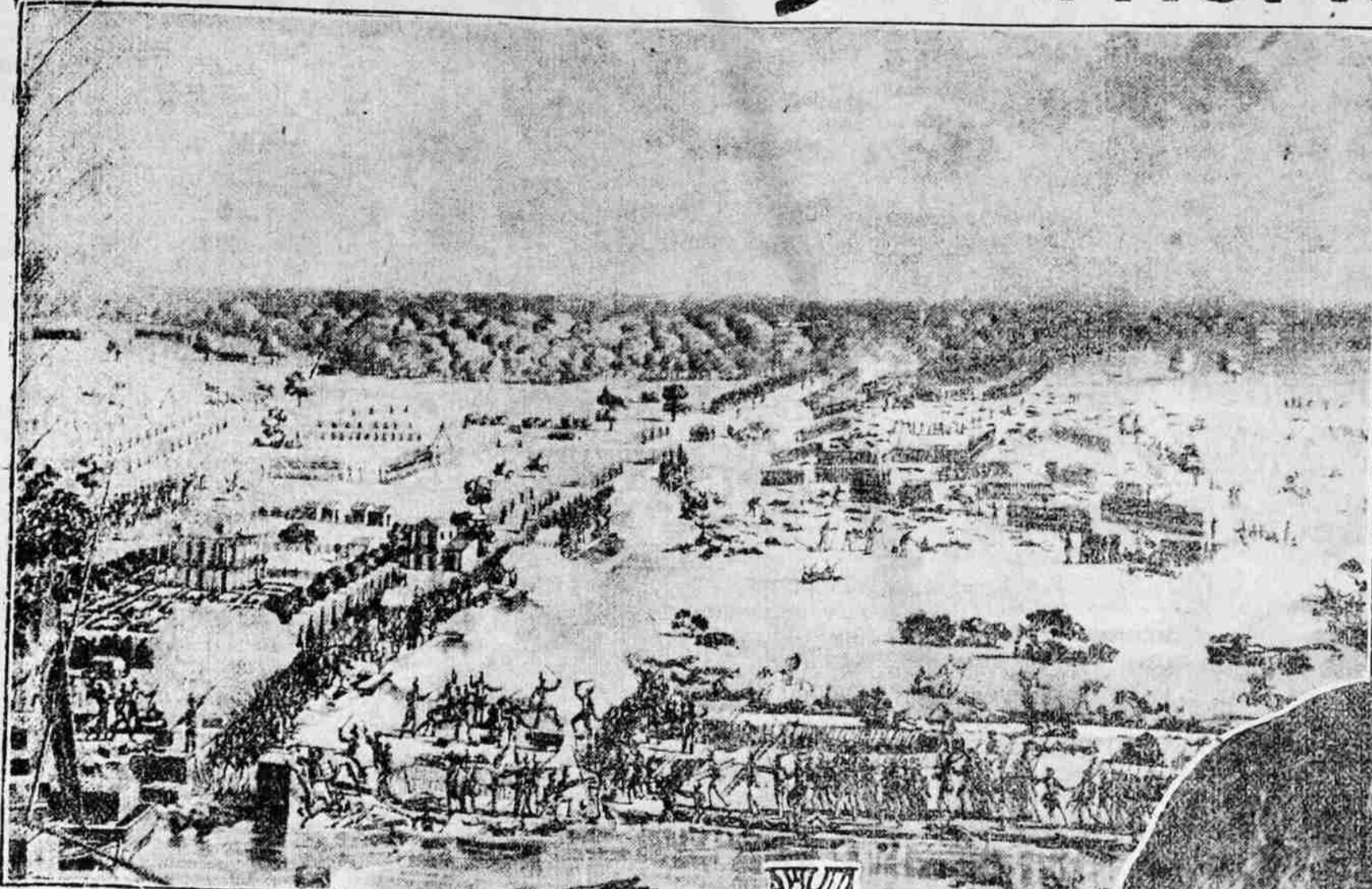


# When Every American Could Shoot

## It Was Just 100 Years From January 8, When Andrew Jackson's Backwoods Sharpshooters, Beat the Flower of the British Army at New Orleans



One hundred years ago on the eighth of January the Americans and British fought their last battle. In the interim a great change has come over the American people. Instead of the rough and ready men of the back woods who couldn't afford to waste a bullet, there has been developed a generation of Americans who hardly know how to handle a rifle. The men who fought the British at New Orleans were probably the best hand to hand fighters the world has ever seen gathered together in one army.

