

1763.

COMBINED HISTORY

OF

Shelby and Moultrie

COUNTIES, ILLINOIS.

With Illustrations

DESCRIPTIVE OF THEIR SCENERY

AND

Biographical Sketches of some of their Prominent Men and Pioneers.

PUBLISHED BY
BRINK, McDONOUGH & CO.,
PHILADELPHIA.

CORRESPONDING OFFICE, EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.

1881.

Gymnocladus Canadensis, Kentucky coffee-nut	R. Floridum, black currant
Juglans Cinerea, butternut	Rosa Lucida, prairie rose
J. Nigra, walnut	R. Blanda, wood rose
Juniperus Virginiana, red cedar	S. Tristis, rose willow
Lonicera Grata, Woodbine	S. Hamulis, cone willow
Menispermum Canadense, moonseed	S. Erioccephala, silky head willow
Morus Rubra, mulberry	S. Nigra, Black willow
Ostrya Virginica, hop-hornbeam, iron-wood	S. Fragilis, joint willow, brittle willow
Plantanus Occidentalis, buttonwood, sycamore	Sambucus Canadensis, elderberry
Populus Tremuloides, quaking asp, aspen	S. Pubens, red fruit elderberry
P. Monilifera, necklace poplar, cottonwood	Sassafras Officinale, sassafras
P. Angulata, cotton tree	Shepherdia Canadensis, buffalo berry
Prunus Americana, wild plum	Smilax Hispida, greenbriar
Pyrus Coronaria, crab apple	Spiræa Opulifolia, vinebark spiræa
Quercus Macrocarpa, burr oak	Spiræa Salicifolia, hardhack, willow spiræa
Q. Obtusiloba, post oak	Staphylea Trifolia, rattle-box, wood-bladder nut
Q. Alba, white oak	Symphoricarpus Vulgaris, coral berry
Q. Prinus, swamp white oak	Tecoma Radicans, trumpet creeper
Q. Discolor, swamp chestnut oak	Tilia Americana, basswood
Q. Imbrecria, laurel leaf oak	Ulmus Fulva, red elm
Q. Nigra, black jack oak	U. Americana, white elm
Q. Tinctoria, yellow bark oak, quercitron oak	U. Racemosus, cork elm, hickory elm
Q. Coccinea, scarlet oak	Viburnum Prunifolium, black haw, arrow wood
Q. Rubra, red oak	V. Lentago, black haw
Q. Palustris, swamp Spanish oak, pin oak	Vitis Aestivalis, summer grape
R. Glabra, sumach	V. Cordifolia, frost grape
R. Radicans, climbing poison ivy	Zanthoxylum Americanum, prickly ash
R. Toxicodendron, poison ivy	Lin-lira Benzoin, spice bush
Ribes Cynosbati, prickly gooseberry	Rubus Strigosus, red raspberry
R. Hirtellum, smooth "	" Occidentalis, black raspberry
R. Rotundifolium, " "	" Villosus, blackberry
R. Lacustre, swamp gooseberry	Robinia Pseudocacia, black locust

Our article will particularly treat of the more valuable woods used in the mechanic arts, and the grasses, plants, vegetables, and flowers most beneficial to man, and particularly those which are natives of these counties. The plants are many and rare, some for beauty and some for medicine. The pinkroot, the columbo, the ginseng, the boneset, pennyroyal, and others are used as herbs for medicine. Plants of beauty are phlox, the lily, the asclepias, the mints, golden rod, the eyebright, gerardia, and hundreds more which adorn the meadows and brook-sides; besides are climbing vines, the trumpet creeper, the bitter sweet, the woodbine, the clematis and the grape, which fill the woods with gay festoons, and add grace to many a decayed monarch of the forest. Here are found the oak, with at least its twenty varieties; the hickory, with as many more species; the thirty kinds of elm, from the sort which bear leaves as large as a man's hand, to the kind which bear a leaf scarcely larger than a man's thumb-nail; the black walnut, so tall and straight and beautiful is nearly gone; the hackberry, gum tree, black and sweet, the tulip, the giant cottonwoods, and hundreds more attest the fertility of the soil and mildness of the climate. The *White Oak* is much used in making furniture and agricultural implements, as are also the Panel Oak, Burr Oak, and Pin Oak. The Blue Ash is excellent for flooring. The Honey Locust is a very durable wood, and shrinks less than any other in seasoning.

In the above list we have given the scientific as well as the English names, believing such a course best to pursue in the study of plants, and more beneficial to the student or general reader.

There may be some plants omitted, yet we think the list quite complete.

GRASSES.

In speaking of these we purposely exclude the grain plants, those grasses which furnish food for man, and confine ourselves to those valuable grasses which are adapted to the sustenance of the inferior animals.

Timothy grass or cat's tail, naturalized	Solium Perenne, perennial ray grass
Agrastus vulgaris, red top or herbs grass	Anthoxanthum Odoratum, sweet-scented vernal grass
Muhlenbergia diffusa, nimble will	Phalaris Arundinacea, reed canary grass
Calamagrostis Canadensis, blue joint, this is a native and grew upon prairies to the height of a man's head on horseback.	P. Canadensis, canary grass
Dactylis glomerata, orchard grass	Paspalum Setaceum,
Poa Pretensis, Kentucky blue grass	Panicum Sanguinale, crab-grass
Pea Compressa, true blue grass	Panicum Glabrum, smooth panicum
Festuca Elator, meadow fescue	Panicum Capillare, Witch grass
Bromus Leculinus, cheat chess, foreign	Panicum Crus galli, barn-yard grass
Phragmites Communis, the reed	Setaria Glauca, foxtail
Arundinaria Macrosperma, or cane	Setaria Viridis, bottle grass
	Setaria Italica, millet
	Andropogon Scoparius, broom-beard grass

CHAPTER VII.

PIONEERS AND EARLY SETTLERS.

INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES OF SHELBY AND MOULTRIE COUNTIES.



THE old pioneers are fast sinking to rest after the toils and privations of the border, whither they came, buoyed up with hope and nerved with vigor, to build for themselves and their loved ones homes amid this beautiful scenery, while yet the whoop of the Indian and the howl of the wolf resounded on every side, and war's alarms came not infrequently, with imperious demands for blood and treasure. Here and there a white-haired veteran, bowed with the weight of years and the unremitting toil of pioneer life, remains an interesting relic of fast-fading times. Before all of these old, hardy pioneers, whose impress was the germ of the present, and whose endowment was lofty examples of courage and unabated energy, and who have durably stamped their characteristics upon worthy successors—before these have passed away, we seek to place upon the historic page the record of whom they were, and what they did to make their country what it is. The ties of home have, ere now, thrown around sterile coasts, frozen plains, and mountain cliffs the halo of the love of a patriotic people.

