



Early Remembrances of J.H. Rountree Lead mines & Platteville written 1870



John Rountree (1805-1890) is considered one of the founders of Platteville. He arrived early and spent the rest of his long life here in Platteville. A very successful business man, he was involved in mining, farming, commercial enterprises, and land speculation. He also served in local and state government positions.

In 1828 he and Mary were married, and they moved into their log cabin. She died in 1837. He married Lydia in 1839. Rountree was the father of six sons and four daughters.

These remembrances were hand written in ink on ten sheets of paper. We've kept the original spelling and punctuation. At that time, spelling, capitalization and punctuation weren't as standardized as they are today. It is also possible that in a few places, his penmanship has been misread.

(Page 1)

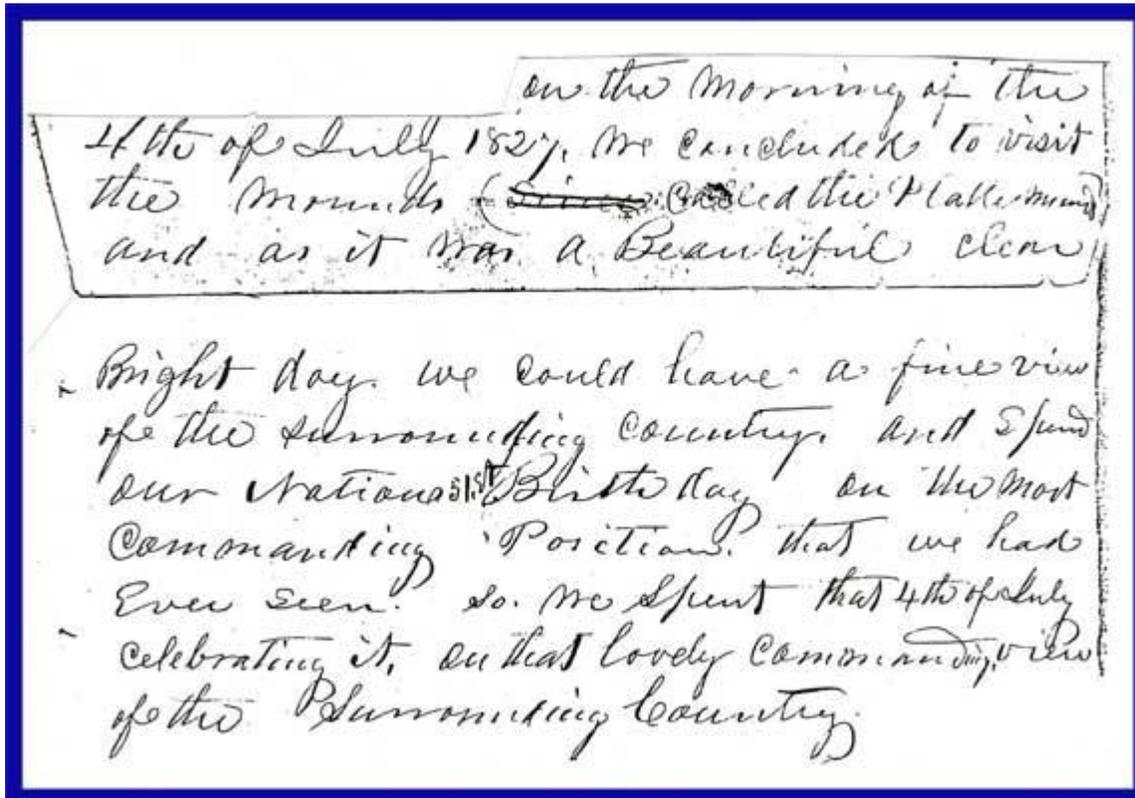
Early Remembrances of J.H. Rountree Lead mines & Platteville written 1870

On the 24th of May 1827 J.H. Rountree reached the Lead Region in company with Honorables Horace McCartney, John B. Terry (who are now both Dead and several other persons by Ox Teams having Started from Hillsboro Montgomery County Ill. in April crossing the Illinois River at Beards Ferry.