These men were recruited from Kentucky and Tennessee, from the streets of New Orleans and from the handouts of the Gulf Coast. So rough were these Kentucky and Tennessee fighters that they were referred to contemptuously by the British as the "Dirty Shirts." This aggregation of militia men Andrew Jackson assembled for the defense of New Orleans knew little about drill. Their military drill knowledge consisted of how to forward march, charge and fire. There were 2,500 in this army of militia men. On the British side there were 12,000 trained veterans who had fought with Wellington. They were veterans from the Spanish Peninsular campaign and from other great battlefields of Europe.

The secret of the success of Andrew Jackson's men was that they knew how to shoot. Every man in Old Hickory's army took careful aim before firing and when the day was done General Lambert, the commander of the shattered British forces found 2,017 of his men were dead or wounded. Five hundred were taken prisoner. Even the commander owed his office to the fortune of battle, for the British chief commander, Gen. Edward Pakenham, fell with his men.

On the American side the losses were only eight killed and thirteen wounded. Historians generally discredit the importance of the Battle of New Orleans. It was fought a month after the treaty of peace between the United States and England had been signed at Ghent. Had the British won the day they doubtless would have been forced to withdraw as the terms of the treaty gave them no territory.

But in the days of the War of 1812 there were no cables under the sea. There were no fast mail ocean greyhounds to race across the Atlantic with words of peace. In America word from Washington to New Orleans traveled by slow post and Andrew Jackson did not know peace had been declared. Neither did the British.

General Pakenham conceived the idea of capturing New Orleans and taking the whole of Louisiana Territory which had been ceded to America by Napoleon only twelve years before. With an expedition of picked men he sailed into the Gulf of Mexico for the attack. General Jackson had been directed by the War Department at Washington to attack Pensacola, which at that time belonged to Spain. All of Florida was Spanish territory in those days. Spain was not at war with the United States but the Spaniards in Florida had allowed the English to violate their neutrality with impunity. The English used Pensacola as an outfitting station from which naval and military movements were made against Mobile and against American shipping coming down the Mississippi for West Indian ports.

**JACKSON HEARS OF NEW ORLEANS PLOT.** Jackson drove the British out of Pensacola and destroyed the wharfs there as punishment to the citizens for allowing their port to be used as a base for British operations. But he did more than win a victory. He discovered a plan was on foot to attack New Orleans. If Jackson had lived a hundred years later he would have wired to Washington for instructions, but there was no time. He wrote a letter to Washington telling his superiors he was on his way to New Orleans and he put the letter in care of a trusted messenger, who was instructed to eat the letter rather than let it fall

into the hands of another. Mounted on his favorite white horse he moved to New Orleans by forced marches. He reached there to find the city almost indifferent to its fate. They were loyal to the United States and hated England, but they did not believe the English would come in force large enough to conquer them. The British already had defeated the American flotilla of six small vessels and had entered Lake Borgne at the time Jackson arrived. Governor Claiborne had begged the legislature to declare martial law and impress everybody into military service, but the legislature did not wish to act. Jackson accomplished what Claiborne could not do. Troops were mustered and drilled for the battle. Among the troops was a company of free negroes and another of Choctaw Indians.

Jackson's enthusiasm fired the city and recruits offered themselves for service. Women and children sang in the streets. For the most part the inhabitants were French creoles. They sang "La Marseillaise," "Le Chant du Depart" as the soldiers drilled. Jackson's "Dirty Shirts" from the backwoods taught them how to sing Yankee Doodle and soon the French Creoles were singing not only their old French songs, but were liberal with the strains of Yankee Doodle.

While Jackson was building forts and throwing up breast works and making plans against every contingency a visitor came to his headquarters one night and offered his services. "I would like to fight," said the visitor. "But I am proscribed. In New Orleans they call me a pirate. My brother recently escaped from jail there. They have hunted me in the swamps and they have tried to burn my ships in the channels of the river. I am John Lafitte of Baratavia."

"I know you for a hellish bandit," said Old Hickory. "You have robbed from everybody and have sold your booty in the markets of New Orleans through your agents. You ought to be hung. I do know that you are a fearless man, and I have a half notion to accept your offer for we need men who can shoot in the battle which is coming."

