

## OFF THE RECORD

By Jim Aron

For heaven's sake, let's quit gabbling like a bunch of little kids over the question of whether or not Scott County should have a large or a small lake in the county park area.

First, let's realize this: That the five men who make up the County Conservation Board are as fine and upstanding a group of citizens as you'll find anywhere. They serve at a tedious job without pay. I'm sure too that those members who favor a small lake do so because in their own minds they are convinced that will be best for Scott County.

Maybe they are right, maybe they are not. The thing is that a great number of citizens believe they are not right. This being the case, the board cannot turn a deaf ear; they can not fail to listen to both sides of the issue.

If it can be satisfactorily proved that a large lake is not feasible, the claim will stop. If a small lake is constructed without even considering the larger lake, the conservation board will be in for tough sledding for the rest of its existence.

The solution, it seems, is straightforward: simple. The State Conservation Commission will study, examine both sides of the issue and give an opinion based on its long experience. Let's see what they have to say.

But feelings, personalities, loss of face should not enter into the matter. Let's thoroughly examine everything good and bad about both lakes, make everything public, and then make a decision.

Let's end this bickering in the Scott County family.

Two distinguished gentlemen have volunteered to "ghost" this column while yours truly is on vacation for the next couple of weeks.

The first week's column will be conducted by a frequent contributor, Henry Hook, publisher of the Morning Democrat. By the way, he is also volunteered to write a column when he attends the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles next month.

The second week's column will be written by Paul Conway, vice-saults night editor of the Morning Democrat.

Your year-old "Dena" Helle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Donald H. Helle of Clinton was watching her dad clean a bullhead.

When he started skinning the fish, she exclaimed, "Oh, daddy, don't put his swim suit off!"

While Mrs. Lewis Fiverson of Davenport was in the hospital recently, she shared a room with a woman who'd left her husband in charge of the children.

He'd planned to take their 8-year-old daughter to the show, but when he saw what was playing, he told her he didn't think she'd like it because it was "too sexy."

"What's that mean?" the girl wanted to know immediately.

The husband floundered a bit, "Well," he said, "it's the difference between a man and a woman."

The girl gave him a long, long look, shook her head at the strange ways of adults — and went out to play.

Orchids, to Rock Island State's Atty. Bernard Moran for his tough attitude with the hoodlums who beat up two East Moline hospital security guards.

He knows from long experience that mollycoddling and signs on the wrist won't make good boys out of bad ones. Other prosecutors might take heed.

Unusual sight — at the Royal American Show's special benefit show for the Royal American Show Club recently — a tough-looking roustabout working on his equally rugged — appearing buddy.

"Come on, come on, get it up, dig out some money. After all it's for crippled kids."

P. S. He threatened and wheeled the guy out of a 20 dingy.

# GINGER BREAD GIANT

Like A Fine Lady, This Magnificent Mansion Is Still Proud And Regal In Its Old Age

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hark back a moment to the Victorian era — an opulent period of yesterday when the bare of plenty was full. A dollar earned was a dollar saved, with little interference from Uncle Sam. The wealthy lived in elegance, and a man's hallmark of success was his home. And what mansions they built in the Victorian age — floral wallpaper covered the walls and floral carpeting covered the floors. The windows were barricaded with shutters and layers of wine-red velvet draperies, every afternoon was pulled and every hinge was marble-topped — and in every corner, a flared what-not. Here is the story of such a home, another in the Sunday Times-Democrat series on "The Magnificent Mansions of the Quad-City Area."

By BILL WUNDERMAN  
Sunday Editor

At 56, this grand dame of Victorian mansions wears her mien well. Though she is a bit droopy around the edges, and stripped of her elegance inside, she still stands proud and regal at 1208 Main St. in Davenport. Her fine mansard roof, faced by deep dormer windows, lends grace to her silhouette. And her vanity remains unspoiled, for geraniums still bloom in the massive (though cracked) urns which flank the front entry.

