

GYPSIES

When I first remember Gypsies, they traveled with horse drawn vehicles. Their homes on wheels were decorative, quaint and appealing. I can remember how afraid children were when they made their annual appearance. We'd heard that they stole children and added them to their families and I always managed to look from a safe distance when they arrived. Once while an entourage of Gypsies went through Salem Illinois, their king died. He was burried in Salem Cemetery. Last year I happened to be there when they came to decorate his grave. Their fleral pieces were ornate and costly. Swarthy men and dark eyed women stood near the markers. My brether in law, Walter Kirk, and I spoke to them. An elder woman, dressed in black, I took to be the widow of the deceased king. She told us that they are in business in many Illinois cities. Her particular family is in the reefing business. Since it is seasonal, it allows time for their pilgrimages. They are well equipped for travel tee. On the camping lot near the cemetery were beautiful house trailers and campers drawn by Cadillacs. Modern conveniences are nice to have, but somehow the Gypsies I fondly remember, had something the ones today have lost.

As a child I was excited when the old colorful caravans of Gypsies arrived, but even the adult citizens enjoyed buying their wares. They sold lace scarves, incense, blown glass paper weights and horoscope charts. They could also tell fortunes, give advise to the lovelorn, or to these having marital difficulties. With talents and wares like this, you can understand why we all reacted as we did.