

I had to laugh during all the danger. When Mr. Mann saw the Boat going down, he jumped out of the way of the horses, into the River, exclaiming as he went, "Oh God, we are lost(!)" But after we got over, we perceived [that] Mr. Mann just got out of the water on the south side, to which he swam without other damages than the loss of his hat and a thorough drenching.

After examining [the] wagon & its contents to see that nothing was lost, and finding the team none the worse for the adventure, we again started on our way to Chicago. I trugged (trudged?) along after the team slowly, which was making good progress because of the fine road to Chicago, so that I was left alone in the rear, to follow as best I could. And when I arrived at a place where I found a small hut schack (sic) near the sandy shore, just in among the bushes, I stopped, swaddled my swollen feet in clothes [cloths?], and with shoes in hand I again persisted in the effort to reach camp. Travelling along with all speed possible, I reached Cottage Grove as it has since been named, which was a timber point running towards Chicago about 3 miles distant therefrom. Issuing out of the woods I saw my first prairie wolf, which leisurely crossed my path, making for the cedar brush on the Lake shore, affording me a good view of him. After I had finished gazing after the wolf, looking around, I cast my eyes about me. When, Lo and behold, I saw **Fort Dearborn** with its whitened palisades looming in the distance, the sun shining down upon it in great splendor. There it stood. It appeared a delightful vision, a home of Rest to the way-worn traveller. A most [more] grateful vision never fell upon the eyes of Christian when first the refulgent gate of Paradise shining [shone] forth it splendor, the goal in view in passing through the [this?] world of sin and misery.

I never before or since looked upon a more enchanting & lovely scenery than the old Fort Dearborn of 1833. The whole of Ft. Dearborn, Building and the outside Palisade had been recently white washed. The reflection of the sun's ray(s) were (was) really Brilliant, showing the large acacia tree that occupied the parade ground in front of the Fort to great advantage. [It was] a prominent Feature of the scenery & under which, in after days, many of the young men were wont to engage in athletic & manly sports & amusement of which Base Ball (sic) and other games of Ball were the most frequent.

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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As I came from Cottage Grove I passed along on the prairie near the Lake, along the shore of which the old Sand Hills, the Cedar and Juniper Brush and the features of the landscape were the same as when the massacre took place in 1812, of which I had previously read.

I approached the town under the most favorable auspices, the sun shedding abroad its efulgent rays, looking down upon us with one of those lovely, clear, peaceful, quiet & balmy days so seldom experienced, greeting our arrival at the end of our journey with a most friendly reception and as it were approvingly admiring your H.S., dressed in his light steel grey suit, with shining Steel Buttons & Broad Brimed Beaver hat, with which I started from our old town on Danville. [This one-sentence paragraph is printed verbatim, spelling and capitalization all the author's work.]

Passing the old **Dean House**, a two-story Frame house situate(d) on the Lake Shore afterwards occupied by Major Handy and his family, I came to the Garden of the Fort, an enclosure of a few acres in extent, used as a vegetable garden by the soldiers of the garrison. Here I came up with the wagon waiting for me. After I had mounted it the team proceeded on its way, passing along in the rear of the few shanties on South Water Street, over the wet prairie to the South Branch of the Chicago River, which we crossed on a frame bridge, consisting of a double row of hewed planks placed side by side upon a frame timber support that wiggled & shook as we crossed it, seemingly not the most secure structure for the passage of teams. After crossing the River on this bridge, which was located at the place where the present Lake Street bridge is located, driving up to (written in pencil: **The Old Wolf Tavern**) **Wattles Hotel**, a short distance above on the point, as that locality was at that time termed, we alighted, seeking the hospitality of the only house of the Kind in the place. We found it so filled and crammed that on application for lodging, we were refused entertainment by the Hotel Keeper unless we were willing to put up with such accommodation as the place could afford, which we found to be of the poorest Kind.

There being no remedy, we concluded to stay and were provided food & drink during the day, which were none of the choicest; and at night being provided with a lodging place in the sitting room. Mother and sister spread the feather bed in one corner of the room, on which they were compelled to pass the night, on the floor of the room, while the rest of us were allowed to provide ourselves with resting places as best we could. Mr. Dean and Brother James took to the wagon and made their bed on horse blankets spread on prairie Hay, the most comfortable quarters enjoyed by any (of us). I secured a small bench whereon to rest my weary limbs, the bench being some(what) short for full-length comfort. Worn and fatigued, I managed never the less (sic) to pass the night thereon, arising in the morning but little refreshed by sleep or rest, owing to the constrained

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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position I was obliged to assume, in consequence of the Smallness of the bench I occupied as a bed.

