

Meet Prophetstown's

Fenn

Family

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by

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Prophetstown Area Historical Society
February 2025

Introduction

Prophetstown like every other community has its “leading citizens.” As they pass on the present generation has little, if any, knowledge of them and our cemetery is filled with these people.

One thing the Prophetstown Area Historical Society tries to do is alert you to these folk, who gave their lives to make our town what it is today. One such family is the Fenn family.

I knew who Kenneth Fenn was, but did not get to know him on a personal basis. The only one I knew personally was Townie Fenn, having done computer work for her. She was a delightful lady, one I always enjoyed visiting with and was sad to see her move away from Prophetstown.

DIES SUDDENLY WITHOUT WARNING

G. N. FENN IS CALLED
NO SIGNS OF BEING IN UNUSUAL HEALTH
From the *Echo*, November 17, 1917.

Born in Connecticut in 1835 he came West at 21 and located in Prophetstown in 1856.

The death of Mr. G. [George] N. Fenn, for more than half a century a resident of Prophetstown, which occurred Sunday morning at his home on Park Avenue, came as a surprise to all citizens, even the family who were living in the home with him having no premonition of what was coming.

Mr. Fenn stepped out of doors and to all appearances was feeling as well as usual, having said nothing about being unusually worse than common. He has not been well for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Holton, who at the time of his death lived in the home, were very attentive to him and Mr. Holton, going out of the house soon after Mr. Fenn, found he had expired a short distance from the house.

Mr. Fenn was known in Prophetstown as an honorable gentleman and being reserved in his disposition made friends to stay when once formed. He was a capable man and in his line of business one of the best. The obituary follows:

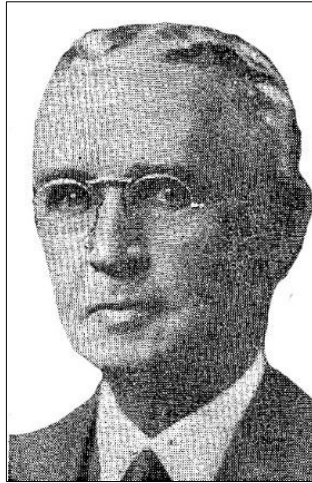
Mr. Geo. N. Fenn was born in Milford, Conn., April 27, 1835, and died in Prophetstown, Ill., Nov. 4, 1917, aged 82 years, 6 months and 7 days.

He spent his boyhood days at the old home and at the age of 17 became an apprentice as a carpenter in Waterbury, Conn. He served his apprenticeship of four years and during this time was employed on buildings then under construction for Yale University at New Haven, Conn. At twenty-one he came West, making his first stop at Davenport, Ia. From there he went to Geneseo, Ill., and in the same year, 1856, came to Prophetstown, entering the employ of the contracting firm of Hodson & Hull, who were at the time building the Edward Gage house on Jackson St., his first work being the erection of a black walnut stairway in that house. In 1858 he returned to his old home in Milford, returning in the year 1861. Since that time he has been a continuous resident of this place.

On April 7, 1864 he was married to Mrs. Emily Wright Johnson who passed away on the 25th of Feb. 1871. To them were born two children, Mrs. Mary F. Lancaster and Charles W. Fenn, who both survive him.



Charles Wright Fenn



Charles Wright Fenn (or C. W. as he was frequently called) was born December 20, 1866. His parents were George Newton and Emily (Wright) Fenn. George moved to Prophetstown from Connecticut in 1856, and he and Emily were married in 1864.

C. W. was in the first class to graduate from Prophetstown High School in 1886. There were 8 in the class. After high school he attended business college in Burlington, IA, and taught at Augustana College in Rock Island in 1888-89, where he organized the business college at Augustana.

On September 23, 1890, he married Bessie Smith and on October 20 purchased the drug store in Prophetstown from William McNeill, hired his cousin H. G. Daggett of Rock Falls, who was a pharmacist, to run the store. C. W. and Bessie went to Chicago, where he entered Northwestern School of Pharmacy, graduating in 1893. They returned to Prophetstown and C. W. ran the store.

In 1895 they built a house on S. Washington St., within easy walking distance of the store. Their house was built by his father, George, a contractor who learned his trade at Yale College in Connecticut, before it became Yale University (in 1887).

