neighbor was ten miles distant, the land which he purchased was relatively cheap selling for \$1.25 per acre.² His store must have been fairly busy in the 1850's for America was in the midst of fulfilling its dream of Manifest Destiny, with pioneers and gold prospectors winding their way down Sauk Trail headed West. There is no written record of how many of these travelers remained in the village.

In 1856, Matteson's first hotel was built and managed by Heinrich Stuenkel. Five years later in 1861, The Matteson House was built and managed by its builder L. D. Mills.

The occupants of the hotels as well as other members of the community, attended Sunday services at the Immanuel Evangelical Church which was founded in 1852. Today, the church still stands at its original location, Sauk Trail and Cicero, about three miles west of Matteson.

By 1880, the village's population was about 500. The "downtown" area consisted of two general stores, two hotels, two saloons, two boarding houses, one shoe shop, a clothing store, a hardware and furniture store, two harness shops, and a blacksmith and wagon shop. The following year, a grain elevator was added.

SECTION VI

VILLAGE GROWTH

Charles Ohlendorf was Matteson's first merchant.¹ Though his closest neighbor was ten miles distant, the land which he purchased was relatively cheap selling for \$1.25 per acre.² His store must have been fairly busy in the 1850's for America was in the midst of fulfilling its dream of Manifest Destiny, with pioneers and gold prospectors winding their way down Sauk Trail headed West. There is no written record of how many of these travelers remained in the village.

In 1856, Matteson's first hotel was built and managed by Heinrich Stuenkel. Five years later in 1861, The Matteson House was built and managed by its builder L. D. Mills.

The occupants of the hotels as well as other members of the community, attended Sunday services at the Immanuel Evangelical Church which was founded in 1852. Today, the church still stands at its original location, Sauk Trail and Cicero, about three miles west of Matteson.

By 1880, the village's population was about 500. The "downtown" area consisted of two general stores, two hotels, two saloons, two boarding houses, one shoe shop, a clothing store, a hardware and furniture store, two harness shops, and a blacksmith and wagon shop. The following year, a grain elevator was added.

In 1853, land was donated to the village for the purpose of building the village's first school. In 1860, Matteson's first school was built on this land. Upon completion, the school was used by both the German and English-speaking peoples of the community. The German residents used the building for their Sunday church services; while the English-speaking residents used the building for their union meetings.³

In 1887, a movement was begun toward having the village incorporated. Due to lack of support, the idea was dropped only to be revived again in 1889 when the movement was placed in the capable hands of attorney F. H. Scott. Through his efforts, enough people signed a petition which was submitted to Judge Pendergast who issued an order that a village election be called for the purpose of incorporation. The judge set April 10, 1889 as the date for the people to vote on village incorporation and appointed William Arnold, W. H. Hahne and Edward E. Harden to serve as election judges. Apparently there was not much public interest for the final vote total was forty-four for and four against. Thus Matteson was incorporated as of April 10, 1889.⁴

On September 13, 1890 the village board voted for the installation of wooden sidewalks at a cost of 2¢ per foot. The village board collected \$40 for this purpose and, combining this sum with the original balance in the treasury, had \$43.63 on hand to build the sidewalks. The Illinois Central unknowingly aided in this project for an Illinois Central foreman offered 100 old railroad ties to be used as blocking under the proposed walkways. When completed, the sidewalks had a definite effect on the growth of the village. By 1897, the downtown

business district consisted of the general stores of G. H. Fortmiller and Charles Ohlendorf; Reese's (later sold to Mr. Koehler), Bartle's and O. H. Dettmerings taverns; Rudolph Adams' barber shop (still in operation); Hahn's compliment shop; Schroadeir's blacksmith shop; Claussen's wagon shop; Grass's harness shop; a grocery store; butcher shop; a candy store; and a meat market.⁵

The butcher shop was owned by Gustalf and Charles Grosche. In later years, when talking about his shop, Charles stated that the business was housed in a two-story wooden building, with an ice-house located on the second story.

We'd cut ice from Elliotts pond and store it upstairs. 7 or eight farmers would haul it for us. We had a chute and they'd pull it up the chute with horses. 3 or 4 men upstairs would pack it away. The ice would keep the meat storeroom downstairs cool. There were 3 or 4 windows in the wall behind the counter and we'd reach in through the window to get a steak, or roast or chicken or whatever the customer wanted.⁶

If one needed a new Easter outfit, a visit to Dunkers mens ware was in order. To add to a new suit, a pair of shoes would be needed. Such a pair of shoes could be purchased at Clueners. If your shoes needed repair, you would take them to Vince's shoe repair. If a new chair or couch was needed or if a death occurred in the family, the man to see was Mr. Wehren, who combined the best of the two businesses. His business establishment used to be across from Meiminge's office shop.

The local bank was built by Mr. H. Stege. He served as the banks first president, employing Mr. H. Schulze as his first cashier. Today this building is occupied by the Campe Insurance Company which is located on 216th Street in downtown Matteson. Also in the downtown

area was located Gottschails lumber yard; an ice house; a cigar factory and two grain elevators; one owned by George and Henry Stege and the other by Bartlett and Frazer. The elevator owned by the Stege brothers and built by the building firm of Marsh and Spier at a cost of \$4,000, was taken from its original location near the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern tracks, where the present National Gypsum Company now stands, and moved, in 1900, 180 feet to a new location close to the Michigan Central tracks near the present water tower. Each elevator could store up to 200,000 bushels of wheat. Nothing was wasted for the chaff, when removed from the wheat, was used by the villagers to feed their chickens.⁷

Matteson, in the late 1800's, was no different from the many small villages which dotted the map of America. It had its sheds and feeding troughs for its horses as well as a downtown parking lot for its horses and buggies.

As the village grew in size, the decision was made by the village board that it was no longer feasible to continue holding their meetings in the railroad station. Thus, Matteson's first village hall became a reality. Being only 16 x 24 feet, it contained a two-cell jail and had enough office space left over for members to handle the everyday problems of the village. Next to the hall was a lean-to shed that housed the man-drawn hand operated fire fighting equipment.⁸ By 1897, the hall was found to be too small as the population of the village had reached 500. At a board meeting, it was decided that the new hall was not to exceed \$2,500 and that the dimensions should be 32 feet in width, 72 feet in length, and 24 feet in height with space enough for

the fire department as well as for a two-cell jail. A belfry was to be added in which was to be placed a fire-bell. The bell cost the village \$154.40 and today stands on the lawn to the side of the village hall.⁹

The construction of the village hall was awarded to Ernst Slamon who charged the community \$3,225; \$725 over the original cost decided upon by the board. The project was completed in November, 1897 and the building was occupied. The following month, the fire department rented the new hall for the purpose of sponsoring a benefit dance which the firemen called the Grand Opening Ball. They claimed that this ball was to be a benefit dance to help ease the pain of Mr. Schroader, who, while having helped paint the new structure, had fallen and broken his leg. Also some of the money was used to help pay for the additional cost of the building.

¹Section I, p. 1.

²Ibid.

³ , A Look Into The Past, Chicago Heights and Her Neighbors (Chicago Heights, ---), p. 19.

⁴ , Matteson Pow Wow to Know How, 1855-1955 (), p. 15.

⁵Chicago Heights Star, August, 1944.

⁶Ibid., July, 1955.

⁷Ibid., August, 1948.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., July, 1951.