

# Who's Who in Wisconsin Rapids

The Who's Who column will be run each Saturday in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune. It will include a brief sketch of the life of citizens who have helped make history for Wisconsin Rapids.

## Susan Bender McFarland



SUSAN BENDER MCFARLAND

Among the pioneer women of Wisconsin Rapids, is numbered Susan Bender McFarland, a descendant of John and Thankful Tripp Cook who came over in the Mayflower. She was born in Sullivan, New York, September 15, 1852 and is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Bender, who moved with their family in the spring of 1855 to Marengo, Ill., and in the early fall of the same year, came to Plainfield where Susan grew to womanhood, and where she received her education in the village school.

### Food Was Scarce

The family arrived with plenty of money, but Mrs. McFarland relates experiences when it was of little value from the fact that both food and clothing were hard to procure. She tells of instances when the flour was getting low, of her father trying to buy some of a neighbor who he knew had a good amount, but was refused any for fear the supply on hand would fall short before the next year's harvest. Her father journeyed to the southern part of the state for the needed article and other food, and her mother ground cornmeal in the coffee mill to make bread for herself and seven children until her husband would return. When he came back, after many days bringing the flour, altho it was late at night, Susan's mother made biscuit and awakened the children to enjoy the feast.

The Bender family were devout Methodists, and every Sunday they were all loaded in a lumber wagon drawn by oxen and driven six miles to the nearest church. As soon as the road was built thru from Plainfield to Centralia, Mr. Bender did his trading at the latter place, bringing his daughter, Susan, with him on many of his trips, Susan often remained for an extended visit at the home of her sister, Jane, the wife of P. J. Johnson who owned and operated a saw mill eight miles north of Centralia. It was on one of these visits that she met Rufus McFarland, who was buying shingles and lumber to transport by raft to St. Louis and other Southern cities. Rafts, lumber pilots and their workmen were common sights in those days when the river was filled with floating logs coming from the northern part of the state to be carried many miles further South to be marketed. The streets were filled with tipsy, noisy, jolly Frenchmen and many were the fights between them and the "town chaps."

### Weds Rufus McFarland

Susan Bender and Rufus McFarland were united in marriage February 1, 1874 at the home of the bride's brother, B. F. Bender at Centralia by Rev. Jesse Cole, pastor of the M. E. church of Grand Rapids. After their marriage they boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Hoover, in a house situated on the lot where the new Sion Lutheran church now stands, while their home was being built. They moved into their new home before the doors were hung and the windows placed. The home still stands and is one of the land marks of this city. It is located on the lot directly south of the Lowell School. It has been remodelled into a very comfortable dwelling which Mrs. McFarland now occupies, together with

her daughter and family, Mr. and Mrs. August Gottschalk.

Mr. McFarland passed into the great beyond July 3, 1912. He was an unusually gifted man, having written many acceptable poems, some of which have been published. He was known as the "Poet Laureate of Centralia."

Mrs. McFarland says that when their home was built the lot was used by the Indians as a camping ground and many times she was kept awake the whole night through with their savage yells. Their house was surrounded by a dense woods filled with bears, wolves and panthers.

### Had Thrilling Experience

One afternoon she was about half a mile south of the house picking wild cranberries, her husband thought she was staying quite late, as it was growing dark. So he went in search of her. He heard a low snarling sound and looking toward the direction from where it came, saw a panther in the act of springing toward her but with the aid of a big club, succeeded in driving him off, thus saving his wife's life.

Mrs. McFarland was one of the few women who "rode the rapids" on a raft. She made the dangerous trip in company with Miss Emma Hasbrouck, now Mrs. Frank Moore of this city, and Miss Emma Miller. The second Wednesday in August each year the Cook family and their descendants held a reunion at Richfield Springs, N. Y. Mrs. McFarland accompanied by her daughter, Mabel, had the pleasure of attending the one held in 1906.

Mrs. McFarland is a practical nurse and has ministered to the ills of her many friends and neighbors. Among the friends she mentions Mrs. Reuben Lyon, long since deceased, as one of her closest friends who was so helpful to her in many ways and whose good advice she will never forget.

### Good Church Member

Mrs. McFarland is a member of the M. E. Church of this city and is a regular attendant, rarely missing a Sunday service. She has always been one of the ardent church workers and is a member of the West Side Ladies Aid. She is a charter member of the Rainbow Chapter No. 87, Order of Eastern Star, in which she has held nearly all the highest offices. She is alive to all the interests of the day and was among the new voters to cast her ballot this fall, voting for the winning candidate. Mrs. McFarland is one of the pioneers who has endured many hardships in the early days and has watched the developments and changes of Grand Rapids and Centralia into the beautiful city of Wisconsin Rapids, which holds for her the dearest memories and interests in life.

### NEKOOSA

Mrs. A. U. Marvin was hostess to the members of the S. & R. Club of Port Edwards at her home yesterday afternoon. After a very interesting program dainty refreshments were served.

Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Rohr were shoppers at Wisconsin Rapids today.

Miss Edith Brown of Chicago arrived home the latter part of the week to visit at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. Brown.

Miss Myrtle Brandt who attends the University of Wisconsin arrived home today to spend the holidays with her parents.



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