Is it surprising then that the undulating, flowery prairies and open vistas of park-like lawns, which, for extent and natural beauty, far excel the baronial manors of European aristocracy, and watered with running streams and quiet lakes—which beautiful landscape is embraced within the limits of these counties—should charm the eyes of the first settlers as they emerged from the dark, dense forests of the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, the Old Do-

minion, and Ohio, and beget in their hearts a love for the surroundings of nature that clings to them in their old age, and falls but little short of reverence when they speak of the old county which witnessed their first struggles for life and competency? These associations have made it a sacred and hallowed spot.

FIRST SETTLEMENT AND EARLY SETTLERS.

SHELBY COUNTY.

The first permanent settlement made in the county now comprised within the limits of Shelby county, was by the Wakefield family. Charles Wakefield, Sr., wife and family, came into and settled in what is now Cold Spring township in March, 1818; the same year in which Illinois was admitted into the Union. Mr. Wakefield had quite a large family; his three married sons, Simeon, John, and Enoch, and their families, and Ormsby Vanwinckle, his son-in-law, and family accompanied him, as did also his youngest son, Charles Wakefield, Jr.; the latter was unmarried at that time. They came from St. Clair county, Ill., and were genuine frontiersmen, and were thoroughly conversant with the habits and peculiarities of the Indians, with whom they were very friendly. The Indians were numerous in this locality at that time. They were a remnant of the Kickapoo tribe; however, most of them left after the Black-Hawk war, and only returned occasionally in the autumn for a short period of hunting. They were always kindly treated by the settlers, and they did many little acts of kindness in return. The Wakefields—father and sons—were all noted hunters, and most of their living was gained by the rifle and other implements of the chase. In the spring of the year they would plant a small patch of corn, and the balance of the time was mostly occupied in hunting, fishing, and the sports of the chase. Charles Wakefield, Sr., settled and built his cabin about three-quarters of a mile south-east from the *Cold Spring*, near the present site of Williamsburg. It was the first house erected in *Shelby county*; it was built of rough, unhewn logs, and mud and stick chimney. By some it has been considered that Simeon Wakefield was the first settler in Shelby county, but that is undoubtedly a mistake; however, very little time elapsed between the coming of the father and his sons. The Wakefields settled at the Cold Spring because there they had an abundance of good, pure water, good soil and plenty of timber, and the surrounding forests abounded with all kinds of game. Simeon Wakefield settled at the Cold Spring, and John erected his cabin about three-quarters of a mile south-west of Simeon's improvement, and Enoch improved a place and built a cabin about one mile due west of Cold Spring. Ormsby Vanwinckle, the son-in-law of Wakefield, located with his family north-west of the Cold Spring, on a piece of land now known as the *Horsman place*. Lemuel Hawkins and family, Arthur Crocker and family, and the widow Petties and family all settled in close proximity to the Wakefields, or Cold Spring settlement, in the year 1818. These families were the first settlers of the county, and all came up from St. Clair county, Illinois. Further mention of them is made in the township history of Cold Spring.

Another early settler was Thomas Pugh, a native of North Carolina, who when quite young moved with his parents to the state of Kentucky, where he grew up, and married and raised a family. In the spring of 1819 he moved with his family to and located near the Cold Spring settlement, not far from the residence of Simeon Wakefield. The place is now known as the Milligan farm. Mr. Pugh was a man of considerable force of character, and enterprising to a high degree. At the time of his arrival here he had a family of three children, a daughter and two sons. The daughter is now deceased; the sons, John and Robert Pugh, are at present both resi-

dents of Tower Hill township. In 1830 Thomas Pugh purchased a farm one mile north of Shelbyville, and began the improvement of the same, and lived there until his death, which occurred in 1858 or 1859. It is related by Robert Pugh that, for many years after his father came to the county, they could find the horns of the elk and buffalo lying in many places on the prairies. Game at this period was found in abundance, there being plenty of bear, wolves, panthers, wild cats, deer, wild turkeys, and numerous small game. Thomas Pugh was quite celebrated as a hunter, and was the most successful Nimrod of the settlement. The nearest mill for the pioneers was at Greenville, in Bond county. It was a horse-mill, and occasionally when Mr. Pugh went to mill he would bring home with him powder and lead, salt and such other things as the Indians needed, which he would exchange for bees' wax, dressed hides, and other trinkets. Pugh was on very friendly terms with the red men, and was much loved and respected by them for his honesty. Robert Pugh says that in the early times bears were very plentiful, and one could hardly walk into the forests without encountering bear signs. The bears and wolves destroyed much stock for the pioneer. The hunter would frequently come across deer that had been partly eaten by panthers, wild cats, and catamounts; the latter were very numerous. Mr. Robert Pugh says that he killed twelve catamounts one winter; and that often large, fat hogs would come up with several pounds of flesh eaten out of their backs, the result of attacks by bears. These hogs were in a semi-wild state and were very vicious, and when in droves would frequently drive off the bears and other wild animals.

It may be interesting in this connection to mention a little trade made by Thomas Pugh soon after he came to the settlement. He gave a cow and calf for a log-cabin, and it was used in common by the whole neighborhood for miles around; to use Mr. Robert Pugh's language, the chain was "kept hot." Implements of all kinds were very scarce among the early settlers, especially those made of iron.

Another pioneer of Shelby county was Asa Ledbetter, who came here with his family about the year 1822; he had formerly lived in the southern part of the state. He was a man of considerable enterprise, and built a water-mill on the Okaw river above Shelbyville, at a place since known as the *Francisco Mill site*. Ledbetter's mill only stood a short time; it was washed away by the high water of 1828, and, sad to relate, Ledbetter lost his life at the same time. He was desirous of saving his mill by weighting it down with rock which he brought across the river in a canoe, and in making the last passage the boat sunk. Ledbetter was a poor swimmer; he however succeeded in getting on a drift log, but the weather was very cold, and before he received assistance he became so chilled that he fell into the water; the body was, however, soon recovered, but life was extinct. Ledbetter left a wife and 1 family.

Jonathan C. Corley, a Virginian by birth, emigrated with his parents to Kentucky in 1808, where he lived until 1823, in which year he came to Shelby county, and settled on Robinson's creek; he continued to reside in this county until his death, which occurred in 1860. He was by trade a blacksmith, and is said to have been the first blacksmith in the county; he was also a farmer. Mr. Corley raised a family of thirteen children. He was also, for many years a justice of the peace, and figured quite prominently in the early annals of the county.

Levi Casey settled on Robinson's creek in March, 1824. He was a native of South Carolina. When he settled here, he had a family of six children; three of the six now live in Shelbyville—John Casey and Elizabeth, now Mrs. Tolly; Nancy, now Mrs. Howse. Mr. Casey improved a farm on which he first settled, where he lived until his death in 1855. He was twice married,

and had four children born in Shelby county. Mr. Casey was one of the early county commissioners and a man of good judgment and integrity.