Soon after crossing that River. Left the settled portion of the Country north of that River. and traveled over an unsettled Country. Foring the Rock River. Some where between where Dickson is Located and Rock Island until we arrived at a Point some where between the White Oak Springs and New Diggings.

After travelling on foot with Alexander Gray, who was one of my travelling companions from Montgomery County Illinois, and Occassionally Digging what was then Called a Sucker hole in search for Lead ore. over the Country about New Diggings Gratiats Grove, Shullsburgh, & Elk Grove.

we concluded on the morning of without finding any. mineral for the balance of the month of May, and all of June and the three first days of July. on the morning of the 4th of July 1827, we concluded to visit the mounds (since called the Platte Mounds) and as it was a Beautiful clear



Here you can see the last four lines of the first page and part of the second page. Here Rountree tells what he and his companion did on the 4th of July, 1827.

(Page 2)

Bright day we could have a fine view of the surrounding country and spent our Nation's 51st Birth Day on the most commanding Position that we had Ever seen. So we Spent that 4th of July celebrating it, on that lovely commanding view of the Surrounding Country. from there we travelled North along that beautiful Prairie Country to where Wingville was after ward Settled and Located. then turning next travelled on what was afterward called the Military Ridge, to a Point in the vicinity of where Mount Ida is Located where we met three waggons drawn by Ox Teams & ½ dozen miners one Lady Mrs. Thomas with her husband & two children they were all fleeing to Galena for Protection from the Indians. these people had a few weeks before stopt at or near what is now Bee Town to Search for Lead. there having been a Lead Discovery made called the Bee Lead Prospect a short time before that near that place.

About that time Some Winnebago Indians had fired on one or more Keal boats on the Mississippi River above Prairie Du chein and Demonstrations of

(Page 3)

war had alarmed the People and those persons that we met was making their way to Galena it being the nearest Point where Provisions and necessary supplies could be procured we that is my friend Gray & myself had been out then 3 or 4 days and had not heard of any trouble or prospect of trouble with the Indians until we met these people we Induced them all to Stop and to Camp and we persuaded two of the miners to Go Back with my friend Gray to Spie out the Situation at the Bee Lead Diggings. they were gone two days and returned with the report that Every thing remained at the Diggings just as they had left it. they saw no Indians nor signs of Indians but after holding a council we all concluded to return to Galena which we did do. reaching there on the 14th of July more in fact nearly two weeks after the Indian alarm & after the People had collected from the Surrounding Country and Built stockades and Block houses at Galena, Gratiats Grove, & perhaps at some other Points

After two or three weeks Forting, the People was satisfied that what was called the Winnebago Fuss would not result in an Indian war, they returned

(Page 4)

to their places for prospecting for Lead or to their places of business.

This was the only Indian Scare or demonstration of displeasure by the Indians until the war of 1832 called the Black hawk war.