On our way from Detroit to Chicago, we passed and re-passed a number of people stopping at the same place where we stopped. (They were) a Mr. Sherman and family, emigrants from New York State, between whom and ourselves, as fellow sufferers, an intimacy had sprung up on the way. **Mr. Sherman** (was) so fortunate as to find a stable which was being converted into a dwelling and unoccupied. He secured it as a temporary abode where his family were to stay until He found a more permanent home for them. (He) was met, the (second) day of our arrival, by Father. (As they) exchanged experiences, he expressed himself comfortably situated with ample room, sufficient for another family to occupy without crowding each other. He kindly offered to share his place with us, and Father was prevailed upon with little persuasion to accept the tendered Hospitality. Moving into the stable, we made ourselves very comfortable on a new clean floor for two or three days, at the end of which time we were visited by Mr. James Spencer\*, a Brother of Mrs. Johnson, wife of Captain Seth Johnson, stationed at the Fort. (Mr. Spencer was) a townsman of ours who had preceded us to Chicago (by) a few months and was stopped on a claim he had made in the big woods, at the edge of **Vincent's Prairie**, 5 miles north of (the) Chicago River.

Mr. Spencer, on finding us situated as were were, knowing that **Mr. Vincent** was desirous of leaving his claim in possession of some responsible party while he returned to England temporarily, suggested to Father the advantage of leasing the house to him until he returned, which he did, to the great satisfaction of both parties. Mr. Spencer came for us with his team and conveyed us to **Vincent Lodge**, a neat frame building, newly built, situated on the edge of the prairie, about 2 miles distant from Mr. Spencer's claim, where Mr. Vincent kept Bachelor's Hall.\* We here found a very comfortable shelter & home, such as few could boast of at that time, with Mr. Vincent as a boarder, and the very fine library in his possession, of which he allowed us the use. We were enabled to pass many pleasant hours in the perusal of his books, of which his library contained many edifying and interesting works.

While living on Vincent's Prairie, Father commenced the building of a house for us in the town. (He selected) a lot, a "canal lot" as it was called, situate(d) on South Water Street, next to Mr. **P. F. W. Peck**, Esq., on the corner of LaSalle Street. We subsequently occupied the house after it was finished.

Before we left Chicago Mr. Dean, our old teamster and travelling companion, called upon us at our lodging place to Bid us

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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good Bye. We were surprised to see him, as 3 or 4 days had elapsed since our arrival, and we were under the impression that he had left for home. But he informed us that his delay was caused by a sick horse, which had been poisoned in wading & swimming through Sloughs and Streams on our Way to Chicago. He stated, however, that he thought his horse had sufficiently recovered to justify him in undertaking the return Journey home. The poor animal was in a sorry plight. The hair on nearly the whole of one side of him had peeled off,

leaving the skin bare. But as it had commenced to heal, and as he considered the animal not otherwise sick or debilitated, he had made up his mind to depart. (He) hurried away, as he said, (due to) the exorbitant charges of the Landlord. (He feared that), if he remained until his horse (had) entirely recovered, there would not be enough left of his earnings, which was \$300.00, to enable him to reach Detroit again.

We were glad to see him again and parted from him with regret, as he thought a poor one of Nature's noblemen, a kind and honest man, possessed of good common sense, a man of feeling, full of sympathy for the sufferer, whether man or Brute. Good-bye, Mr. Dean. Pax vobiscum. I (have) never heard of him since, although I again visited Detroit less than a year afterward. I think he was a farmer residing in the vicinity of Detroit.