The original drug store was a white clapboard building owned by William McNeill, which was moved in 1895 to its present location as a duplex on East Ave., [after] C. W. purchased the drug store from McNeill. The new brick building which housed the drug store was constructed by George Paddock in 1895. Paddock had also erected a two-story brick building in 1892 at the corner of Main St. and W. Third, where the new Farmers National Bank was located.

C. W. and Bessie had 3 children, Kenneth born in 1897, Alma in 1900 and Camilla in 1903. There were 3 grandsons, Robert Fenn, Stanley Sturtevant and James Evans.

In 1904 C. W. was named a director of Farmers National Bank and served for the remainder of his life. He also served as vice president of the bank.

In 1912 a young man from Morrison, Dudley Dean Slocum, was hired as a jeweler at the store.

In 1921 son Kenneth graduated from U. of I. School of Pharmacy in Chicago and the store became C. W. Fenn and Son.

C. W. was always interested in new products. While he ran the drug store he sold, as a sideline, the first pneumatic-tired bicycles. He purchased his first Buick in 1911. He installed a water softener in the house in the 1920's, and one of the first mechanical refrigerators in the late 20's. While the refrigerator was in the kitchen, the compressor/condenser was in the basement.

C. W. was associated with Rexall Drug Co. for 30 years, was secretary/treasurer of the Illinois Rexall Division for 8 years.

At one time he served on the Prophetstown school board and on the board of the Morrison Country Club. He was a member of the Congregational Church, the Masonic Lodge, and was the first president of the Prophetstown Booster Club.

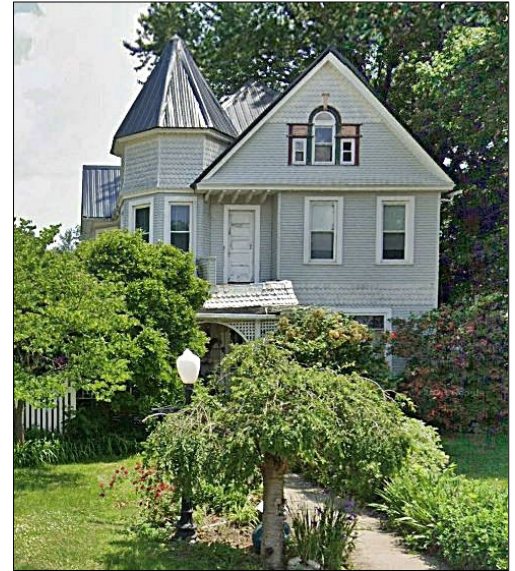
With Kenneth at the store, C. W. had time to pursue some other interests. He became an avid golfer and traveler. He and Bessie took many automobile trips throughout the U.S. and Canada and around the Gaspé Peninsula. In 1936 they traveled through the Panama Canal and went to Cuba. In 1939 they made a trip to the Hawaiian Islands. On these trips C. W. took many pictures, mainly 8mm movies. He was frequently asked by PTA groups in the area to show the movies at their meetings. Grandson Robert, who was in high school, went along to run the projector while C. W. described the scenes.

In later years at the store Louis Weburg served as jeweler, and John Sibley worked in the photography department. In the early years public school books were not supplied by the school board, and were available at the drug store.

C. W. Fenn Home
505 Washington St.



1900



2023



The first graduating class from
Prophetstown High School – 1886.
C. W. Fenn is at the front right.

LOCAL COUPLE WERE MARRIED HERE TODAY

Miss Camilla Fenn Becomes Bride
of Aubrey Sturtevant.

Will Live Here.

From the *Echo*, June 1926.

Miss Camilla Fenn, younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Fenn, was married at noon today to Aubrey C. Sturtevant, only son of Mrs. Jennie C. [Cleaveland] Sturtevant, at the home of the bride's parents [Cyrus and Mary Cleaveland].

The ceremony was performed in the presence of 40 relatives and friends by Rev. A. E. Beaumont of the Congregational church.

There is an interesting connection involved here. C. W. Fenn was a druggist in Prophetstown, owner of Fenn Drug. Jennie Cleaveland's brother was Frank Cleaveland, also a druggist in Prophetstown. So the marriage created a connection between our two druggists. Jennie Cleaveland is the gr., gr., gr. aunt of our present pharmacist, Nicole Johnson-Huen. Frank Cleaveland was her gr., gr. grandfather.

