

CENTENNIAL HISTORY
OF
MASON COUNTY,

INCLUDING A
SKETCH OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF ILLINOIS,

ITS
PHYSICAL PECULIARITIES, SOILS, CLIMATE, PRODUCTIONS, ETC.

BY
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SPRINGFIELD, ILL.:
ROKKER'S STEAM PRINTING HOUSE,
1876.

497968

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1876

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but one pair of burrs, or millstones, and they but seven inches in diameter.

The upper stone was stationary and the lower one revolved, to grind the corn. It ground corn only, and its most rapid work was one and a half bushels per hour, and the meal was exceedingly coarse. Owing to the scarcity of mills, in this then new country, it was patronized from a large extent of territory.

On the settlement of Mr. Scovil in Havana, they received their ground corn from Beardstown. The Falkner family, sometimes from Fulton county, and from Mackinaw, and from this mill in 1838 and '40.

What time it ceased to exist, we have been unable to ascertain, but having served its day and generation, like all else, it has passed away.

EARLY SETTLEMENT OF SALT CREEK TOWNSHIP.

The early settlement of what is now the township of Salt creek was in and around what was then so generally known as Big Grove. For a long time the improvements were all near the timber. Land situated three or four miles from the timber was at a discount, and for a long time there were congress lands on the prairie, subject to entry, after all the land near the timber had been taken up. The original settlers never imagined that the time would come when they and their children could not have the benefit of all the prairies around Mason City for stock range. The first settler was Wm. Hagan, who came in 1830, and located on the bottom, near old Salt creek bridge, where he remained till 1850, when he sold out to Ephriam Wilcox, and removed to Missouri. None of his family have ever lived here since. The farm on which he lived is the one which has latterly been owned and occupied by Charles L. Montgomery.

Austin P. and Robert Melton came to Big Grove in 1832. Austin P. Melton settled on the farm afterwards owned by Geo. Virgin, where he remained a few years, and moved to Tazewell county and remained till 1862, when he moved to Walker's Grove, in this county, where he now resides.

In 1835, Daniel Clark, from Warren county, Ohio, settled in the immediate neighborhood of Mr. Hagan, and remained until his death, in 1854, leaving three sons, Daniel, now of Mason City (see Biography), Alfred, in Crane creek township, and William, in Du-Buque, Iowa.

In 1836, the Virgin's, George, Kinsey, Abram and Rezin all came and settled in the Grove, and remained till they died, which occurred as follows: Kinsey, in 1853; Rezin, in 1872; George, in 1855; and Abram, in 1873; the latter, the only one who left any children living in this county. He left three sons and three daughters, all here, and the only ones of that name in the county. Kinsey Virgin left one daughter, the wife of James Hoyt, in Cass county, Iowa. George and Rezin had no children. George, for a number of years previous to his death, kept a store at this place, first in a small log house, and afterwards in a frame house built for the purpose, near which George Young erected a mill, John Pritchett a blacksmith shop, and Louis Bushong a shoe shop. To all of these, and the residences necessary for themselves and families, they gave the romantic name of "Hiawatha."

For a number of years the place had some notoriety in the eastern part of the county, furnishing supplies to many of the inhabitants in the vicinity, but after the railroad was located through Mason City, instead of this place, as originally surveyed, notwithstanding the romance of its name, which, though of Indian origin, was said to have been suggested here by an eminent physician of the neighborhood, the town gradually dwindled away, till now Ed. Auxier's cornfield marks the site. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

In 1837, Edward Sikes, John and Eli Auxier, John Y. Swaur and John Young, all from Ohio, came and settled near the grove.

Edward Sikes settled on the farm formerly occupied by Robert Melton, and now owned by F. Auxier, where he since died, leaving a numerous family. John Auxier settled in the eastern part of the Grove, where he acquired, by raising and feeding cattle, a large tract of land, where he died, in 1859, leaving a numerous family, who have since moved to Iowa. Eli Auxier had previously died, leaving a widow and two children, viz: Rev. E. E. Auxier, who now owns the site of the obsolete town of Hiawatha, and a daughter, the wife of Nelson Dody. John Young settled in the western part of the grove, near the farm of Col. Abner Baxter (who came a year afterwards), and died, leaving a numerous family, among whom were William, who settled on the north side of the Grove, and died in 1865, leaving a family, and where his widow (since married to Joseph Lemley) now resides; and George, who was engaged in the practice of law in Mason City, and died there, in 1873.