In the fall of 1825, Samuel Little, a native of Illinois, born on the frontier in the southern part of the state, built a cabin in the west part of Ash Grove township. In the spring following, his brother John and his brother-in-law, Robert Duncan, came and built cabins near by. They were regular frontier-men, and delighted to hunt and have sport with the neighboring Indians. When the Indians left the state, the Littles moved to Texas. Duncan remained in this state, and died in Bond county, where he accumulated considerable property.

David Elliott was perhaps the first settler on Richland creek. He located in what is now Richland township in the spring of 1825. In early days he had a horse mill and still-house, which he carried on quite profitably for several years. His brother, Jacob Elliott, moved into the settlement in the fall of 1826. He subsequently moved into what is now Holland township. He has lived in the county for fifty-four years, and is a hale and hearty old man, full of life and vigor.

Another early settler was William Weeger, who made a settlement on Richland Creek in the spring of 1826. He was one of the early county commissioners. His eldest son, John Weeger, settled here at the same time. His wife Anna bore him twins July 4th, 1826. Their names were Julia Ann and Jane. The neighboring Indians made for them a double papoose cradle, which is still retained in the family, and is regarded as a unique and curious article of furniture.

Other pioneers in the neighborhood of Big Springs were Samuel Weatherspoon, Bazel Daniel, William Daniel, and B. Fancher, with their families, who settled there in 1826. In the fall of 1826 John Cochran, with his three sons-in-law, John, Daniel, and William Price, settled in what is now called Cochran's Grove. Mr. Cochran raised a family of five children. His youngest son James, who was thirteen years of age when they came to this county, is the only member of the family now living, and one of the oldest citizens now residing in the county. Other pioneers of Ash Grove township were John Frazer, Robert Templeton, Joseph Dixon, Robert Rankin, Daniel Green, John Bolin and John Storm.

In this connection we must not fail to mention the Renshaw family. John and James Renshaw were both enterprising men. They settled on Richland creek in 1826. However, the year before, in 1825, they came up to Shelby county with a drove of hogs, which they had driven up from White Co., Ill., where they were then residing; they were so pleased with the country, that on their return home, they sold out their possessions, and the following year settled in the county as above stated. James Renshaw afterward lived for a time in Shelbyville, and subsequently moved to Decatur. John still lives near where he first settled, and is one among the few pioneers left in the county. They are both men of integrity and enterprise.

Among the old settlers of Shelby county was Barnett Bone. He was a native of Tennessee, and came to Illinois in the year 1825. He settled on the banks of the Okaw, about two miles south of where the city of Shelbyville now stands. Here he built a substantial log-house, where he lived for several years. He was a public-spirited man, and took a lively interest in county matters and the development of the country. The first county commissioner's court was held at his house above mentioned. He was a consistent and prominent member of the Methodist Church, and was known far and wide for his hospitality and kindness to his fellow-man. He was twice married, and lived to a ripe old age. He died in

this county, respected by all who knew him for his many good qualities.

Elias Miller, one of the pioneers of this county, was a native of Virginia, and came to Shelby county before it was organized. He lived for some time with another old settler, Barnett Bone. He was a widower when he came to the county, and for some years was engaged in teaching school. At that time he was considered one of the first in his calling. He afterward married again, and lived for several years in Shelbyville. His decease is the sad portion of this biography. It was some time in the year 1837 he concluded he would go down to Dry Point township to visit his friends. The day was fearfully cold, he lost his way in the timber, and was compelled to lie out all night, and death resulted from exposure to the cold. Two of his children are still living: Mrs. Crockett in Christian county, and R. B. Miller, of Stewardson, Shelby county.

FIRST MARRIAGES

solemnized in Shelby county, 1827, after the county was organized: May 2d, John Cochran to Sally Bateman; Oct. 4th, John Hall to Eliza Cawly; Oct. 4th, Jeremiah Provott to Lidy Willborn; Nov. 7th, Thomas Duty to Sally Rian; Nov. 8th, Henry Smith to Sally Willbern; Dec. 2d, John May to Rachel Rooks; Dec. 19th, Thos. Cole to Louis Hawks; Dec. 19th, Andrew Cronk to Judy Lee Bone; Dec. 22d, Thomas Ward to Elizabeth Wedick.

There were many other marriages that took place in the county prior to the above; and they receive mention in the pioneer chapter and the several township histories; but believing that it will be of interest to our readers to know the names of the parties who were married and received license the first year after the county was organized, we therefore make the list a part of this chapter.

Probably no name is so familiar to the early residents of Shelby county as that of Joseph Oliver, who was a native of the Old Dominion, and was born on Christmas day, December 25, 1794. He is descended from a long line of English ancestry, and his forefathers were among the earliest to brave the perils and hardships incident to the early settlements of the colony of Virginia. His father, William Oliver, was a captain of a company of volunteers in the Revolutionary war, and participated in many of the campaigns and battles of that eventful struggle. The war over, he returned to the bosom of his family. He was the father of twelve children, three of whom were soldiers in the war of 1812: John, Richard, and Joseph. John and Richard, being the eldest, were the first to enlist, and Joseph, in making a trip to Norfolk, Virginia, with a drove of cattle, there met his two brothers, who persuaded him to enlist (although not of age, his father had given him permission to enlist if he wished to do so). He enlisted in the cavalry arm of the service, and furnished his own horse, saddle, bridle and blanket. The government furnished him the other implements of warfare. Captain Sanford was the commander of the company of which young Oliver was a member. He remained in the service until peace was declared, and soon after started on a pilgrimage for the then western wilds. Arriving at Kaskaskia, he began the life of a peddler, and with a horse and wagon traveled over much of southern Illinois. He purchased his goods at Kaskaskia, and would make frequent trips to the surrounding country, and generally with considerable profit to himself. He continued in this business until the summer after the capital was changed to Vandalia. He then settled in Fayette county, and was elected the first Sheriff of that county, an office he held until the county of Shelby was organized. He then resigned his position in Fayette county to accept the clerkship of Shelby county. It was in the spring of 1827 that he came to this county, and he was soon after