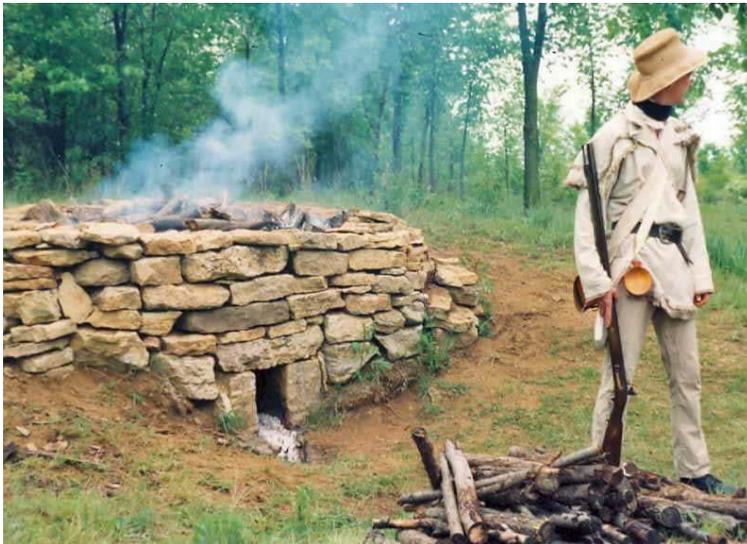
during the fall of 1827, my partner and myself purchased a mineral prospect that had been discovered, by finding Small pieces of Lead Mineral in the Litter piles of Dirt Scratched out by the Badger to make holes in the ground that was the first mineral discovered thereabouts and that was discovered on the Bluff at the East End of the old Rountree Lead, and just close by where the car house of the Broad Gage Rail Road stands now. which Lead proved to be very productive, but the price of Mineral was very low selling for \$7 to \$14 per thousand during the winter of 1827 & 28 and for several years after

Frederick Hollman, James R. Vineyard Joseph H. Dickson William Woodbridge and some other came to Platteville in 1828, which was then called Platte River digings. Early in the spring of 1828

(page 5)

At what was then called Platte River diggings with some little success they had left in spring in the Spring of 1828 my then partner and myself Built a Smelting Furnace and which was the first lead smelting furnace (as I believe) Built and used in what is now within the limits of Grant County.

Within the next two years the Finney Patch the Hessling Leads were discovered, and within the next five years the Teller, the Davidson, the Vineyard, & many other Leads were discovered that all proved good Leads. Captain Com stock Built a Lead smelting furnace 1½ miles SW of Platteville. S. G. Bates & Holmes Built a Lead smelting furnace, 4 miles southwest of Platteville within 3 or 4 years after the Building of the Platteville furnace. all the Lead furnaces Built Previous to 1836, was what was called the Log furnace In the year 1836, John H. Rountree John Atchinson Daniel Warner Richard Miller, Robert Bonson and seven other Gentlemen formed a company to Build four Blast Furnaces and did Build them the first of the four was Built near Smelzer Grove now George Town and was managed and Run by John H. Rountree for several years

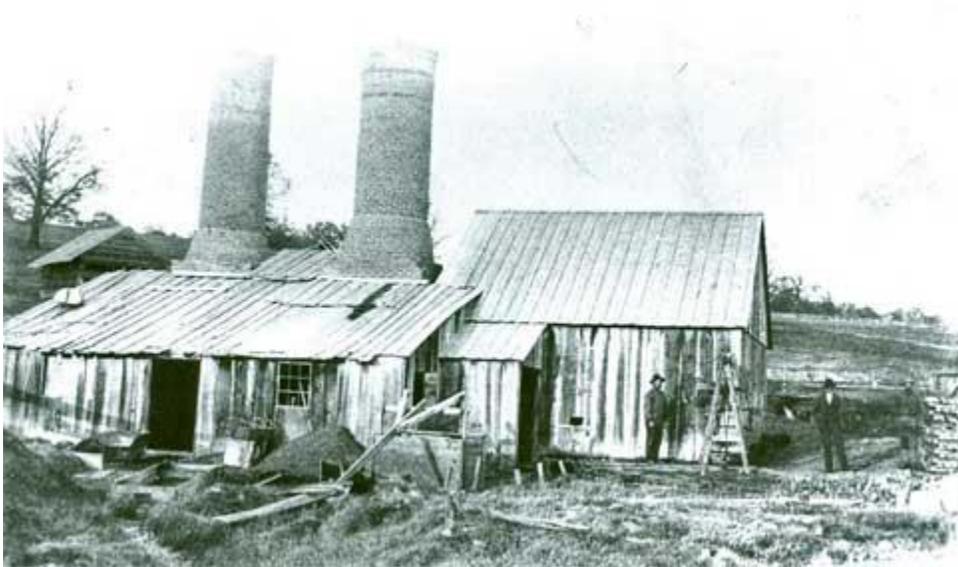


This is a re-enactment of the earliest form of furnace used by the miners. There are no pictures of Rountree's furnace.

