

TAKEN FROM A CHICAGO PAPER

JUNE 8, 1966

Want Ad Turns Up Rare Street Guide for Antique Book Shop

An Austin News reader spied a want ad in the Austin News classified section, called the advertiser and a story was born.

The story from the advertiser—Charles F. Petelle, owner of Petelle Antiquarian Book store, 4244 Armitage—made the deal with the reader. He bought boxloads of old books.

And from the boxes came some gems. Namely, an 1892 "Complete — Unique — Original Hill's Guide from All Parts of the Earth" subtitled "Chicago and the World."

It was a street guide, but much more. Obviously printed to cash in on the trade and influx of visitors to the Chicago Columbian exposition, the 248 page book covered the world in general and Chicago in particular.

Maps depicting the West Side show different street names in Hermosa (Petelle, a buff of early Chicagoana, believes the Hermosa section might have been a suburb of Chicago around the Civil war period).

Humboldt Park, Garfield Park and Austin were the western limits of the city. Forty-eighth street and/or Hyman

ave., now Cicero ave, formed the city's western boundary south of Madison st. and or Robinson ave., (Laramie today).

And 52nd st. was the boundary north of Madison. Good hunks of Garfield Park were annotated as unimproved park property. Linden park station at 52nd between Washington and Randolph was the end of the line.

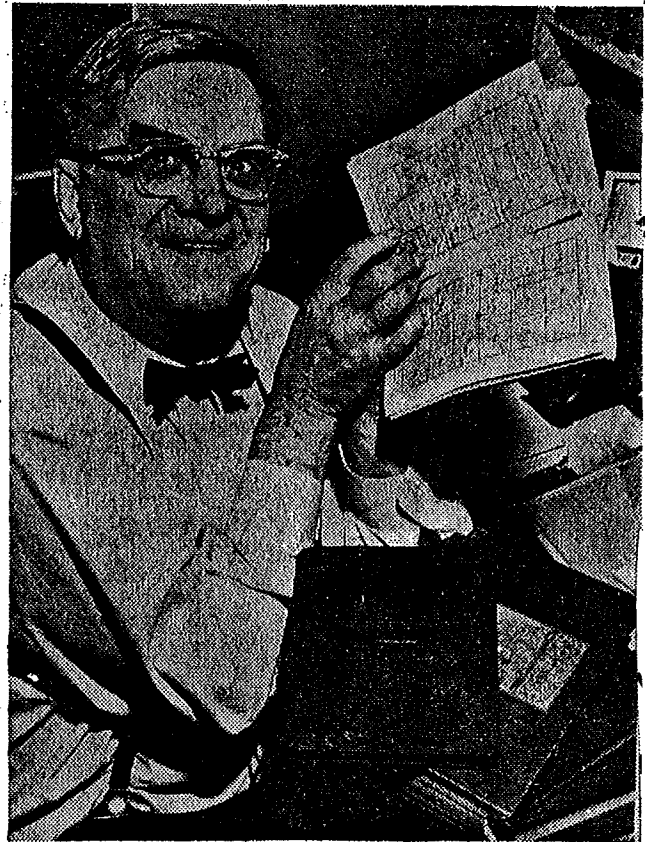
Streets bearing different names than today starting at 40th (Pulaski) and North ave. going west included Pennsylvania instead of Keystone; Grant, instead of Karlov, and north of the railroad tracks Grant was known as Hamilton; McAuley, Kenney (42nd st.), Tripp, Howard, Hinkley and Columbia (44th st).

In the run of streets between Chicago and Kinzie, and 46th to 52nd an Indiana was sandwiched between Hubbard and Ohio. Between Madison and Congress, and 40th and 48th st., there was an Owasco street between Van Buren and Jackson.

Hill's advised you could get a "handsomely furnished room" in a hotel for \$1 to \$2 per day without meals. Restaurant bills of fare offered whole lobster for 50c, porterhouse steak for 60c and stewed sweet-corn 5c.

Listed among the "prominent and interesting places to visit in Chicago" was the Cook county insane asylum, located in Dunning, extreme northwest part of the city. "Contains usually 1,000 to 1,500 patients. Beautiful grounds; comfortable place for the insane. Admission free to visitors on application to the local superintendent.

And if this didn't strike your fancy you could go to the Athenaeum, 26 Van Buren; a popular place of intellectual entertainment and instruction;" Or



Antique Directory

Charles Petelle, who operates unique antique book store at 4244 Armitage, with early city director that recently came into his possession opened to pages listing West-Northwest Side streets under their original names.

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the Chinese quarter—Clark st. south of the grand Pacific hotel. Bridewell, a jail, "admission free," here, too.