qualified to fill the offices of county and circuit clerk, recorder and judge of probate. Mr. Oliver bought a "squatter's" improvement of Josiah Daniel, near the Shelbyville spring, which consisted of a small cabin and a few acres of cleared land. He built an addition of one room, and here opened up county business. The offices were kept here until the county erected their first court-house, a log structure. His office fees at that time were not sufficient to support himself and family. He therefore opened a subscription school, which he taught, using the court-house for a school-room, and at the same time attending to his duties as a county official. Mr. Oliver was also the first postmaster in Shelby county. The post-office was also kept in the court-house; but as the mail was limited to letters only, he often carried the letters in his hat, and would hand them to whom addressed on meeting them in the little village. By the present generation that would be regarded as rather a primitive style of distributing the mails. Mr. Oliver also was the first merchant in the county in the early days, deriving his principal trade from the Indians, of whom he would buy skins, bees-wax, etc., and give them powder, lead, tobacco, groceries, goods, and other things, in exchange. In his domestic relations Mr. Oliver was happily situated. While a young man, he was united in marriage to Miss Eliza Barthrick, a Virginian by birth, and daughter of Daniel Barthrick, an early settler in Fayette county, Ill. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver had three children born to them: Benjamin, Mary Jane and Eliza. Mary Jane Oliver was the first white child born in the present limits of Shelbyville. Her birth occurred Feb. 3d, 1828. Mrs. Oliver died April 13th, 1834, and on the 31st of December, 1835, Mr. Oliver married Miss Sally Fearman, a native of Kentucky. They had three children, William, Margery A., and Joseph. Mrs. Oliver, at this writing, has been dead about six years. Uncle Joseph Oliver is still a resident of Shelbyville, and at the advanced age of eighty-six years is quite feeble in health, but still able to walk out. Wonderful indeed have been the changes which he has witnessed in the last half century, having been a resident of Shelby county for fifty-four years. Her growth and development he has watched with the greatest interest. But a few years of earth is left for this venerable gray-haired veteran, before he shall be numbered among those of the past. It is pleasing and gratifying to his friends to know that he has lived a most honorable and upright life—a life which has shed honors upon himself and the generation in which he lived. And now in his green old age he is loved and respected by all for his integrity and purity of life.

One of the oldest pioneers of Shelby county, as well as of the State of Illinois, is Uncle Johnny Rose. He was born in Livingston county, Kentucky, in the year 1806. His father, with his family, moved to Pope county, Illinois, the September following his birth. Here he grew to manhood, and in the year 1827 he came north and located on Sand Creek, Windsor township, Shelby county. His brother William came with him, and together they located a farm and built a small log cabin upon it. Through his indomitable industry he has amassed a competency in his old age. In 1867 he moved to Sullivan, where he now resides. He was married to Miss Matilda McDaniel, October 21, 1829. By this union there were five sons and four daughters. In 1862 Mrs. Rose died, and was buried in the Grider cemetery, Shelby county. His second wife was Mrs. Mary Jane Lilly, who is still living. No children have been born from this union. Uncle Johnny is not only one of the oldest, but one of the best citizens. He has raised an excellent family, all of whom stand high in the estimation of their fellow-men.

Prominent among the pioneers to this county from North Caro-

lina was Benjamin Walden. He was a native of the above State, and soon after his marriage emigrated to the State of Tennessee, where he continued to live until part of his family were grown. He then sold out his possessions, and gathered together his worldly wealth, and with his wife and children came to Illinois, and settled in the southern part of the State, where he lived several years, and in 1827 he came to Shelby county, soon after its organization, and located on a tract of land now comprised within Richland township. His eldest son, Hugh Walden, was a man of family at that time, and came and settled near his father the same year. Benjamin Walden raised a family of ten children who grew to manhood and womanhood. Only three are now living. Their names are as follows:—Benjamin, John, and Mrs. W. F. Hilsabeck.

Benjamin Moberly, another well-known "old settler," was born in Madison county, Kentucky in the year 1799. His father, Isaac Moberly, moved to the southern part of Illinois in 1812, where they lived a number of years in a Fort in what is now Franklin county. He was quite a noted Indian hunter, and was also an adept in procuring all kinds of game. It is said that with his rifle he could strike the eye of a deer at the distance of a hundred and fifty yards. He was one of the best rifle shots in all that section of country, and was a man noted for his bravery and agility. In the early part of the year 1827 Benjamin Moberly moved north and made a settlement on Sand Creek, in Shelby county, where he afterwards improved a large farm. He now lives in Windsor, and is a hale and hearty old gentleman, and delights to talk about the early times.

Jacob Cutler and son, John C., came to Shelbyville in the fall of 1827. They opened a small store, and brought the second stock of goods to the county. Jacob Cutler sold goods here until 1833, when he moved to Fort Madison, Iowa, and was one of the first merchants in that place. He resided there until his death. John Cutler is still a resident of Shelbyville.

John Frazer, who was for many years a prominent man in the eastern part of the county, settled in what is now Ash Grove township in 1828. He was a native of North Carolina, but moved to Kentucky with his parents when a youth, and came here from the latter State at the time indicated above. Mr. Frazer and wife raised a family of eight children, and he continued to reside in this township until his death, which took place in the spring of 1855.

CAMP MEETINGS IN EARLY TIMES.

The first camp meeting held in Shelby county was near the cabin of Thomas Robinson, on Robinson's Creek, in 1828 or '29. This meeting was held by the Methodist denomination during the month of August, and the weather was very warm and sultry. Jonathan Howard's wife was at the altar (which was a round pole laid on two logs). Howard thought the place too warm for her, and he made an attempt to take her out and away from the altar, so she could "cool off," as he expressed it, when the preachers (four in number) objected, saying they would attend to her bodily welfare as well as her spiritual. This Howard could not stand, and he became boisterous, divested himself of part of his clothing, walked into the surging and sweating crowd, took his wife by the hand and "led her out." Coats flew off in an instant; loud talking and angry imprecations were indulged in, and for a few minutes it looked as though a fight was imminent. Robinson took Howard's part. Men seized hold of clubs, and the preachers of that early day could handle a club with a great deal of grace, and they were not easily scared. The meeting soon became one of confusion, and very near a riot, in consequence of which the meeting was broken

up, as the preachers had their friends, as well as Howard and his crowd, and both seemed willing to show the power of muscle. We simply mention the above circumstance of the pioneer era in order to exhibit the customs and peculiarities of that period. The above incident was narrated to the writer by a participant of that to him pleasing occasion.

One of the early settlers of Shelby county was John Tackett, a native of Virginia. He emigrated to Kentucky, where he lived several years. In the fall of 1829 he moved with his family, which consisted of a wife and two children to Shelby county, Illinois. Here one child was born to them. Mrs. Tackett died soon afterward. Some time after a second marriage was consummated, and from this union two children were born. Soon after the arrival of Mr. Tackett in Shelbyville, he bought the hotel built by Thomas Lee. He continued in the hotel business for seven or eight years, when he embarked in the mercantile business with Dr. Haden, which occupation he followed for several years. Becoming tired of this pursuit, he again fell back to his old business, that of a landlord. He died in Shelbyville in 1850. Three of the family are still living in the above city, namely, William J., John A., and Mrs. Edward Hopkins.