Originally, Frank's drug store was at 220 Washington Street, located on the corner lot where the Shaw cookout is held today. Later, he purchased the building at 326 Washington Street and moved his drug store there. That drug store was purchased by Bob Hearld, who owned it when we came to town in 1964. The Fenn Drug was at 316-318 Washington Street.



The Cleaveland Drug
Stores.

← 220 Wash. St.
326 Wash. St. →



316-318 Wash. St.

Fenn Drug

C. W. Fenn's drug store was quite different than what you see today. He built the store in 1895 and used the north half for the drug store. The south half was rented to other businesses, including a grocery store, clothing store and restaurant.



The drug store

A VERY EARLY PICTURE of Fenn Drug. Things sure look different now.



This building once sat where the present drug store building is. It was moved to East Ave. and with an addition was turned into a duplex. The store was owned by William McNeill, who sold it to C. W. Fenn. Fenn had the present brick build constructed.



1958 Fenn's Drug Store in the Early Days

One probably would not recognize Fenn's Drug Store today if he were looking at this picture.

Kenneth Fenn supplied this picture to us of the store when his father, C. W. Fenn, was owner of the store. In those days there was no center aisle and the balcony was not enclosed as it is today.

Mr. Fenn is at the right in the picture and at the left is F. L. Adams, inventor of the first Eclipse lawn mower. Mr. Adams was a jeweler in the Fenn Store for a number of years before he invented the lawn mower.

The picture is believed to have been taken around the turn of the century, or shortly after.

Change of Firm

Having sold an interest in my Drug and Jewelry Store to Mr. H. F. Daggett, the style of the firm in future will be

FENN & DAGGETT

Thanking all for their patronage and good will during the past 18 years, I trust that the "new" firm may merit a continuance of that "good will" in years to come.

C. W. FENN

Our drug store had the Fenn name for over 110 years.

C. W. Fenn Drug

Fenn & Daggett

C. W. Fenn & Son Drug

Fenn Drug

Kenneth N. Fenn Obit



KENNETH N. FENN - 80, Prophetstown, died Friday afternoon [August 25, 1978] at Community General Hospital where he had been a patient for two weeks. Services will be 2 p.m. Sunday at the First Congregational Church, Prophetstown, with the Rev. Daniel Boxwell officiating. Burial will be in Riverside Cemetery. There will be no visitation. A memorial fund has been established in his memory for the First Congregational Church.

Fenn was born Dec. 27, 1897, the son of Charles and Bessie (Smith) Fenn. He was educated in Prophetstown schools, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Illinois Pharmacy School.

He married Leath Brown, Sterling, Jan. 1, 1919, in Sterling. Fenn lived in Prophetstown all of his lifetime and owned and operated Fenn Drug Store from 1921 until 1964.

He was a member of the First Congregational Church, veteran of WW I, 50 year member of Prophetstown Lodge 293 AF & AM, Charter Member Prophetstown American Legion Post 522, and served as member of the Prophetstown Booster and of the Board of Directors of Farmers National Bank for many years.

Survivors include his widow, one son, Robert C., Sunnyvale, Calif., one sister, Alma Evans, Kirkwood, Mo., two grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Contributed by Melva L. Taylor - *The Daily Gazette*, Sterling-Rock Falls, Illinois August 26, 1978 - Saturday.

Leith Fenn

Funeral services for Leith B. Fenn, 87, will be held this Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church. Rev. James A. Winship, interim pastor will officiate the service with burial in Riverside Cemetery, Prophetstown. There will be no visitation.

Leith was born July 20, 1897 in Sterling, IL, the daughter of Joseph and Ella

(Allison) Brown. She was educated in Sterling schools and a graduate of the American Conservatory of Music, Chicago. She was a former member of O.E.S., a member of the First Congregational Church and served as organist and choir director for 33 years.

Kenneth Fenn of Prophetstown and Leith were united in marriage on

January 1919 in Sterling, IL. Mrs. Fenn resided in Prophetstown until 1981.

Survivors include one son, Robert C., Prophetstown; 2 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband in 1978.

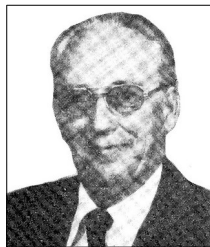
A memorial has been established for the First Congregational Church.