(Page 6)

the other three furnaces were Built one near Mineral Point one on the East fork of Fever River a short distance below Council Hill station and the one on the Cat Fish near Dubuque

The first Land Plowed and crops Raised in the Region of Country about Platteville was 1828. Col. Joseph Dickson Plowed 10 or 15 acres of Land in the Spring of 1828 and Raised a crop of Corn on it a part of the Same farm now owned by Roselip, 1½ miles South of Platteville In the Winter of 1828 & 9. on the Petition of myself and a neighbor consisting of F. Holl man J. R. Vineyard, Thos Hugill & perhaps others to Wm. T. Barry Postmaster ~~March 10th 1829~~ Genl a ~~Private~~ Post office was Established at Platteville, named at my Suggestion, because of its Loca tion in the vicinity of the Platte River I was appointed Postmaster by Postmaster General Barry, under General Andrew ~~commissioned March 10,~~ 1829 Jackson's Administration. ^ There was no mail Route from Galena the nearest Post office nor was there any provision for carrying the mail to & from Platteville, & to & from Galena only as I could find conveyance. So



This photograph shows the last operating lead furnace in Platteville. It was a blast furnace, the more efficient type Rountree was talking about.

(Page 7)

as I was having Ox teams hauling Lead to Galena, usually making two trips per week, and I employed trusty honest Ox Team drivers, to drive my Ox Teams, I would make up the mail consisting of from one to 4 different small packages once a week or once in Two weeks and hand the same to one of my Ox Teamsters who would put the same in his Pocket and take it to Galena and deliver same the Postmaster at that place & the Postmaster there would hand to him all of the letter & paper packages addressed to Platteville Post office and he would bring in his Pocket safely to me and my ox teamsters was never known to Rob the mail or to fail to safely deliver all mail matter entrusted to him. that same mode of carrying the mail was continued until after the close of the Black Hawk war of 1832, when Doctor Philio obtained a contract to carry the U States Mail from Galena to Prairie Du chien By Platteville which was continued for some time, and afterwards mail Routes from Galena via Platteville, Mineral Point &c &c to Madison. Wis,



Although slow, Oxen were strong and worked better than horses pulling heavy loads on primitive roads. This illustration is from an early 20th century post card.

(Page 8)

under the management of those successful and well known & Remembered enterprising men Messrs Frink & Walker, who Run Large fine four horse Stage coaches, on all the principal mail Routes in Northern Ill. and Southern Wisc. for many years.

The oldest Tax receipt that I find in looking over my old papers reads as follows copy Received of J. H. Rountree five dollars & "fifty cents in Cash and an order on Mr Curtis former Sheriff for \$2.50 cts being the amount of his Territorial Taxes for 1829, Platteville, Michigan Territory August 18th 1829 John Parker Depy Sheriffe Crawford County"

The Lands Embraced in the Counties of Grant, Iowa LaFayette & other parts of Southern Wisconsin except a small strip on the Southern Line of those Counties, was purchased of the Indians at a Treaty held at Prairie Du chien in the Summer of 1829. And within the next three years the most of the land in this part of Wisconsin was surveyed, by 1st Running the 4th principal meridian North as far as to the Wisconsin River, then Running Town

(Page 9)

and Range lines then subdividing into Sections, the Base Line being the State Line dividing Illinois from Wisconsin having been Established and Settled by a commissioner on the part of the United States, and a commissioner on the part of the State of Illinois in the years 1831, and 1832. History of the Black Hawk war having been written & Published, I shall not undertake to say anything about it

The first School house in this vicinity and, in Southern or Southwestern Wisconsin was Built By Subscription near the Eastern present Line of the 16th section and within the corporate Limits of the village of Platteville in the year 1833. and a School was Taught in the same in 1834 and 1835 by Mr. Huntington and the Building was Built and used for a church and School Building a charter An act of the Wisconsin Territorial Legislation was passed

An act to incorporate the Platteville Academy (was introduced by J.H. Rountree then member of the Legislative council) and passed and approved by the Governor March 1st 1839, which Academy was started the same year and was the first Academy of Learning in what is now Wisconsin.