Among the parks attractions listed were the artesian well and pavilion in Garfield Park and Humboldt Park's pavilion.

But the "find" of the old 1892 Hill directory was not the only valuable Petelle discovered in his buy of boxes. Deemed valuable by him was a first edition of Mark Twain's "Following the Equator;" a mission hymnal in the Dakota Indian language; and a privately printed book of a man's 1901 first person account of a trip to Yellowstone. And a book on the early history of the Missouri Ozark region.

Many times such buys are worthless and many times valuable. From his quarters on the Northwest Side Petelle does a world-wide business.

"I gave up dealing in new books. You might as well be selling sausages if you're going into business just to buy and sell at a profit. Profits are slim in new book sales, too, and there's too much paper work."

~~In the used book business there are many personal instead of monetary rewards. For example, Petelle just bought a book he has been seeking for 20 years from a man in Michigan. It deals with early Chicago, Petelle's favorite subject.~~

It is his favorite subject because a forebearer Louis Petell (various spelling variations have shown up in print) was one of the three French Canadian settlers written about the earliest settlement of Ft. Dearborn. Petell and Wilmette and LeMai were mentioned in an 1803 diary.

Petell, who it is believed had an Indian wife, was apparently killed in the 1812 Ft. Dearborn massacre, but descendants carried on the

the Artic Circle.

The Artic Circle shipment to a French missionary was routed via dog sled on its last leg of the journey.

Petelle finds customers and books by advertising. He gets many clients by referrals from other book dealers or librarians. Without any trace of vanity, he said New York book dealers will refer clients to him because: "I'm good, frankly."

It takes years to become a good bookman. And Petelle said you only scratch the surface and realize how much more there is to learn.

His biggest coups were getting permission to copy on microfilm two books in the Vatican. And having 15 books in a French university translated into English for clients.

His biggest boner was quoting a book (he imagined the book as a collection of pamphlets; it wasn't; it was a fancy bound book) at \$60. The customer was delighted and snapped up the offer. Then the customer told Petelle he had ordered a similar book from Petelle two years before and it cost \$200.

Book value is sometimes determined by the condition of the cover, etc. and sometimes not depending on the collector. And the bookman's guiding philosophy is "there's a buyer for every book." You may have to wait 200 years to find him, but he exists.

Meantime, the average used book dealer pays the rent via his small "bread and butter" sales of \$2 and \$3 books. The big coups are mainly fiction, according to Petelle.

Dispelling the notion book dealers pay you a pittance and resell for a small king's ransom, Petelle said the average book dealer will not take advantage of those that don't do

Petelle disclaimed being a genealogical buff, but said he has found references of the family name dating back to 1360 in French books.

"I'm interested in buying all early American history and Chicago history in particular. But to be valuable books must be first hand accounts of historical events and not rehashes. And to be monetarily valuable it must be prior to 1830."

Petelle, who started book collecting at age 12, with his first job, has the dictionary that came with his set of Encyclopedia Britannica—\$125 in that day. Today he has about 40,000 books in stock. *3 (cont.)*

He has specialized in Catholic books. Petelle stated about 8,000 titles exist on St. Joseph alone. He has between 600 and 1,000 books on the Virgin Mary. And he has clients all over the world—shipping to India, Rome, Philippines, Ireland, England, Newfoundland, even

"If you are called in by a private party to look over a collection you must remember they put their trust in you and you treat them in a decent way. It's to your advantage." *(4 cont.)*

Not too long ago Petelle was asked by a client to find out the value of a set of 1678 books printed in Frankfort, Germany, that had been in the family for four generations. Alas, the books are a Biblical commentary with very little sales potential, and the fee for Petelle's research was greater than the books' value.

Petelle has a vast collection of reference books that will give a pretty good idea of a book's worth. But none is greater than actual auction records. For example, the same book sought and quoted across the country will range in price from 85c to \$30.

Petelle sells his books when he gets around to publishing a

catalog with the titles. Specialized subject matter is the secret, he said, and he gets a 30% to 40% sale of his catalog books. Fiction dealers will only get a 3% to 5% sales return.

Up until two years ago Petelle ran the book business part-time. He has been in the credit business since the age of 12. (He was credit manager of the Gold Dust Corp., manufacturers of the Gold Dust twin trademarked soap.)

Petelle opened a book store in 1953 in Oak Park to ease into upon his retirement. Seven years ago he moved to the Armitage address when he outgrew the Oak Park quarters. Upon retiring in 1964 his daughter, one of five children, and her four assistants turned over the operation to Petelle.

"It's a love and a challenge," Petelle declared. "I get a greater kick out of finding a book for a client than I did when I haunted book stores on my own for myself. I only wish I had gone into the business at age 12." *5- END*