Bushrod Washington Henry was born in Culpepper county, Virginia, February 4, 1805. In the fall of 1830 he came to Shelby from Rutherford county, Tennessee, where he had lived about three years. He was one of the pioneer preachers of the county, and from the consistency of his daily walk as compared with his creed and faith, he became one of the most popular advocates of Christianity in this region of country. He was an untiring worker, and in 1832 had succeeded in establishing a church with a large membership in Shelbyville. It was denominated the First Baptist Church of Christ of Shelbyville. He was three times married, and at his death his descendants numbered fifty persons—children, grand-children, and great-grand-children. He died the 20th day of August, 1879, and will ever be remembered by the people of Shelby county as one whose virtues and walk in life would benefit the world were they imitated.

The subject of this sketch, Gen. William F. Thornton, was not only one of the prominent men of Shelby county, but of the State of Illinois. Although not one of the pioneers of the State, he became an early settler, and figures largely in the rise and progress of the State. He was for years a member of the Legislature, and was also a man of education and broad culture. As an advocate and public speaker he ranked among the first in the State. His patriotism is beyond question, as the records at Washington will show that he commanded a company of soldiers in the war of 1812. His broad mind and excellent business capacity brought him in contact with the first talent of the State. He was one of the three commissioners appointed by Gov. Duncan, in 1836, for the purpose of constructing the Illinois and Michigan canal. Subsequently he proved an important auxiliary in the negotiating of bonds in the European market for the above object. In 1840 he was deputed to go to London with the bonds, where he effected the sale of \$1,000,000 at 85 cents on the dollar, which was ten per cent. better than his instructions. Later in life he became a prominent banker in Shelbyville, and was one of the moneyed kings of central Illinois. He died a few years since with a name placed alongside of the prominent and active men of the West.

THE FIRST GERMAN FAMILY IN SHELBY COUNTY.

John P. Freyburger was a native of Bavaria, Germany. He emigrated to America with his family in 1831. On his way from New York to Ohio he was taken with the cholera, and on his arri-

val at Aetna, Ohio, he died. The family lived in the State until 1835, when they moved to Shelby county, Illinois. With a family of four children in a new country, and among strangers, it took all a mother's tact to bring up her little family and make them useful members of society. They settled in Okaw township, where her son, Michael Freyburger, now lives. The mother died in 1870, at the age of 78. Three of her children yet reside in Shelby county, and one in the State of Arkansas. It was the mother's intention, when she moved to Illinois, to settle at Peoria, but when near Shelbyville one of their horses gave out, and hence they were detained a few days in this vicinity. In the meantime they found warm friends among the settlers, and were persuaded to remain in their midst, where they yet reside honored and respected citizens.*

"THE DEEP SNOW."

One of the important epochs in the early history of this part of Illinois was what is familiarly known as the "deep snow," which occurred in the winter of 1830-31. Indeed, it prevailed throughout the western states and territories. On account of the meager preparation for so severe a visitation, the early settlers suffered many hardships. It is difficult for those of to-day to comprehend the sufferings of cold and hunger that those sturdy pioneers underwent. The snow commenced falling as early as the first of December, and continued almost without abatement throughout the winter. The measurement in the timber was from four to five feet deep. The stumps standing, where trees had been cut for fire-wood, after the snow had passed away, had the appearance of having been filled by giants, as some of them measured from six to seven feet in height. The roads were completely blockaded, the fences were wholly under the snow so that the people passed with their teams over them from one settlement to another. For weeks the settlers were virtually buried in their cabins, and only went forth, as food and fuel demanded, from dire necessity. A large portion of the stock perished from cold and starvation. The wild game, such as deer, prairie chickens, quail, etc., was found in immense numbers, frozen in their tracks.

THE "SUDDEN FREEZE."

This occurred in January, 1836. It was one of those sudden changes, a regular "Manitoba Wave," that only occurs once in several decades. Up to noon, of the day of this phenomenon, it was rather warm than otherwise; in fact, it had been raining some. Soon after mid-day the storm broke forth, when every puff of wind seemed to be borne from the point of an icicle. Boiling water cast into the air came to the ground a sheet of ice. Ponds and streams were almost immediately locked in ice. Some old settlers say that the frogs had not time to pull their heads below. One tells us, that in passing over a pond, a day or so afterwards, he kicked off, by actual measurement, the heads of a bushel and a half of frogs. This, however, we cannot vouch for; it seems a little overdrawn.

Thus we close the history of the long-to-be-remembered, sturdy pioneers of Shelby county, and turn to open the pages of her prosperous offspring of Moultrie.

MOULTRIE COUNTY.

The county of Moultrie, as stated elsewhere, is an offspring of Macon and Shelby counties.

It was not until eight years had elapsed from the time when Illinois was admitted into the Union as a state, that the first white

* There are many other old settlers who are spoken of in the histories of the respective townships, where they located, and hence are not mentioned in this chapter.

ASH GROVE TOWNSHIP.

(SHELBY COUNTY.)



HIS township contains forty-two sections of land, the whole of town 11, range 6 E. and the south row of sections from town 12, range 6 E. It is bounded on the north by Whitley township, Moultrie county; on the west, by Windsor and Richland townships; on the south, by Big Spring township, and on the east, by Coles county. It is well drained by several streams, tributaries to the Little Wabash. There is considerable timber along these streams. Among the larger bodies is Cochran's Grove; it contains fully three thousand acres at the head waters of the West Fork of Little Wabash; a part of the Grove is in Richland township, and has been known by this name for over fifty years; it was named in honor of John Cochran, one of the early settlers. The two other large groves in the north part of the township, are called the East and West Four Mile groves; these groves are at the waters of two small streams, called four mile creeks; they are tributaries of the East Fork of Little Wabash. A beautiful prairie, situated south of this timber is also called four mile prairie. The timber mentioned, in early times, received its name, four mile groves, from the fact that it was about four miles distant from Whitley's Point settlement, north of Ash Grove. This township was a desirable location for the early settlers, inasmuch as here could be found three things indispensable—wood, water and an abundance of game; and in proof, we find as early as 1826 there were several families within the boundaries of what now comprises Ash Grove. The deer were the principal game; however, bears were seen in the township as late as 1833, and panthers for several years later. Along the streams was a favorite hunting-ground for the Indian, and as late as 1827 Indian camps still remained. In the winter of 1826 and 1827 the Indians had quite a large camp, of ninety or one hundred lodges, on the west side of the west four mile branch, on what is now the William M. Wilson place. The Indians camped here were a part of three tribes, the Kickapoos, Pottawatomies and Delawares, under a chief by the name of Turkey. These Indians were very friendly, and considered honest by the early settlers. This camp was a lively place, particularly on Sunday, made more so by the presence of a great many white people, who would come from the settlements for miles around to spend the day. The camp was kept lively by horse-racing, shooting, foot-racing, jumping and trying their muscle in various ways. In the spring of 1827 the Indians left their hunting-grounds in this part of the country, and were not seen any more here after the year 1828.

