

# Allan Pinkerton-celebrated Dundee citizen

Allan Pinkerton, the most celebrated man who ever lived in Dundee Ill., was during his lifetime a cooper, chartist, abolitionist, and one of the most famous detectives of world wide fame.

He maintained Dundee's underground railroad for runaway slaves, became an agent for the Chicago abolitionists, and became a friend of John Brown. He prevented the assassination of President-elect Abraham Lincoln before his inauguration, organized and was the first chief of the secret service.

Pinkerton was born on Aug. 25, 1819, in Glasgow, Scotland. The day after he married Joan Carfae in 1842, they hurriedly left for Canada. He was fleeing from arrest as an active agitator in the chartists' proletarian movement.

Arriving in Chicago in late December of that year, he found work as a cooper in Lill's Brewery for which, it is said, he was paid 50 cents per day. Within a year they moved 38 miles northwest to the beautiful village of Dundee, containing about 300 inhabitants. The village is located on the romantic Fox River, called the Pish-ta-ka in the original Potawatamie Indian language,

according to Pinkerton.

In one of his many books Pinkerton wrote, "The town rests there on the banks of this beautiful river stream and between the guardian hills upon either side, like twin nests where there is always song and gladness. The town was originally settled by a few sturdy people, the hardy Scots, as its name would indicate."

At either end of the one bridge that crossed the river, were clustered on each side of the street, all the stores and shops of the place, a few country stores, a post office, a blacksmith shop or two, a mill and two small taverns, save one. This was Pinkerton's shop which was located the farthest of any from the business center of the village, and stood back of, and facing the main highway, upon the crest of a fine hill, about 300 yards distant from the bridge.

This was his home and his shop. This was his quiet, but altogether happy mode of life in Dundee, in the summer of 1847, at which time his career as a detective begins.

Pinkerton was too poor to purchase the materials he needed to make the barrels, so he was compelled to cut his own hoop poles and split his own staves. He found a little island in

the Fox River, a few miles above Dundee, and but a few rods above Algonquin, where poles were both plentiful and of the best quality. One day while working there, he found traces that the island was being used. He informed B. C. Yates, the sheriff at Geneva, of his finds.

From this information Pinkerton gave, the sheriff was able to trace outlaws to this island; where subsequently the officers captured the coin counterfeiters, a formidable

gang, consisting of men and women, securing their implements and a large amount of bogus coin.

In honor of this event, the island was given the name of "Bogus Island." Of later years, this historical spot was known as "Basswood Island."

It was said that Allan Pinkerton achieved the beginnings of his fame while in Dundee. However, Pinkerton might have felt as one who had greatness thrust upon him, when

following the Bogus Island episode, he was asked to apprehend a counterfeiter who was in town.

H. E. Hunt, keeping a small general store in, and becoming a wealthy merchant in Dundee, and Increase Bosworth, another storekeeper of the village, later to become a retired capitalist of Elgin, asked for Pinkerton's help when \$10 counterfeits of the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance's Bank appeared in the village. They were so well executed as to cause trouble to farmers and country dealers.

"Old Man Crane" lived in Libertyville not 35 miles distant and evidence proved he was engaged in distributing the worthless money for eastern counterfeiters.

Pinkerton at first objected to their request as not knowing anything about counterfeiters but then agreed to help the storekeepers.

Inside Eaton Walker's harness shop, he found John Craig who has asked directions to "Old Man Crane's," and made arrangements to meet him in a ravine across the river. Here Craig confessed the business he was in and exhibited two of the counterfeit bills. The terms were 25 per cent; \$125 in good money brought \$500 in the counterfeit bills. He was captured in Chicago with the help of Pinkerton, but escaped after being taken back to Geneva.

The event was widely discussed. Its two far-reaching effects made the region unhealthy for counterfeiters and made the fame of Allan Pinkerton. This was the beginning of a distinguished career.

The Eaton Walker harness shop is pictured next to the G. W. Dempster furniture and undertaker store.



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From his cooper's shop Pinkerton trained slaves and helped them to escape through the underground railroad.

Allan Pinkerton was appointed to the Chicago police force as its first — and at that time — only detective. Soon he had five detectives working under him and he achieved widespread reputation in the Middle West.

In 1850, he left the police force and opened his own agency — Pinkerton's North Western Police Agency. In the late fall of 1856, his reputation became nationwide when he arrested and convicted a famous international French swindler about whom the New York City police could do nothing.

His new reputation brought him more and wealthier clients. His agency was soon working for the railroads and the express companies, arresting freight car thieves, express car robbers, and highwaymen. He rose rapidly in his law-enforcement business.

It was under Pinkerton's protection that Lincoln went safely from Philadelphia to Washington in 1861, after a plot to assassinate President elect Abraham Lincoln in Baltimore was uncovered by Pinkerton operatives while they were investigating threats of sabotage to the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore railroad. When Mr. Lincoln was safe in Washington, D. C., Pinkerton sent his famous telegram, "Plums arrived with Nuts this morning."

Known as Major Allan, he instituted the first Secret Service and was its head during the Civil War.

Afterward came the outlaw bands beginning in 1860. The Reno brothers were first in the early 1860's and Jesse James began his depredations in 1866. Pinkerton died in 1884. His two sons, William and Robert were to continue the detective agency.