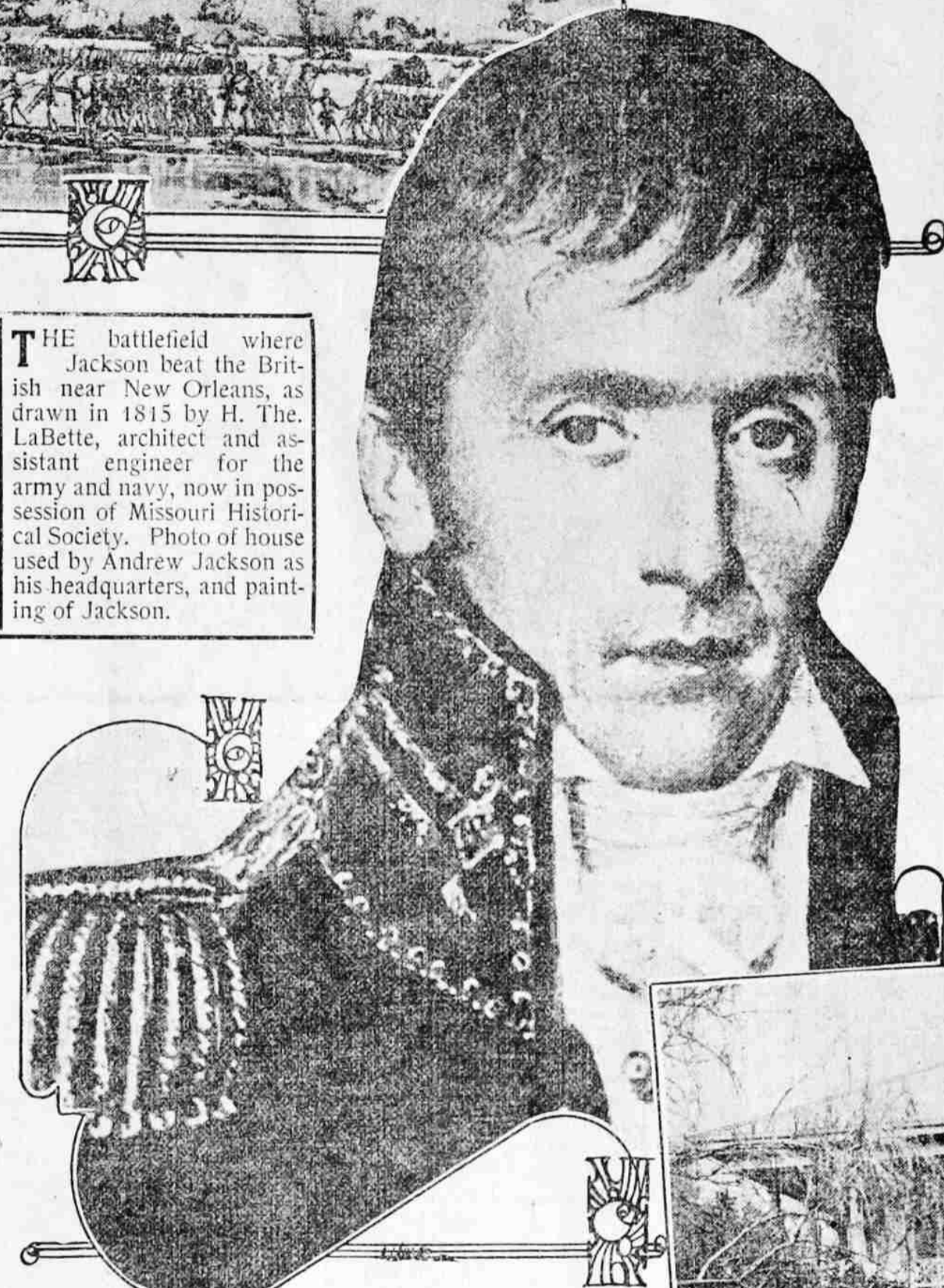
"If I come I will bring my brother Pierre on whose head there is a reward of \$1,000. Both of us would fight for you and the only request we have is that you pardon us our past and permit us to live in peace the rest of our days. We will on our part promise to abide by the laws of the United States no matter how irksome they are to us."

**JACKSON ACCEPTS OFFER OF PIRATE BROTHERS.**

Jackson agreed to accept the aid of the pirates, but he could not promise them clemency after the battle. He said they would be safe, however, until the British were repelled and then if the State of Louisiana saw fit to punish them for their past deeds he would give them a chance to get back to the bayous and swamps. However, if they fought bravely he would recommend clemency for them. The brothers agreed. Baratavia was a pirate stronghold on one of the sluggish channels of the Mississippi River below New Orleans. The inhabitants had made their living not only by pirating on commerce, but they had smuggled in slaves from Africa. Just before the invasion by Pakenham the British had made overtures to the Baratavians. They wished the pirates to aid them in the capture of New Orleans. Lafitte half way agreed to join them and in that way secured information as to the size of the British force.