In going to our home on the prairie we crossed the North Branch of (the) Chicago River at Kinzie St. on a Bridge of a similar construction to that crossing the South Branch at Lake St. Traveling along the north side of the Main (Chicago) River, a one room log building in which the Smithing was done for the for the (sic) inhabitants, and the repairing of Indian guns, was carried on by Mr. McKee who, as I was informed, was employed by (the federal) Government, or those in authority, for that purpose. After leaving Mr. McKee's shop, we next came to a Block residence then occupied by Col. Hamilton\*, Atty. and the recorder of our County. (That building was situated a short distance east of Dearborn Street) And then, as we approached the lake, we passed in the rear of the old Kinzie House, where the road led through the timber. At that period [time], a heavy body of timber occupied the ground of the North Side, extending from River Branch to Lake, approaching to within about a hundred yards of the Main River. The body of timber (was) fringed with an almost impenetrable thicket of crab apple and wild Plum trees extending along its border to near the lake. When cedar & Juniper bushes [were substituted for / replaced the] crab and Plum, going north along a sandy Ridge Road a distance of [1 to 2 ½ or 2 miles], we passed over the place where the timber had been cut that furnished the palisades of Fort Dearborn,

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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near the commencement of Lincoln Avenue. This was in early days styled the Little Fort Road. Passing thence over the Indian trail leading to Green Bay, we arrived at Mr. Burdick's house, situated midway between the ridge and the prairie, about 3 ½ miles distant from town, on a low, flat prairie. (It was) a very pleasant location to look upon, but (it) proved to be rather wet in wet weather, as his (Mr. Burdick's) Oats, of which he had sown a few acres on the newly broken prairie, indicated when it (the oat crop) was a foot high standing six inches in Water, before the prairie was drained, which occurred in after years.

After leaving Mr. Burdick, we hunted our way along the sand hills, as there was no well-defined road, thro[ugh] the timber until we arrived at the Domicil(e) of our Vincent. Here we found the Old Gent, a man of about 45 years of age, an English Gentleman of apparent respectability, who had seen something of the world. (We) were received by him with much cordiality. On entering the house we found (it) to consist of one large Room about 18 x 24 ft. in size. It was a neat frame Cottage, well lighted, shingled, weather-boarded outside, and lined with flooring inside. As it stood at that time, it must have cost several hundred dollars, as shingles and sawed lumber were only obtainable some distance from Chicago. Having taken possession [When Mr. Vincent had taken possession], by temporary makeshifts, consisting of comfortables [amenities] procured for the purpose, Partitions were put up and the house set in order. The furniture, consisting of trunks, was soon arranged. Mr. Vincent had previously provided for himself a stove, bedstead, chairs and tables, and we had procured a few (necessities) of life in Chicago. (Since) our culinary larder (had been) further supplied through the thoughtfulness of Mr. Spence, the women folks proceeded to get up a most palatable and substantial meal. We sat down with our host Mr. Vincent and partook of it. Mr. Vincent especially enjoyed the meal in true English Style, prolonging the time at the meal without dessert or wine, by pertinent, appropriate conversation. Here he displayed a fund of humor, sociability & good Breeding, being chuck full of anecdotes & funny stories with which he entertained the party for nearly an hour.

After a week's rest domiciled at Vincent Lodge, being somewhat recuperated in Health & Strength, (we prepared) to commence operation on our building in town. Father had selected a lot on South Water St near LaSalle, belonging to the canal commissioners. He squatted, as was customary at the time, on the lot he had made up his mind to purchase. The ensuing land sale was expected to take place shortly afterward.

Going to work felling trees and getting out timber for the framework of our house took me some days. Although skillful in handling an axe, I nevertheless found the unaccustomed

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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work of felling trees a very tiresome occupation. However, I succeeded in course of time in cutting what was needed for the frame of our intended building, after the timber was hewed, by a carpenter hired for the purpose. Father brought home a Yoke of young Steers, not yet well broken, which he bought from a Hoosier, together with a wagon. To me was allotted the task of hawling (sic) the timber to town. I succeeded in doing this by means of the new team. I drove the Steers and guided them by means of a rope fastened around their Horns.

There being no bridge over the main River, I deposited my timber on the bank of the River near the present Clark St., whence it was conveyed across the stream by means of Col. Hamilton's canoe. I attached several pieces of timber (to the canoe, and in that manner) I was able to float it across the River. (There) it was hauled to the place (site) where the building was to be erected.

Many and great were the difficulties I had to contend with in my first experience in Bull driving, a labor which I was making my first experiment. One day, while taking a heavy load of timber to town, the day being very warm, my oxen (were) tired and thirsty. After unloading I led the cattle, (still) attached to the wagon, to the stream to allow them to moisten their parched throats and allay their thirst. (Upon) descending to the water, they broke loose (of) my hold on the rope and (rushed) into the stream, with wagon and all. (There) they remained with nothing visible but their heads. (I was unable) to persuade them to come out of the River by (any) means. After many ineffectual attempts to drive them from the stream, (I feared) the cattle might be drowned. Without further delay (I) looked around for the Col's canoes. I observed them drawn up on the opposite shore, with no one to come to my rescue in my great Dilemma.

