

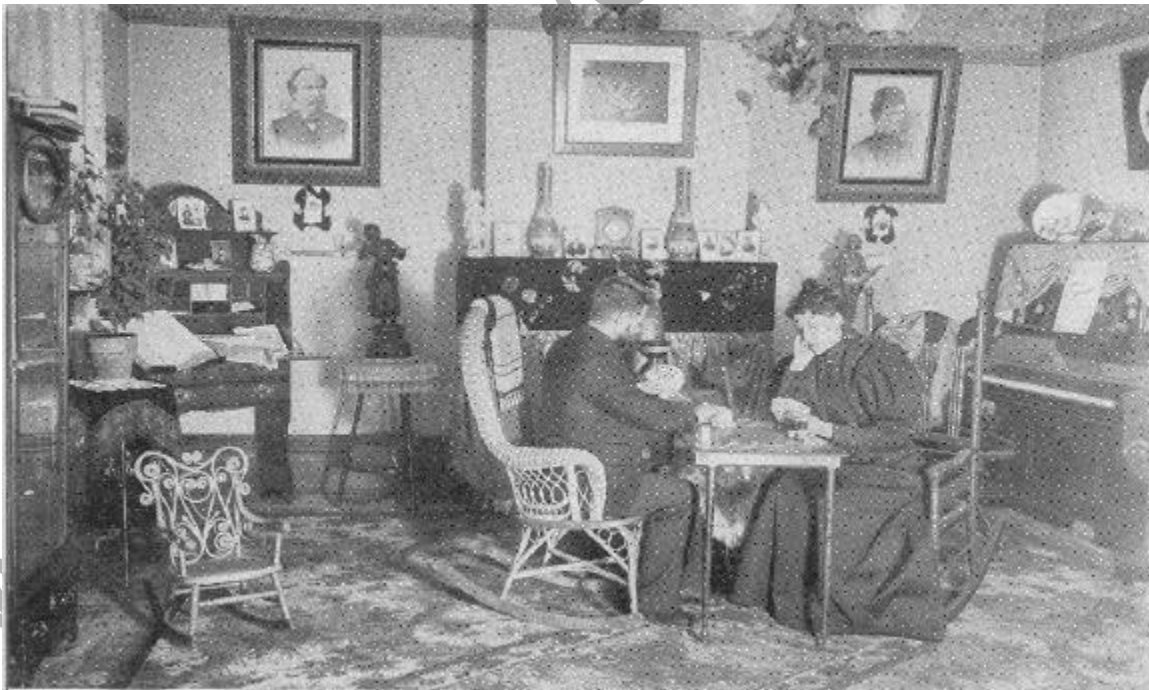
SMALL-TOWN LIFE

People liked simple pleasures, solid comfort, a little uplift

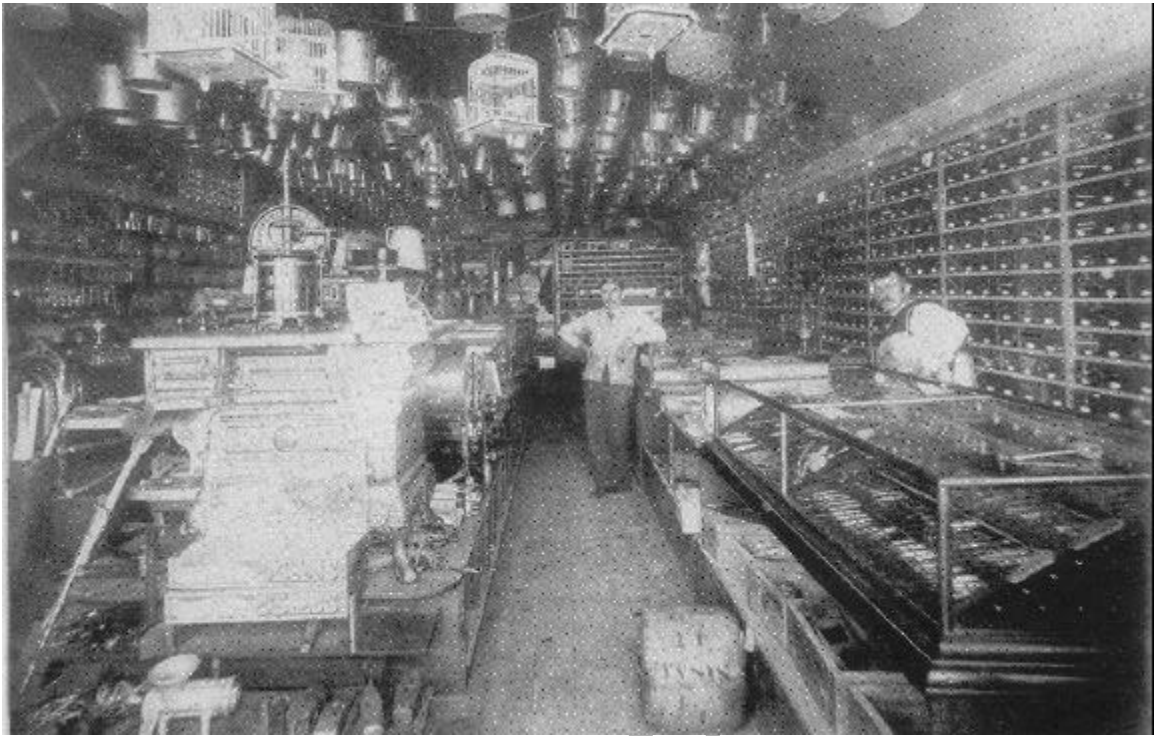
Was the name of an article found in LIFE, Volume 28, Number 1, January 2, 1950 in an story entitled "THE GOLDEN YEARS BEFORE THE WARS". The article details life in the small town of Boonville.

In small towns – most of them – life was self-sufficient and pleasant. It was certainly that way in Boonville, Mo. (pop. 6,000) on the Missouri River. Because the railroad has by-passed the town, Boonville missed some of the bustle of a booming age and settled down to a life as leisurely as the river in midsummer. It was a time when a skilled clerk or bookkeeper could earn as much as \$8 a week and live comfortably on it. Potatoes were 30 cents a bushel, eggs 12 cents a dozen, whisky \$2 a gallon. Breakfast or supper at the commercial hotel cost 15 cents and a good hot turkey dinner cost 20 cents.

Boonville's streets were lined with comfortable houses most of them with barns and buggy sheds. There was plenty of drama at the Stephens Opera House and cotillions in the big Rivercene mansion across the water. And, like all small towns, Boonville was fine for boys. After trimming the kerosene lamps, driving the cow to pasture and chopping stovewood, they could poke along the riverbanks, watch the steamboat or gawk at one of the town's half dozen automobiles. In winter there was skating on the river; in summer, fishing and even nude bathing – but not, according to a local ordinance, until at least two stars were visible in the sky.



IN A BOONVILLE PARLOR a game of rummy occupies a couple's evening in the early 1900s. They are playing by the light of gas lamp, warmed by a wood-burning stove. The family Bible lies open near desk, big family photographs hang on walls, and the sheet music of the popular *Blue Danube* lies on the piano.



COMMERCE AND CULTURE took up town's time. Here a hardware store displays bird cages, pails, stoves and the ever present case of jackknives.



A GROUP OF PRETTY students interested in uplift practice the Delsarte System, which taught them graceful gestures to accompany every emotion.



DIGNIFIED ANGELERS relax on a sunny afternoon. They are probably out for catfish and perch.



A CRAP GAME passes time on the Boonville – New Franklin Ferry, which operated until the year 1924.



OFF FOR A PICNIC on the Missouri River, Boonville families wait for sailing time aboard the excursion boat *Nadine*, while a dog waits on the gangplank. The *Nadine*

capsized and sank in 1905 with the loss of four lives. The small boy in dark stockings on the top deck is Albin Schmidt, who now runs a jewelry store in town.

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