John Y. Swaur, the only survivor of the party who came in 1837, now lives on the north side of the Grove, where he, with his sons, McDonald, William and George, have by their industry and discretion in raising and feeding stock, risen from poverty to affluence, and become the possessors of fine large tracts of land and fine herds of stock.

In evidence of the above fact, it may be here stated, that in this centennial year they gave the assessor the largest personal property list in Salt creek township, where many large lists are made.

Among the early settlers may also be named George H. Short, who settled and improved a farm, adjoining the Hagan's place, where he now resides, but owing to ill health for many years, has remained closely at home; and, also, Jonathan M. Logue, familiarly called Uncle "Jot," whose name has long been familiar to the inhabitants of Big Grove; Eli H. Sikes, who came to the Grove with the Virgins, when he was quite a youth, and settled on the north side of the Grove, married a daughter of Wm. Warnock, Sen., and died in 1868, leaving a widow and several children in affluent circumstances, the result of his industry, and the inheritance of his good name. Suplina Judd, best known as "Squire Judd," figured *with*, and *for*, considerable notoriety for several years on account of his judicial character.

Coming down to the present time, there are but few persons remaining that lived about Big Grove twenty-five years ago. John Y. Swaur and family, before named, E. E. and J. W. Virgin, sons of Abram Virgin, Edmund E., son of Eli Auxier, Robert A., son of Austin P. Melton, and Ludwig and Wm. L., sons of Granville Davis, are the only ones remaining of the original settlers and their descendants. While the place will compare favorably with any locality in the west for health, many have died; but make the same review of the changes wrought in twenty-five years, and the numbers who have died are below an average mortality. Since, the neighborhood has become somewhat isolated, being five miles from a railroad station, Big Grove, though possessing comparatively less notoriety than in former times, yet these early settlers have been succeeded by a class of unpretending citizens, that for industry, intelligence and prosperity will compare favorably with any part of the State, and consequently of the world.

Among the present inhabitants of the neighborhood of Big Grove, in addition to those above named, are Cortes Hume, Wm.

F. Auxier, Wm. P. and John R. Falkner, John Hill, George Lumpee, H. C. Burnham, J. A. Hendrickson, J. H. Varnholt, Wm. Brown, Aaron Werner, Michael Malony, John McCarty, A. A. Blunt, and others. ←

The social habits of the place have of course changed in the last fourth of the century. While the present inhabitants are eager for the daily papers, lest their interests may be affected by the "spring" or "decline" in the "hog market," the pioneers were content with mails once a week, or less frequently during bad weather or high water. Yet they had their social enjoyments, and it is with no regret that we remember listening to their discussions of the respective merits of "gourd seed" and "flint" corn, or the prominent points of a favorite "coon dog."

The old "timber school house," long since removed but still remembered, "Though lost to sight, to memory dear," as the place where the people of the eastern part of the county went to vote, and the "spirited" manner in which elections were sometimes conducted, their opinions being sometimes defined, and arguments enforced by physical as well as logical means, yet they never dreamed of the crookedness of some of the political combinations of the present day. Where now stretch the broad farms of those we have named, the writer has seen growing prairie flowers,

Side by side, graceful, affianced, destined to meet and unite
 One by the other, in beauty, all decked in their coloring bright,
 Reaching and quickening, all their fragrance is scattering
 around,
 The earth is made proud with their beauty, rejoiced of its
 offspring the ground.

And now, with a separate life, swells proudly each little shoot,
 While veiled in its sheltering womb lies secret the germ of the
 fruit,
 As they sink to the earth, one by one, the seed of another is
 sown;
 And so the great whole, as the parts, live a life of their own.

