

How Decatur Got Her Shade Trees

Editor's note: The following interesting story is reprinted from the files of the Daily Democrat:
(By French Quinn)

The other evening, Judge J. T. Merriman and the writer were driving over our own beautiful town and had pretty well covered every street when we parked the machine and commented upon the improvements that we had noted and the changes that had taken place during the many years of our residence here. The beauty of the homes, the well kept lawns, the landscape and other gardens, the miles of modern pavements, the excellent lighting system, our public buildings, the municipal plant, the factories, old and new, all came in for review and while it may be true that the judge and the writer may have been happily prejudiced yet the sum total of our comments were that our beloved town was a mighty fine place and that congratulations were due its citizens, living and dead, who had made it all possible.

During the conversation the writer asked the judge what in his opinion—taking the town as a whole in one mental picture—was the most striking thing in the picture? Promptly

came the answer, "The beautiful maple shade trees that line every street." In our opinion that answer admitted of no convincing negative argument. The shade trees of Decatur ARE beautiful. Every street has its full quota. The trees seem to be of about the same diameter and age, and that fact was commented on. Promptly again the judge answered, "Do you know who in the main is entitled to the credit for the initiative in this universal tree planting?" The writer admitted his ignorance. "Well, this is the story," said the judge, "along about the year 1875 Decatur had a couple thousand inhabitants, a good many fair to middling residences and a few very good ones, a host of vacant lots and these residences and vacant lots mixed up indiscriminately, all her miles of streets were mud—plain mud—which accounted for the fact that even the lawyers wore boots, miles of so-called sidewalks, made out of boards laid sideways, step on one end and the other end flew up and hit you on the nose, no street lights—lanterns had a ready market—and every night darkness lay upon the face of the deep and during the day the sun burned over the city for there

was no shade save for a few noble forest elms that had still been spared—the slaughter of those gigantic elms is an almost unforgivable offense. Such was the Decatur in '75.

"Decatur was a town not a city, had a town government, three trustees, a town attorney and a marshal. The Hon. R. S. Peterson at that time was the town attorney. Mr. Peterson was one of the leading lawyers of the town and was a man of vision and good judgment. He loved the trees; he saw a great lack and he drew up a resolution, presented same to the town trustees, which resolution was afterwards incorporated into a town ordinance, to the effect that all property owners were called upon to plant shade trees in front of their several lots, no matter whether the lots were improved or vacant. Under the leadership of Mr. Peterson the citizens of the town obeyed this ordinance almost universally and in most instances planted maple trees, although a number of cottonwood trees were set out that ultimately gave way to maple."

The writer insisted to the Judge that that was a most interesting story. We both registered the opinion, which

Geneva Youth Plans
To Attend Wittenberg

Carrell Clew, of Geneva, is among the students receiving permission to enter Wittenberg College this fall. Freshmen were expected to report at the college today and for four days, they will have the campus to themselves and will be entertained, instructed and prepared for their respective college careers. Other freshmen will report on Sept. 11. School work will begin on September 13. The college expects to hold its Arts College enrollment to approximately 1,000 students.

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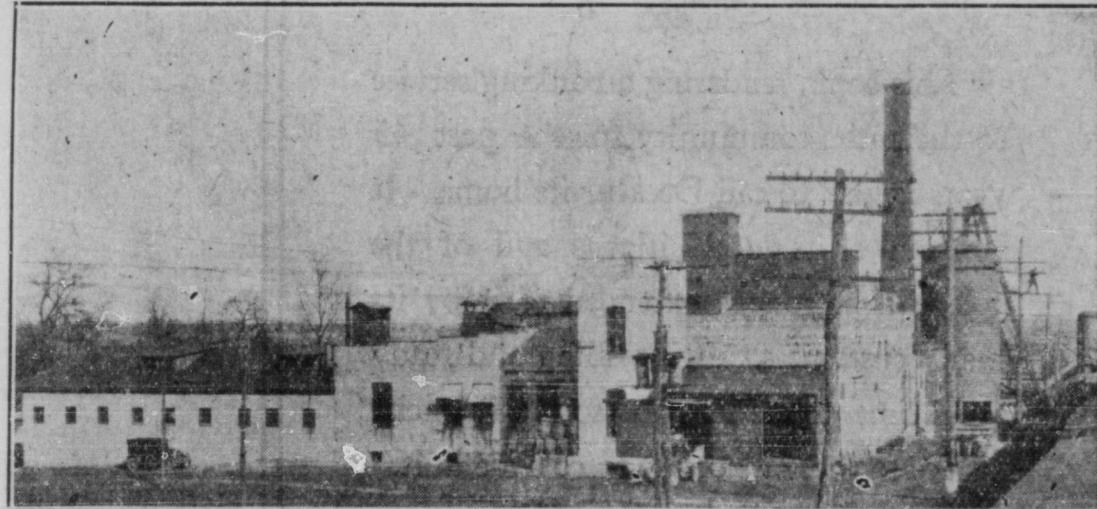
Greetings

We extend to you people of Decatur and Adams county a most sincere and friendly greeting on the occasion of your great homecoming celebration. This sentiment, we are sure, is that of all citizens of Bluffton and Wells county—your well wishing neighbors.

Our annual Free Street Fair will be held during the last week of this month—from Sept. 25 to Sept. 29, inclusive. Come to Bluffton and enjoy it with us. We welcome you most cordially.

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Our organization joins in extending a welcome
to the Old Home Week visitors.

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**Bluffton Evening News**

WELLS COUNTY'S FAVORITE NEWSPAPER