Push open the heavy, wide oak doors. Through them, have passed famed figures — governors and presidential aspirants and headline makers like Amundsen, who discovered the South Pole, and Jane Addams of Hull House who won a Nobel prize.

They marveled at the birds of paradise which still perch in leaded glass in the vestibule, and at the magnificent grand staircase that reached all the way to the third floor art gallery and museum.

This was the home of C. A. Ficke, one of Davenport's most influential and interesting citizens. Twice he served as mayor, and twice he traveled around the world in search of art and antiquities. In his day he was one of the city's richest men, and each year, Davenport newspapers traditionally carried a story that "Ficke is again the city's heaviest taxpayer."

While rich, he was no snob and he fretted at times that his residence in such a big house might make people think of him as "high toned."

His pleasure. But his house was his pleasure, and he lived in it and loved it for nearly 40 years.

Of all the Victorian mansions in the Quad-Cities, this one was the most Victorian of all. Every line was festooned with the elegance of the period in which it was built. On the most reliable in-

formation, work was started in 1881 and the massive place was not completed until 1884. The cost was said to be \$100,000 — a tremendous outlay in those days.

"They didn't seem to spare a thing in this house," says M. E. Dugan, the present owner. "There was everything, from kitchens in the basement to dumb waiters and a couple sets for servant-calling systems. We have found the original working drawings for the place, but it's still difficult to count the rooms. For instance, do you call a 10 by 10 foot pantry a room?"

By the most obvious count, the Ficke mansion had 38 rooms. This counts the attic area, which was a fine art gallery and museum, and the basement, which was finished off into rooms — some with hardwood floors.

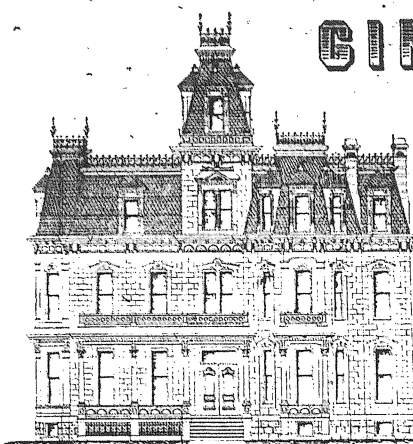
Full of lace. Although Dugan rents out the mansion now in apartments and sleeping rooms, the place is still full of the ore when it was the finest house in Davenport.

"Here, you'll find this interesting," said Dugan, leading the way to the basement down a very beautiful staircase.

He opened a heavy door to a dark cavern, heavy with the musty smell of dust and time. Dugan tugged on an extension cord, and I discovered we were in one of those places "rare today" — a wine cellar. The room was built of brick, and the arched ceiling was high enough so you could stand upright. It was cool inside, and the oak racks for holding the bottles made strange shadows on the walls.

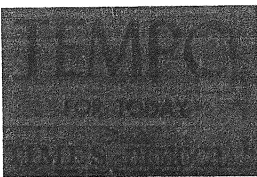
"It's been many a year since any wine was in here; I'm threatening to

MANSION—  
(Continued On Page 6D)



Embellished by the "gingerbread" so characteristic of Victorian-style houses, the sketch above guided builders in the construction of what is best known as the C. A. Ficke mansion, although Ficke himself did not build the place. A complete set of working drawings for the mansion were uncovered in the old house several years ago.

At right a drawing of the first floor. A few dimensions:  
Dining Room, 27 by 16 feet  
Sitting room, 26 by 16 feet  
Two matching parlors, each 18 by 17 feet  
Entry Hall, 44 feet by 10 feet  
Downstairs bedroom, 24 by 19 feet.



SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 1960



The entry hall of the old Ficke mansion is still immense today. This photo was taken from the vestibule. On the stairs is Mrs. M. E. Dugan. She and her husband own the place today.



With 38 rooms on four floors, this mansion at 1208 Main St., Davenport, was once the finest home in the city. (Staff Photos by Harry Ball)