He gave all the information to Jackson. When he joined the American Army he brought with him his band of freebooters. The country below New Orleans was so swampy it was not inhabited at the time of the Battle of New Orleans except by the pirates and a few adventurous hunters.

**THE** battlefield where Jackson beat the British near New Orleans, as drawn in 1815 by H. The. LaBette, architect and assistant engineer for the army and navy, now in possession of Missouri Historical Society. Photo of house used by Andrew Jackson as his headquarters, and painting of Jackson.



While it was known the British were landing on Lake Borgne their exact location could not be determined. Pickets were scattered over the country, but when a man has an army of only 2,500 men he cannot spare many pickets.

One of these pickets stationed at an important location on Lake Borgne was captured and from him the British learned where the other pickets were stationed. These were picked up one by one. On December 22 the British landed at a little fishers' village on the shores of Lake Borgne. Their scouts had been over a great deal of the land in the meantime and had decided on their approach to New Orleans. From the fishers' village they pushed on along the shores of a bayou and entered a swamp. Skirting a plantation at the edge of the swamp they marched until they arrived at the banks of the Mississippi River shortly before noon of the same day. Jackson was completely surprised. The cathedral bells were rung in alarm and the troops hastily assembled to give battle.

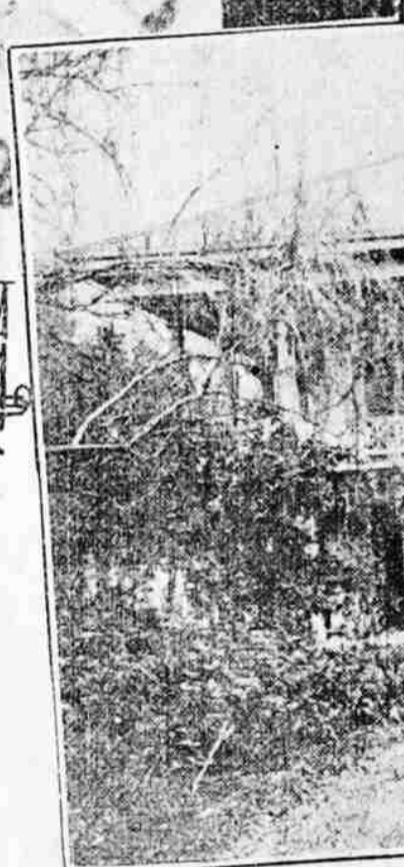
The British paused to rest and await the onset of the army. Jackson's men were given supper and then they moved on the British. While the army marched down on the banks of the stream, the American river boat, Carolina, dropped down alongside. The Carolina shelled the British. The shelling was followed by an order from Jackson to charge. The battle was fought in the dark. There were no particular results. Historians say Jackson's chief aim in fighting was to gain prestige.

Before daybreak he drew back about two miles to what is now the suburbs of New Orleans. The British erected breastworks and awaited reinforcements. Cannon were unloaded and brought across the

country for the British, while Jackson's final detachment of backwoodsmen also arrived from Kentucky and Tennessee. On New Year's Day the British advanced to the attack. Jackson's men were defended by cotton bales and earthworks. The British out-classed them in artillery. The battle was nothing but a skirmish as far as the fighting on shore was concerned. Shot from the British guns, however, wrecked the Carolina. Her guns were brought ashore and from them on were used by Jackson's land force.

On the day of the final battle Jackson's line of defense stretched from a swamp to the river, a distance of a half-mile. He had only twelve cannon, but the guns were manned by the best gunners in the world. Among those who manned the guns were artillery men from the United States regular army, some French soldiers under Flaquiere, who had fought under Napoleon, sailors from the burnt Carolina, New Orleans Creoles and the Lafitte brothers with their pirate bands. All knew how to handle artillery and on the day of the battle they gave a good account of themselves.