I was compelled to march around the point and cross the Lake Street bridge to procure the canoe. I (then) extricated myself from my dilemma, leaving my team all the while cooling themselves in the river. Fearing a watery grave for my cattle, I hurried across the River with the canoe and was fortunate enough to get the team again on terra firma. After (that) we proceeded homeward, where we arrived at sundown.

After I had finished the job of furnishing the timber for our home in Chicago, Father made contract with Mr. Philo Carpenter to furnish the timber for the first Presbyterian meeting house built in Chicago. Mr. Carpenter kept store on south Water Street east of Dearborn, where we done (sic) most of our trading in the town. (There was) no house of the Kind where services could be held, excepting the carpenter shop in the Garrison, where the Rev. Jeremiah Porter was wont to hold forth to the soldiers at the Fort. He & Mrs. Wright, etc., feeling the want of a place for Divine service, started the project of erecting the first Presbyterian meeting house.

The bargain was consummated as stated. To me was assigned the work of fulfilling the contract on

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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Father's part, which I believe was done to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The ground on which Chicago was originally situated, on the south side of (the) Chicago River, consisted of a wet Prairie east of State, extending west to the South Branch of the River and southerly some distance into the country. In the spring of the year and during wet weather, it was nearly covered with water [but for] several sloughs emptying (in)to the River and its Branches. (They) served as drains thro' which its surplus

waters were conducted to the River. One of these Sloughs was to be found at the foot of State St., another at the foot of LaSalle, the latter extending in a South Westerly (sic) direction beyond (sic) Randolph St. Along its banks large trees and low bushes were found in profusion.

The Slough, called Ogden's slough\*, emptied into the South branch a short distance below 12<sup>th</sup> St. south of Col. Wilder's house, which was situated at the head of a strip of timber extending north along the S. Branch as far as Madison Street. This strip of timber tapered off to a point & became an impenetrable thicket, in the rear of Col. Wilder's House, of Crabb apple & plum trees. At the North end of this grove, near Franklin & Madison Sts. Was to be seen, some years later, the Baptist Parsonage, Occupied (sic) by the Rev. Hinton.

Ogden Slough and another slough just south of it, known as the Healy Slough\*, named after Robert Healy, the first settler on its Banks, afforded the means of drainage of the wet Prairie in that Section. On the South Side of the Healy Slough was to be found the stone quarry from which was taken the first stone used in filling the cribs that entered into the construction of the first pier from Harbor. The stone(s) were quarried by Messrs. Boyer & Spence, who had a contract from (the) U. S. Government to supply the stone for the cribs of the Pier. The stone(s) were transported thence to the mouth of the River in an Ark, similar to those so commonly met with in early days on the Susquehanna River. The Ark, containing about 6 cord of stone, was drawn by one or two horses. (They were) attached to the Ark by means of a rope along the river, canal-boat fashion, from the landing at the quarry to the mouth of the River. (There) they (the stones) were deposited in the cribs of the pier, (which were) ready to receive them. The banks of the stream (had) been cleared of the brush, sloughs bridged, and a tow path constructed from the quarry to the place of the pier.

The Ark was built on the bank of the Chicago River near LaSalle St. by Messrs. Boyer & Spence in the year 1833 and was

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Valentine A. Boyer to Allen L. Boyer

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an object (of) considerable attraction at the time to First Settlers of Chicago.

It was on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May 1833, on a propitious day, as before mentioned, (that) we arrived in Chicago, being exactly one month on our journey from Danville, until we arrived in Chicago. After remaining at Vincent Lodge about 3 months, our house being ready, we moved into town.

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We were permitted to use this interesting letter of life in our area at an early date through the courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society. The long hand (sic) written paper may be found in their manuscript room.

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Publications Committee 1956-7  
Olga Mae Schiemann, Chairman,  
J. Howard Euston  
Col. Edward N. Wentworth

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DUNELAND

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Transcriber's note: Page numbers referenced in these End Notes are the pagination of the updated edition, not the original. Valentine Boyer command a broad vocabulary, but he has made use of expanded sentence structure throughout, omitting commas to set off many lengthy parenthetical phrases, leading to a lack of clarity. I have therefore inserted several commas in some sentences and broken other sentences into shorter, readable units. (One sentence, on MS page 5, is 15 lines long, with an average of 11 words per line. The first and final words are reproduced here in **bold face** type.)