The first to settle, was Samuel Little. He was a native of Illinois, born in the southern part of the state. In the fall of 1825, he came into this part of the country bringing all his possessions on an

ox-cart. He built a cabin in the west part of section 18, now the Samuel Rankin place. Little was born and raised on the frontier and among the Indians. When this country began to be settled, and his old friends and companions, the Indians, left, as he delighted to hunt with them, he too left the county, moving to Texas.

In the spring of 1826, John Little (brother of Samuel), and Robert Duncan, brothers-in-law, came into the township. John Little settled on section 20, east side of the Wabash creek, in the timber, and cleared out five or six acres, where he raised corn. His cabin stood within one hundred and fifty yards of the mouth of the Willow branch, and near the Wabash bank. The place he cleared, and where he raised his corn, has grown up in timber, and there are now large trees growing thereon. Little left for Texas at the same time as his brother. Robert Duncan settled on section 17, west side of the Wabash branch, near where D. T. Clawson now lives. He was only a "squatter," never owning any land, as was the case with his brothers-in-law. He afterward went up into what is now Moultrie county, and settled in the Whitley creek settlement, and subsequently went to Bond county, where he died about two years ago, in good circumstances.

In the fall of 1826, came John Cochran accompanied by three sons-in-law, John, Daniel, and William Price. The three Price brothers married three sisters, daughters of John Cochran, and all had families when they came here. John Cochran was born near the state line of North and South Carolina. He married in North Carolina, where he lived a number of years. He then emigrated to Caldwell county, Kentucky, in 1802, where he lived twenty-four years. Upon arriving in what is now Ash Grove township, he settled on section 7, and built a cabin at the head of the West Fork of Little Wabash river, near where J. H. Cochran now lives. He lived there until his death in 1853, at the advanced age of ninety-two years; his wife preceded him seven years, at the age of seventy-three. Mr. Cochran raised a family of five children; his youngest son, James, who was thirteen years of age when they came to this county is the only survivor of the family, and has lived in this vicinity ever since 1826. He has raised a family of four children. William the eldest is a well-known citizen of the county, having filled the office of circuit clerk for sixteen years, with credit to himself and satisfaction to the people. The second child, J. J., is now deceased. James H., and George R., are engaged in farming.

John Price also settled at the head of the Wabash; his son, J. H. Price, now owns the place. John Price raised a family of ten children, and lived on the above place until his death.

Daniel Price settled on section 7, where A. Kemp now lives. He was a large, well-proportioned man, and was captain of a company in the Black Hawk war. He afterward settled on the east

prong of the Wabash creek, sometimes called Four Mile creek, where he died. He was a man of fair education, filled the office of Justice of the Peace in the township for a number of years, and was one of the early County Commissioners. He put up the first horse mill in the township, in about 1833. Prior to this date the early settlers here went to Drew's mill, on the Okaw, for their milling. Price raised a family of seven children—four boys and three girls.

William Price settled on section 8, where Rollins Storr now lives. He died in 1837. He also raised a family of four boys and three girls.

John Frazer, a native of North Carolina, emigrated from Kentucky to Illinois and settled in this township in 1828 on section 6, where V. Tressler lives. He had a family of five sons and three daughters. His oldest son, Frank, made an improvement on the east side of the section, in 1832. Albert G., his second son, improved the T. Gilpin place as early as 1833. Greenberry Frazer settled the J. C. Hart place, section 28, in 1832. Only two of John Frazer's children are now living—William F. and Mrs. John Dawdy. They live in Pana, Illinois. John Frazer died at the residence of his son Albert, in Ash Grove township, in the spring

of 1855. Robert Templeton, a native of North Carolina, came here in 1828. He settled on section 4, the first settler in the west Four Mile Grove. Joseph Dixon located where the widow Weeks now lives, on section 4, in 1828. He was a native of North Carolina.

Robert Rankin settled the J. P. Templeton place in 1828. His cabin stood near the section line of sections 4 and 9; he was also from North Carolina. Two of his children now live in the county; Samuel Rankin, who lives in Windsor, and Mrs. V. Storm of this township. John Storm, a Kentuckian, settled the William M. Wilson place, section 9, in 1830. He was one of the first preachers in Ash Grove township, and of the Christian denomination. He organized several Christian churches in this and adjoining counties. He spent the greater part of his life preaching the gospel. He died in 1855, aged sixty-two years. He raised a family of six children, five sons and one daughter. Only two of the family are now living; Vincent Storm resides on section 10, where he settled in 1845, and Mrs. Wm. M. Wilson, living on the old Storm homestead, where she has lived half a century.

William Elis, a native of Tennessee, made an improvement on section 3 in 1830, where his son, C. R. Elis, now lives. In about 1831 William Elis had the misfortune to have three of his sons killed by lightning. At the time they were killed they were traveling across the prairie on a trail a foot, and when found by a cousin, John N. Curry, they were lying in the path about ten feet apart. They were single young men, and were the first persons buried in the Elis cemetery. All of them were placed in one grave, and a little log house built over the mound, which has long since rotted down, and nothing now marks the spot.

John Storm, a nephew of the Rev. John Storm, came here in 1830, and settled on section 8. He raised a family of four children, three of whom are now living: William, Hiram, and John C.

John L. Clawson, a native of Virginia, from Tennessee, settled here on Sand Creek, in 1830, where he lived about seven years, and then moved to Ash Grove township, and located where he now resides. He has four children living in Ash Grove, and one in Cedar county, Missouri.

The first settlers in the vicinity of Sexson post-office were Daniel Green and John Boim. They settled here in 1830. John and Nathan Curry were the first settlers in the east four-mile grove. The Currys were from Tennessee, and came here as early as 1830. Two of John Curry's children now live in this township: I. J. and Silas. Nathan Curry has one daughter living in the township,—

Mrs. G. W. Templeton. James Curry, brother of John and Nathan, settled on section 2 in 1833, where he lived a short time, and then moved to Coles county, where he resided until his death. Four of his children still reside here: J. W., Wm. J., Nathan, and Mrs. James Storm.

William Morgan, from Kentucky, settled here on section 18 in about 1831. He was a blacksmith, and the first man here that could do any blacksmith work; consequently he was quite an acquisition to the neighborhood. He was also a wood-worker, and was considered by the early settlers a good workman in both his trades. About ten years ago he sold out and moved to Kansas.

Free Sexson, a native of Virginia, settled on section 7, where his son, Perry Sexson, now lives. He resided there until his death, about thirty-eight years ago. He was run away with by a horse, thrown from a sleigh, and received injuries from which he died. He left a widow, who still survives him, and a family of eleven children. Ten are still living, eight of whom now reside in Ash Grove, viz.: M. F. Perry, Wm. A., Mrs. John Abercrombie, Mrs. George M. Rankin, Mrs. Isaac R. Baker, Mrs. Wm. E. Blackburn, and Mrs. Eli P. Bennett. The two in Arkansas are Green B. and Joel C.

