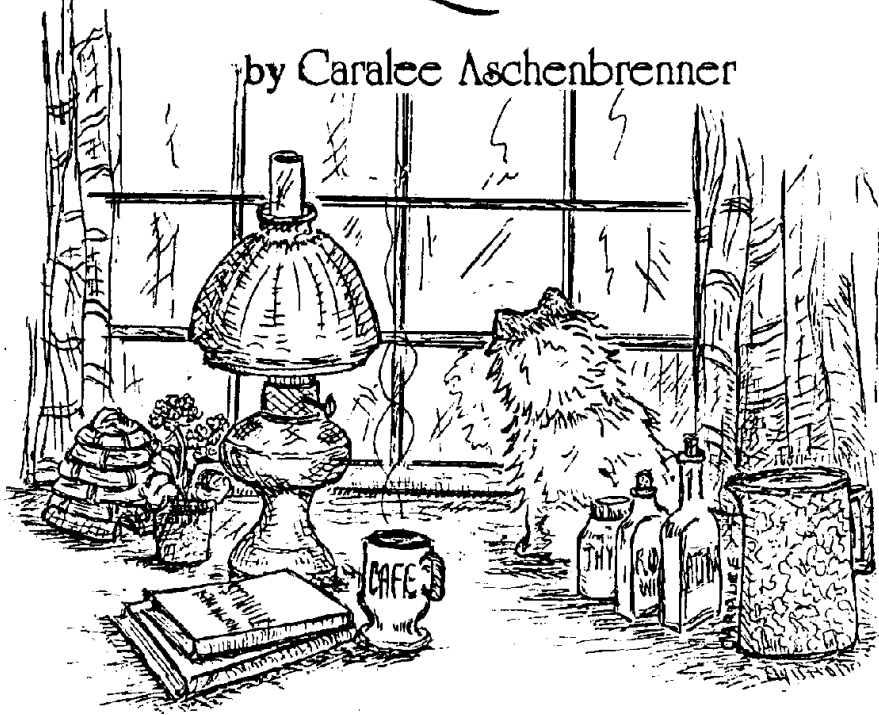


# Please Don't Quote Me ...

by Caralee Aschenbrenner



Part IV



iver towns become accustomed to the periodic flooding of the Mississippi. At the early day when there was a motley mix of log or slab houses which could be easily replaced it didn't seem a great loss when the water's rose. But as time wore on with a substantial frame or a brick or two, there was more at stake. Water was the bane of Sabula at floodtimes.

There was the terrible flood of 1859 which prompted the city to issue bonds in order to begin the first serious project to build dikes... cost \$7,800. In between then and now there were others. Nearly a hundred years later another enormous inundation occurred in 1951. Besides the river rising, it rained constantly for days so that the levees which had been gradually improved and with supplemental sandbagging were not enough to withstand the onslaught of the terrible current. Units of the National Guard arrived. The U.S. Coast Guard stood ready to evacuate residents plus volunteers of all ages from many parts came to assist.

Federal funds were requested but as the Mississippi's waters didn't threaten D.C., action was slow. Until, that is, the next year, 1952, when an equally devastating flood was predicted. All the usual aid again was quick to respond when history seemed about to repeat itself. This time the town had an ally, or allies, which were more effective than their own previously futile but compelling pleas... the media. Radio, newspapers and the emerging television all reported Sabula's plight which attracted the attention of the funders so that work was soon in progress.

The Army Corps of Engineers immediately began operations for flood control because for one thing, a record in high waters had been achieved. Sand was dredged around Sabula which resulted in the creation of three nice lakes which surround the town, the Rt. 64/52 causeway west separating two of them with a scenic aspect. Plus more access to fishing and boating and hunting, the modern "industry" which the town promotes, replacing the unique enterprise which have gone before. The place is a sportsman's destination. Sabula as a goal of sportsmen was given some governmental boost as early as 1914 when the state conservation depart-

ment established a "fish rescue" station there. (Was it mouth-to-mouth?) Before and since, thousands have discovered for themselves the extensive water-world around Sabula for the pursuit of fish and game. A large harbor and boat mooring are tucked in a cove just at the south edge of the town, the street to it going under the railroad overpass.

There is a beach area, picnic grounds, camping, etc. just at the side of the Mississippi. A launch is also at the northwest corner of town which leads the adventurous up into the sloughs and backwaters of the mighty river. The Mississippi, we remind you, is one of the most sought-after goals of world travelers. We live right beside it.

These river edges are home to vast assortments of animals, birds, fowl and fish. This time of year, of course, there are eagles and because there is no foliage on the trees, the rookeries of the GBH can easily be seen just as you come off the Iowa side of the interstate bridge (or with binoculars from the Illinois). In the summer you see these heron or egret and many other feathered friends wading about either side of the causeway with also the improbable sight of flocks of pelican. Yes. This being one of the great flyways of migratory birds, Sabula is a good place to center your watching.