Mr. Boyer often capitalizes words bearing dramatic portent, such as Father, Great Work and Future, and others, while failing to capitalize words normally capitalized, such as Congress and the final word “canal” in North and West Branch Canal and elsewhere. Boyer's use of the term “emigration”, referring to his family's move from Pennsylvania to Illinois, is curious, as the dictionary definition of “emigration” is “the act of leaving one's own country to settle permanently in another”.

Jim Nelson, Historian, Duneland Historical Society, September 2019.

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**MS Page 1:** Valentine Aurant Boyer (1817-1890) was a Chicago doctor. He was the son of John K. and Elizabeth (Aurant) Boyer. Valentine was born in Pennsylvania, with siblings James and Maria. The family arrived at Ft. Dearborn (Chicago) on May 26, 1833. They were included in the first (unofficial) Chicago census in August 1833, prior to incorporation of Chicago as a town. The family had a log cabin on S. Water Street, near Newberry & Dole, a retail merchandise house at the intersection of S. Water St. and Dearborn.

Valentine had already begun medical studies at the University of Pennsylvania when the family moved to Illinois. He resumed his studies there, graduating in 1836. He was listed as a medical doctor in Chicago's 1839 city directory. From the 1843 Chicago census: He served as assistant surgeon to the 16<sup>th</sup> regiment of the Illinois Volunteers; served on the first board of the First German Lutheran Church; operated a pharmacy until it burned down in the 1871 fire; and was listed as a justice of the peace. He was Chicago port surveyor under President Franklin Pierce. Married Mary Catherine Specht in 1837 and retired in 1880. His residence in 1885 was at 490 Fullerton Avenue. Dr. Boyer died in May 1890.

John Boyer filed a claim for wharfing privileges in 1835. John soon was named street commissioner and supervisor of roads and bridges. Later he was a coroner. His daughter Maria married Boyer's business partner, French-Ottawa Madore Beaubien. After John's death in 1843, Elizabeth ran a boarding house at 153 S. Water St.

The Sac War = The Black Hawk War, April 6 – August 27, 1832. Black Hawk, chief of the Sauk and Fox tribes, crossed the Mississippi River in an attempt to retake Native American land that had been ceded to the United States in a disputed treaty from 1804. The Sauk and Fox, with their Ho-chunk (Winnebago) allies, were outnumbered and outgunned by US militia units and warriors from the Menominee & Dakota tribes. There were Potawatomie warriors on both sides. The battlegrounds are now in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin.

**P. 3:** on Plymouth Rock – This refers to the (estimated) 10-ton granite boulder which is believed to be the exact point of disembarkation for the shipload of Pilgrim settlers who established Plymouth Colony, in present-day Massachusetts, in 1620. The boulder split in two halves during an attempt to move it to Plymouth in 1744. The upper half was returned to its original site in 1880, and the date “1620” was carved into it. For a mature human of any age or size, “taking up one's abode *on* Plymouth Rock” would have been a physical impossibility.

**P. 13:** to keep Bachelor's Hall – To live as a bachelor.

James Spencer – James *Spence*, born in England. Arrived from Pennsylvania 1834. Leased his claim at Big Woods, 5 mi. N. of the Chicago River, to John K. Boyer. Spence's home at LaSalle & Lake Streets was destroyed by Chicago's first fire, Oct. 1834. Listed as a canal contractor, 1839 city directory. Death notice, Nov. 4, 1839.

**P. 14:** Col. Hamilton – Richard Jones Hamilton (1799-1960) came to Illinois from Kentucky in 1820. Married Diana Buckner in 1822. Admitted to the Illinois bar in 1827. Second lawyer in Chicago, arrived in April 1831. He soon became a probate court judge, notary public, county & circuit courts clerk (1<sup>st</sup> clerk of Cook County Circuit Court) and school fund commissioner. Served in the Black Haw War, 1832. (For this activity he gained the honorary title of Colonel.) Buried in Rosehill Cemetery.

**P. 17:** Ogden's Slough – was a slow-moving creek that drained part of the swampland in the triangle between the main part of the Chicago River and the south branch. Named for William Butler Ogden (1805-1877), first mayor of Chicago (by election), 1837.

Healy's Slough – named for early settler Robert Healy. The water in this slough was originally clean; but the  
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