Joseph Blythe, a native of Tennessee, settled on section 33 in 1833. He was among the first settlers in the south part of the township. He now lives on section 3, where he moved in 1841. Other early settlers in the south part of the township were William McDaniel and John and William Rose.

David L. Storm located on section twenty-two (where H. C. Storm now lives) about 1834.

Jacob Tressler, a German from Ohio, bought the John Frazer place in 1836. His son, V. Tressler, now owns the place. For a number of years Jacob Tressler kept a tavern here to accommodate the travelers on the State road.

Cochran's Grove post-office was established in 1831 or '32, and John Price was the first post-master, the office being at his house. The mail was then carried from Paris to Vandalia via Shelbyville. James Poe and Jesse Evans kept the office for a number of years. The last post-master at the Grove was James Cochran. He kept the office for fifteen years. When the railroad was built and Windsor established, the office was taken to that point with J. B. Bruce as post-master. Cochran's Grove post-office was quite a distributing office. The following offices in this part of the county received their mail from this point: Hood, Sand Creek, Whitley's Point and Big Spring. Hood post-office was in the southern part of this township, established about 1854 with Aaron Hood as post-master. The railroad killed the Hood office, and it was discontinued at the same time the Cochran's Grove office was. This township has only about two miles of railroad in the north-west corner. The I. & St. L. road passes through sections thirty-one and thirty-two.

Sexson is on the section line between sections fifteen and twenty-two. They have a post-office here, established in 1877, a general store by Phillip Lutz, who is also post-master, a blacksmith and wagon shop by S. H. Kirkpatrick. The town house is here, and was built in 1879, a school-house and a few dwellings. This little village was started by Ammerman and Lutz. They first opened a store here and afterwards got a post-office established. The place was named after Morgan F. Sexson, an old and honored citizen who lives near by.

The first school-house built in this township was a log cabin erected in 1833, and was used for several years before any floor was put into it, and this was a puncheon floor. It stood on the south-east corner of section four. Daniel Green, a one-armed man, was the first teacher. The first church was built on section eight by

the Christian denomination in 1840, where the present Christian church now stands. It was a frame building covered and weatherboarded with clap-boards, built by Robert Abercrombie. The Methodist church is in the extreme southern part of the township, on section thirty-three. Hiram Smith, brother of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, preached Mormonism here about 1832 or '33. He preached at the residence of John Price. Other Mormon preachers followed him, and quite a number in this vicinity joined the faith and subsequently sold out their effects and went to Nauvoo, Illinois.

We here relate the Mormon trouble in this township, called the Mormon War by the old settlers; it was occasioned by citizens, mostly from the Wabash Point, that not only objected to the faith, but objected to having its doctrines preached in this part of the country. They raised a mob and went to a meeting being held by the Mormons, at the residence of Allen Weeks. (This occurred in 1836 or '37.) The Mormon preacher was a Rev. Carter. The mob went there with the evident intention of taking Carter out and whipping him, or doing him some other bodily harm, but Carter became apprised of their intention and slipped out of the house bare-headed, and in the darkness of the night got away. The mob had in company a Methodist preacher who was their spokesman. The mob soon dispersed. Afterwards, Younger Green, who was a citizen of the township and a preacher of the Mormon faith, and being present at the disturbance, went before Judge Breeze and swore out a warrant for the arrest of the leading members of the mob, and as it was supposed the mob would resist civil authority, the warrant was placed in the hands of Col. James Vaughan, who was at that time colonel of the militia. He gathered together about one hundred men and marched to where the mob was collected, in a grove of timber, near where T. J. Curry now lives. Upon the sight of the militiamen, the mob immediately showed fight and a disposition not to be tampered with, as the mob was fully seventy-five strong and well armed. Col. Vaughan detailed three men to go and inform them that if they did not surrender immediately, he would march upon them and take them by force.

The mob received the three men according to the rules of war, and sent word back to Col. Vaughan that they would all die right there before they would surrender or allow the warrant to be

served upon them in that way; that they were willing for any constable to serve the papers, and they would appear before any justice of the peace. Col. Vaughan then rode in front of his men and said, I will take them in short order if a majority of this company is willing. All who are in favor of marching against this mob who defy the laws of Illinois, march to the front ten paces. After a short silence two men marched out, and the balance stood stock still and laughed. The colonel was so disgusted he handed the warrant to a constable in the company and told him to serve the papers the best he could, and the colonel then turned his horse about and rode off in a gallop, leaving his company of brave men to disband, or do as they liked. The constable soon after served the warrant, and mob and militiamen got together, procured some whisky, and had an old-fashioned time; and here the matter dropped, as no one ever appeared against the mob on trial.

The first marriage in the county took place in this township on May 3, 1827. John Cochran and Sally Batemen were the contracting parties.

LAND ENTRIES, T. 11, R. 6 E.

Oct. 21, 1829.	William Price,	W. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 8, 80 acres.
"	John Price,	E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 7, 80 "
Mar. 11, 1830.	John Frazer,	E. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 7, 80 "
June 19, "	John Price,	W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. W. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 8, 80 "

T. 12, R. 6 E.

Nov. 16, 1832.	Nathan Curry,	S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 34, 40 acres.
Oct. 28, 1833.	Jas. F. Smith,	S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 34, 40 "
June 16, 1834.	Hiram Langston,	S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 36, 40 "
Feb. 24, 1836.	Hiram Langston,	N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 35, 40 "
June 6, 1836.	Elliot Crockett,	W. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$,	sec. 36, 80 "

SUPERVISORS.

Wm. B. Bennett elected in 1860, re-elected in 1861. James Storm elected in 1862, re-elected in 1863-4-5-6. J. H. Brockin elected in 1867, re-elected in 1868. N. Curry elected in 1869, re-elected in 1870. M. F. Sexson elected in 1871, re-elected in 1872. W. B. Bennett elected in 1873, re-elected in 1874. W. Storm elected in 1875. W. Shaw elected in 1876, re-elected in 1877. J. H. Brockin, elected in 1878. G. W. Cross elected in 1879 and 1880, and is the present incumbent.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

REV. ALLEN GASKILL.