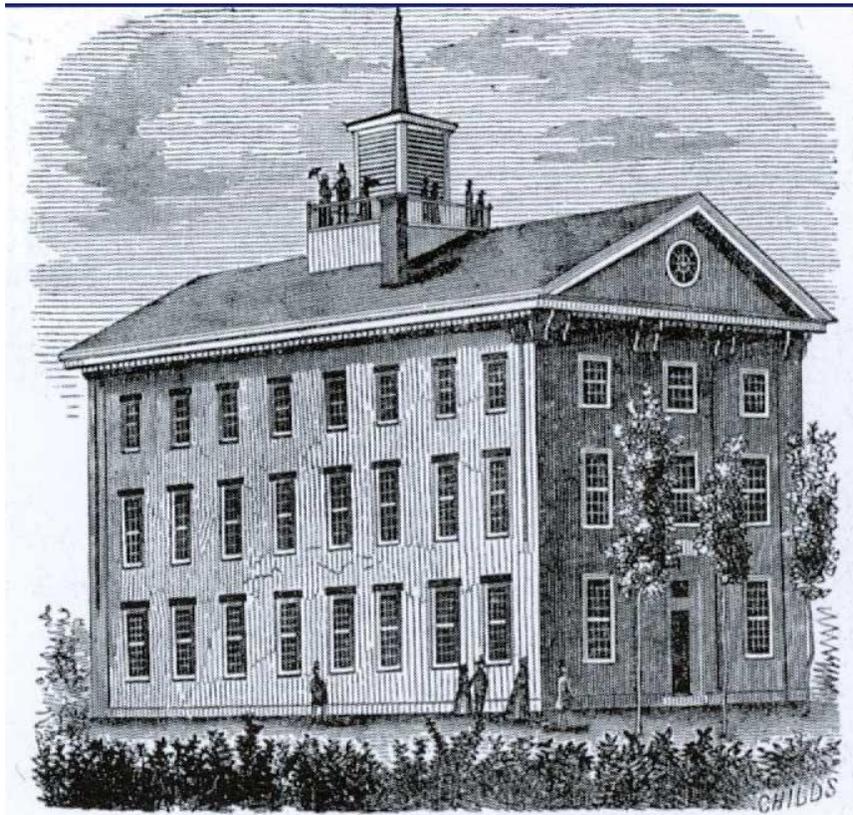


This is the log schoolhouse Rountree was talking about. By the time this picture was taken, it was being used as a farm building

(Page 10)

The Platteville Normal School was organized and School started in 1866 and was the first Normal School in the State of Wisconsin.

It may not be considered Boasting to say that Plattevilles Inhabitants Built the first school house at least in the Southern Portion of Wisconsin, and they organized and put into Existence the first Academy of Learning, in the Territory of Wisconsin. And the Normal School Regent of the State of Wisconsin with and through the aid support, and Patronage of the Inhabitants of Platteville Started the first Normal School in the state of Wisconsin. all together certainly giving this place the credit of being formost in the Advancement of Learning of any place in Wisconsin



Platteville Academy

The Academy was started by the citizens of Platteville. As the number of students increased, a new and larger building was necessary, and this building was completed in 1853. Rountree actively supported the Academy. Because of its reputation for excellence, it was chosen by the state to become the first state normal school. Normal school is the term for schools that train teachers. Later the building housed the Mining School. The Normal School and the Mining School eventually became UW-Platteville. This stone building, with many additions, still stands near the campus.