Kenneth Fenn's former home at 207 Park Ave.

I was hired by the Prophetstown Elementary School in March 1964. In July we came to visit Prophetstown on our way to Montana. Ted Gapinski, the PES Supt. who hired me, gave us a tour of the town. This was one of the places we drove by. It was quite different than what you see now, because it had a flat roof. Having lived in California it was common to see homes with flat roofs, but not in Illinois.

We found out later that Ken's decision to build a flat roof caused quite a stir in our small community. Apparently, a lot of negative comments were made around town relative to what many saw as a rather "odd" roof. I got to know Townie Fenn quite well, having worked on her computer a number of times. I mentioned the roof thing to her and she told me that, eventually, Ken placed a large sign in front of his house which said: "We don't like your roof either!"



Robert C. Fenn, 77, of 29 Meadow Lane, Prophetstown, died Friday, Jan. 15, 1999, at his home.

A memorial service will be held at the First Congregational Church, Prophetstown, on Saturday, Jan. 23, at 2 p.m. with Rev. Elizabeth Hazel, pastor, and Rev. M. Melvin Hough, former pastor, officiating. Internment is in the Riverside Cemetery, Prophetstown. There is no visitation.

A memorial has been established for the First Congregational Church and the Hospice of the Rock River Valley. The Gardner Funeral Home, Prophetstown, is in charge of the arrangements.

He was born Oct. 28, 1921, in Sterling, the son of Kenneth and Leith Brown Fenn. He graduated from Prophetstown High School, Class of 1939, and attended Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa, and California Flyers School of Aviation, Inglewood, Calif.

He married Townsend Hardeman on May 8, 1943, in Kirkwood, Mo. He worked with United Airlines for nearly 30 years, retiring in 1981, after which the couple moved to Prophetstown in September of 1982.

He was an active member of the First Congregational Church, Prophetstown; director and president of the Farmers National Bank, Prophetstown, and a 50-year member of Wheatland, Wy., Lodge 16 AF & AM.

He is survived by his wife; daughters (and spouses), Sally (David) DeVries, Windham, N.H., and Elizabeth (John) Hayna, Barrington, Ill.; and grandchildren. Daphne and David DeVries and Justin and Spencer Hayna. He was preceded in death by his parents and an infant sister.



TOWNSEND H. "TOWNIE" FENN, 101, of Arlington Heights, IL, formerly of Prophetstown, IL, died Friday, May 27, 2022 at The Moorings of Arlington Heights.

Cremation rites will be accorded. A memorial service will be held at 1:00 pm on Sunday, June 26, 2022 at the Advent Christian Church in Prophetstown, IL, officiated by Pastor Andy Ploenzke. Interment will be at the Riverside Cemetery in Prophetstown. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a donation in Townie's name to an organization that was near and dear to her heart - Feed My Starving Children, c/o Stacey Hartman, 740 Wiley Farm Ct., Schaumburg, IL 60173. (Please include a note that the donation is in memory of Townie Fenn.)

Townie was born March 24, 1921, in Gray Summit, MO, to Glen and Marion (Evans) Hardeman. She was educated in the Gray Summit grade schools and in 1939 she graduated from Washington High School in Washington, MO. She attended St. Louis Business College in St. Louis, MO. Townie was employed as a secretary for Ralston Purina in St. Louis, and later worked for the Elementary School District in Elk Grove Village, IL. On May 8, 1943, she married Robert Fenn in Kirkwood, MO. Townie and Bob moved to Prophetstown in September of 1982. They were members of the former First Congregational United Church of Christ in Prophetstown, where they were involved in a several church activities. He died January 15, 1999. She was also active with Volunteers for Education at the Prophetstown Elementary School and at Good Samaritan Riverview Center. Townie enjoyed spending time with her family.

Survivors include two daughters, Sally (David) DeVries of Windham, NH, and Elizabeth Hayna of Hoffman Estates, IL; four grandchildren, Daphne (John) Fandrich of Delaware, OH, David DeVries of Windham, NH, Justin (Holly) Hayna of Downers Grove, IL, Spencer (Kathleen) Hayna of Palatine, IL; ten great grandchildren, Jack, Luke and Allison Fandrich, David, Leilah and Michaelah DeVries, Connor and Luke Hayna, Violet and Eloise Hayna.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Robert, four brothers, one son in law, John Hayna.