This gentleman was born in Tuscarawas county, Ohio, February 20th, 1819. His parents, John Gaskill and Mary Taylor, were natives of England, and settled in Ohio in 1816. His father died when Mr. Gaskill was ten years of age. He attended the common schools for only a few months, but, after reaching manhood, studied by himself, acquired a substantial English education, and for four years taught school. On the 12th of February, 1839, when in his twenty-first year he married Harriet Everhart, a native of Harrison

county, Ohio. He learned the carriage-making trade, which he carried on at Port Washington for a number of years. He had become connected with the Methodist church under the preaching of the Rev. William Swayzie, in the year 1834. In 1844, he was licensed to preach as a local minister. In 1851, he joined the North Ohio conference in which he was a traveling minister two years, after which he located. The first year of the war of the rebellion he volunteered (on the 24th of August, 1861) in Co. C. Fifty-first regiment, Ohio Infantry. On the organization of the company he

was elected first lieutenant, and was promoted to be captain in March, 1862. His regiment was in the Army of the Cumberland, and its first Colonel was Stanley Matthews. On account of failing health he resigned and came home December 26th, 1862. In 1863 he removed to Shelby county, purchasing the farm on which he now resides. His older daughter, Mary J., is now the wife of the Rev. G. W. Fisher, a Presbyterian minister at Trenton, Clinton county. The younger, Drusilla A., married W. C. Kennedy, of Ash Grove township. He has taken an active interest in the Methodist church. The society in Ash Grove township known as the "Gaskill church" was built up under his supervision. In 1865 he was a traveling minister on the Windsor circuit. He was originally an anti slavery man, and was called an abolitionist in the days when that term was a synonym of unpopularity. His first vote for President was cast for Harrison in 1840. He was a whig as long as that party lasted, and then became a republican, and voted, in 1856, for Fremont, the first republican presidential candidate. Since 1876 he has been an active supporter of the principles of the National Green-back party.

HARRISON MESSER, (DECEASED)

HARRISON MESSER, who died at Shelbyville, February ninth, 1864, was one of the prominent residents of Shelby county. He was born at Concord, New Hampshire, August the twenty-third, 1766. His father, Amos Messer, was a native of Rockingham county, New Hampshire, and his mother, Sarah Colby, of Hopkinton, Merrimac county. When he was about ten years old, his parents moved with the family to Canada, and resided for some time at Dunham Flats near Montreal. On the breaking out of the cholera in Canada, the family moved to Nashua, New Hampshire. Mr. Messer shortly after went to Concord, where without capital he began the arduous battle of life on his own account, entering into the transportation business. Railroads were not then in existence, and the business of transporting goods required many men and much capital. He bought some horses on credit, was successful, and gradually increased his business till it assumed large proportions. Stage lines then traversed the different sections of New Hampshire, and he went largely into this business, having sometimes as many as a hundred horses on the road. On the twenty-fifth of November, 1840, he married Mary Boynton, who was born at Merritt's Bridge (now Laconia), New Hampshire. As soon as the stage lines began to be supplanted by railroads, he turned his attention to railroad construction, in which he was engaged the remainder of his life. In 1848, he began work on a contract on the Boston, Concord and Montreal railroad, of which he built upwards of twenty miles. In the fall of 1850, he transferred his operations to the state of New York. He constructed part of the New York and Erie railroad; finished the Jefferson and Canandaigua road; and built a part of the Buffalo, Corning and New York railroad. He also built part of a road running from Cleveland to Toledo in the state of Ohio. In company with other gentlemen he secured a contract for masonry of the bridge across the Ohio at Cincinnati, but the work was relinquished on account of funds not being furnished. In the spring of 1853, he began work on the Terre Haute, Alton and St. Louis, (now the Indianapolis and St. Louis) railroad. On this road he held the position of manager and sub-contractor, and was engaged in building several miles of the line. In company with some other gentlemen he laid out Mattoon and other towns along the road. After the road was built, he was connected with it as fuel agent till 1860. The latter year he went to Missouri, and was interested in building a railroad in Platte county, but was obliged to abandon the work on the breaking out of the war of the rebellion. In 1864, he was at work on a contract

for making the fills and grades on the Indianapolis and St. Louis railroad at Shelbyville, and while attempting to get on a freight train to return home, his death resulted from an accident on the ninth of February, 1864. His widow afterward carried out the contract and completed the work. Mr. Messer was a man of iron constitution, and during his life performed an immense amount of hard labor. He was extremely energetic, and to this quality was owing the great part of his success. He always had an object in view, and never rested short of its accomplishment. He was ambitious and hopeful, and never gave way to discouragement. While others were mourning over disaster, he went to work to repair them and arrange his plans for a more successful attempt in the future. He belonged to the class of self-made men. He quit school at fourteen, and his subsequent education was obtained by his acquaintance with the business affairs of life. He was brought in contact with all classes of men, and held his own by his natural shrewdness of mind and his excellent judgment of human nature. He was in early life a whig and afterward became a democrat. He brought his family from New Hampshire in 1859 to Mattoon, which was their home till 1861, when he moved on the farm, north-east of Windsor. A short time before his death he began the erection of a large and commodious dwelling. He owned fourteen hundred acres of land at this place, beside a large tract in Missouri. He left three children: Mary Hellen, wife of Ellis Baldwin; Belle, who married J. B. Brisbin and Amos H. Messer.

JOSEPH BLYTHE

Was born in Lincoln county, Tennessee, March 25th, 1814. Both his father and grandfather were named Thomas Blythe. The latter moved from North Carolina to Tennessee in the early settlement of the state, first locating in Bedford and afterward in Lincoln county. Mr. Blythe's mother, Phoebe Dawdy, was a daughter of Howell Dawdy, who lived in New Jersey and served in the Revolutionary war. The subject of this sketch was the third of ten children, all of whom grew to maturity. His father died when he was fifteen. His educational advantages were confined to the old subscription-schools, held in log school-houses with puncheon floors and their only furniture split-log benches. He secured a good education, afterward improved by experience with business affairs. August 4th, 1831, he married Sarah Crockett, daughter of William Crockett, and niece of the celebrated David Crockett, famed for his skill, as a huntsman and his daring adventures in the early annals of Tennessee. In 1833, Mr. Blythe emigrated to Illinois and settled in the southern part of the present Ash Grove township. The settlements in the county were then few in number. After living five years on Congress land he made an entry. In the spring of 1841, he sold his farm at three dollars an acre, and bought eighty acres, where he now lives, at eight dollars an acre. His farm now consists of three hundred and thirty-six acres. His first wife having died on the seventh of September, 1854, he was married on the following 18th of December to Mary Ann Crockett, sister to his first wife. She was born in Lincoln county, Tennessee, on the 25th of November, 1819. He has six children:—Angeline, now the wife of William Webb, of Iowa; Susan, who married David Hall, of Windsor; William T., connected with the signal corps of the United States army and now in Texas; Sarah, who married Timothy Small of Richland township; and Ruth and Alfred, who still reside at home. He has always been a democrat from the time he voted for Van Buren in 1836. He has taken an active interest in public affairs. He was first elected justice of the peace in 1837, and was the first person elected to that office after the formation of Wabash precinct, which then embraced the present Big Spring and Ash Grove townships. He was twice re-elected to the same office.