The railroad bridge which you can see at the entrance to the boat harbor has had considerable updating since the first was begun in 1880. In 1906 the original was renovated and widened. The complex construction of it now is of the "movable" sort.

Rail traffic is halted and the bridge "rotated" to allow tall ships to pass through, a fascinating process if you are fortunate enough to be there at the right time. There are a lot of rules, regulations and etiquette attendant to riverways.

Floods aren't a thing of the past nor the threat they pose. Construction of the lock and dam system in the 1930s has raised the water considerably in order for commercial freighting to continue and presumably to control water levels in flood time. But Mother Nature isn't to be denied. In 1965-66, as it does at least once or twice a decade, the Mississippi nearly breached the levees

again. Huge pumps with the capacity to move a million gallons a minute have been employed at various points to help ensure that Sabula won't be swept away.

Although their name, Sabula, derives from *sabulum* meaning sand, the town has developed a firm foundation in determination. Their gritty pioneer forefathers are part of that heritage. As America neared its Centennial in 1876 Old Settler's reunions were organized all across the nation with Sabula being no exception. The stipulation there was that anyone who lived within eight miles of the town prior to 1849 was eligible to be called an "old settler." As years passed, naturally, less stringent rules amended the original.



Although bad weather discouraged attendance at the first reunion, by 1880 a table groaning with victuals had to be stretched to 244. Oratory and games, gossip and reminiscence were a part of those annual observances for years.

It had been decided at that first there at "Sugg's Grove," residence of a pioneer doctor, that to commemorate the contributions of those pioneers, one hundred trees would be planted at the Centennial time. They were planted in a design they called the "Union Square Polygon." Some of these had to be cut when a school later was put on the site but it was for a good cause.

The first school lessons, of course, were given in some humble residence as at all early settlements, the first time in 1838. There were no public funds to build a school so an assortment of arrangements was made until in 1844 when the Meth-

odist congregation decided to build a church but ran into financial difficulties and were unable to complete the structure. Townspeople offered to help if it could be used for a school during the week which was satisfactory to all. In 1856 a stone building was erected as a school all its own. Tuition was 78¢ in the summer (60 days) and a \$1.18 during the winter (60 days). The teacher's salary was \$165.00.

By 1869 a publicly supported school was advanced with two wooden buildings put up, one on the north side and one on the south with the stone building serving yet as the "high school." Changes in the school system have been many and complicated but are on record to be scanned. Like most places some of the changes have brought heated argument. By the 1970s consolidations of small town schools was ongoing.

After a couple attempts at the ballot box in 1974 Sabula merged with Miles just down the road west, as it still is today. The school is known as East Central. There are elementary schools in each, the high school is at Miles.

As for the spiritual needs of the community, the first church services were held in Sabula in 1839 when the stout-hearted old circuit rider, Rev. Barton Cartwright, preached at a private residence in the common way, as he did throughout Iowa and Illinois at the early time. He later settled in Ogle County, Illinois.

The Methodists, as before mentioned, built the first church building which served also as school, there then being no upset over division of church and state. A Congre-

gale which caused much illness. There were so many children and other residents of one home and the doctor came so often, laden with the quinine palliatives of the time, that it was popularly called, "Pill Hill."

We have only briefly touched on the history of our Iowa neighbor, Sabula, although there is much information about it which colors this summary version in black and white. Much more can be found at the town's library right under the water tower with one of the town's parks. The first library was organized in 1875 by the usual types who believe in the importance of reading and advance. Numbers of volumes increased over the years until all were absorbed into the school system.

Then, in 1961 the community began to work again to form a separate library which opened in the Masonic Lodge, rent free. It eventually outgrew those quarters so a campaign was set in motion to build a facility all its own. Many volunteers and fund raisers put together money in that cause and then a large donation by Arnie and Billie Krabbenhoft made dream reality. The Krabbenhoft Library was built in 1984 and is a modern, attractive place undergoing the exciting pangs of computerization in the regional library system. We thank the librarian, Ronda Taplan, who is surely representative of today's librarians... enthusiastic, friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. We thank her for the exceptional assistance in preparation of this series, Carrollport to Sabula. The evolution of Prairie la Pierre: BC (Before Carrollport) to Sabula is far too obscure for us to tackle though we know it did exist!

*Next week is the final say, a little more to wrap up, though hardly to tell all, about that welcoming harbor on the Mississippi. Sabula.*

**Subscribe to the Prairie Advocate and get all the news & advertising you need for Carroll County.**

**Just e-mail us with your address. pa@internetni.com**

**We will bill you \$24.00. You'll get the Prairie Advocate mailed to you for 52 weeks.**

**Thank you for your support!**