From battery to battery the line was filled out with a confusion of arms and trappings. On the extreme right under the love of the Mississippi was a company of regular infantry and a company of Orleans Rifles with dragoons who handled a howitzer. Next was a battalion of Louisiana Creoles in gay and varied uniforms. The sailors of the Carolina came next with their cannon. Near them were the pirates with two guns. There was a battalion of negroes and mulattoes. At their left were the Frenchmen under Flaquiere. Alongside the Frenchmen were the Tennesseans in homespun clothes and



flannel shirts under the command of Colonel Carroll. Adair's Kentuckians were next to Carroll and next to the swamp were Colonel Coffee's Tennesseans.

It was against this mingled force that Gen. Edward Pakenham threw his army the morning of January 8. Part of his force was sent across the Mississippi River to attack Commodore Paterson, who had a marine battery on the west bank of the river opposite Jackson's entrenchments.

On the east side of the river General Pakenham's brilliant array began the movement against the Americans at daybreak. It was a far different army from those who fought on the other side. Instead of a motley array of men the British were all in brilliant uniform. General Pakenham rode on a black horse and led his troops. He was a brave General. If there ever was one, but he had never led an army against sharpshooters and he did not know what he was going against. He was the target for many guns and long before the day had grown old, both Pakenham and his black charger had fallen mortally wounded. Sever-

al of his Generals fell with him. At 8 p. m. General Lambert, who had risen to the command through the slaughter of his superiors, led the shattered soldiers from the field. Several days later they disembarked at Lake Boyne and left America for ever.

The house where General Jackson had his headquarters remained standing until four years ago. It was then torn down to make room for the switch yards of the Frisco & Rock Island railroads. Until it was razed it was one of the show places of New Orleans. Bullets still were embedded in the walls of the place. For many years before its destruction it was the country home of Henry T. Beauregard.

A monument marks the battleground site. Every schoolboy knows how the American people honored Andrew Jackson by making him President of the United States. It is interesting to know what happened to the Lafitte brothers. They were granted amnesty for all they had done before the battle and John Lafitte became a prominent ward politician of New Orleans.

**An Epileptic Camp.** Life in the open air with healthy employment is proving 100 per cent more beneficial in the treatment of epilepsy than experiments with rattlesnake venom or other much-heralded drugs, according to the recent report of the Pennsylvania Epileptic Hospital and colony farm, at oakbourne, Chester County.

The hospital is a little community of itself. Segregated from the rest of the world, seventy-five patients find their tasks and pleasure within the limits of the extensive farm, and are not only improving their physical condition, but are making farming a practical experiment.

There is work for every one, whether in the fields, the dairy or

future well-being. To perfect the work, Samuel W. Morton, president of the hospital and farm, has urged that \$150,000 be added to the present endowment fund. With added provision for maintenance, it is hoped that more advanced work in the study and treatment of epilepsy can be carried on.

**Trolls Mate Twenty-Seven Years.** Mrs. Mary N. Grainger, an English woman 50 years old, says she has found in Kansas City the father of her two children who deserted her in Canada twenty-seven years ago.

Francis Grainger, the man Mrs. Grainger claims as her mate, is married and has a family. He conducts a hardware store at 2216 East Eighteenth street. He denies he knows Mrs. Mary Grainger. After traveling more than 5,000 miles and searching for her husband for a generation, Mrs. Grainger came to Kansas City.

The story told to Virgil Yates, an assistant prosecutor, sounded like a passage from a novel and caused a warrant to be issued against Grainger, charging wife abandonment. Mrs. Grainger said she knew her husband as Isaac Grainger.

"It was in England that I met him near forty years ago," Mrs. Grainger told the assistant prosecutor. "He was in the English Army and I was a girl who lived near a rifle range where the soldier boys practiced. "As I was watching them one day, with my knitting in my hand, one of the soldiers came over and took my scissors. He laughingly told me he was going to keep them. I was flattered by his neat fitting uniform and his smile, and I said I didn't care."

"That was the beginning. After that I went to the rifle range often—each time seeing the man I was beginning to love. In three years he

was discharged from service, and we lived together in England for several years. Then we went to Canada, where two children came into our home. We never were married, but became husband and wife under common law.

"One night, just twenty-seven years ago last month, he left and never returned. I waited and waited, hoping he would return to me. Finally I decided to find him. I came to the United States and when my work permitted me, I went from city to city in search of the father of my children.

"I heard he was in Kansas City and I came here. I found my husband had lived here twenty years and was married and had children. I went to his store and there I told him who I was."

**Job Missed It.** "Bout de only trouble dat Job missed," said Uncle Eben. "was runnin' fur office an' havin' friends come aroun' de mornin' after election to tell him whur he made his mistake."—Washington Post.