LYNCHBURG TOWNSHIP.

Among the first settlers in Lynchburg township was Nelson Abbey, in the year 1837. He built a log cabin near where the village of Sny Carte now stands, which is supposed to have been the first house in Lynchburg township. During the next year William Rodgers settled near, and was soon followed by John

HAVANA.

Havana is beautifully situated on the east bank of the Illinois river, and is the county seat of the county. The situation is somewhat elevated, perhaps an average of forty feet above the river. It contains many fine residences and pleasant homes, and more than ordinary taste is exhibited in the improvement and ornamentation of grounds.

The town contains, as near as we can estimate in the absence of precise figures, 3,000 inhabitants. During the past year has erected a fine school edifice on the bluff east of the court house, at an expense of nearly \$30,000, an improvement of which our citizens are justly proud. In addition to this main central school house, there are smaller houses for the primary schools in both the north and south ends of the town.

The churches are as follows: The Methodist Episcopal church, corner of Main and Broadway, is a good, plain house, and the place of worship of one of the oldest societies in the city. Being centrally located, and of easy access, it is as well attended as any. The Reformed church is located on the second block south of the M. E. church; a neat, well finished house, of unpretentious appearance, erected at a cost of about \$7,000.

The Lutheran church, on the bluff northeast of the court house, is still smaller, though the average attendance is larger than in the two preceding. It is as old, if not the oldest organization in the city, and its membership is the wealthiest of any. A neat parsonage is attached to their grounds, and their pastor has a pleasant home.

In the northern part of town is the Catholic church, a neat, commodious frame building, as are all the others, very tastefully finished. This society has a large membership, and some of the most substantial citizens of town and country are included in its

numbers. All the foregoing churches have pastors in charge, and regular services, though the minister of the Reformed church receives his salary from the Board of Domestic Missions of that church in the East.

The Baptist church is a neat frame building, near the southwest corner of the public square. The membership is few in number, and without a minister at this time.

Our Swedish citizens, of whom there are about fifty, are making efforts to hold religious services in their own language, and a minister of that nationality has recently visited them several times for that purpose. A word in reference to our Swedish population. Though not wealthy, they are in fair circumstances, and are rightly ranked among our most valuable citizens. Honest, industrious, temperate and reliable is the reference we must make to them, and a personal acquaintance with each enables us to know "whereof we affirm."

If there is one class of inhabitants more than another of whom we have just reason to be proud, it is our

MECHANICS.

We have a large number of mechanics, in all the various trades usually pursued in inland towns. Carpenters, machinists, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, painters, jewelers, printers, tanners, etc., etc., that are equaled by few and excelled by none. Strangers have remarked to the writer, in regard to some of our mechanics, whose abilities they had tested, that they *regard them as very superior, indeed*. It is ever our pleasure to give honor to whom honor is due, and we hold it as a fundamental principle of a democratic government, that the masses, the man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, either in common or skilled labor, is the bulwark and stay, the anchor and safety, of the institutions of our country. Hence the value of the free school system in our country, where the property is taxed for the education of the poor man's children. With few exceptions, the best minds in America have sprung from the laboring classes, and been educated in the common schools. More of this under another heading.

The first settlement was made where Havana now stands in 1839. In 1829, in September, a postoffice was established, and six

years later, or 1835, a town was laid out—O. M. Ross, proprietor. The second family was named Myers, and the third was the Krebaum family, some of the members of which have been identified with the public and business interests of this city and county down to the present day.

The details of the early settlement of Havana are so fully set forth in the biographies of Pulaski Scovil, A. W. Kemp, N. J. Rockwell, O. E. Foster, J. H. Neteler, and others, that a repetition here would be a work of superogation. In lieu there of, we will refer the reader to the biographies above named, to the extracts from early newspapers, and the railroad department.

Havana contains many substantial business houses, warehouses, steam elevators, and three hotels; and her trade, though not as flourishing as many towns, has had a slow, healthful growth. In 1856 there was no brick building in Havana. In 1857 J. H. & D. P. Hole built the first brick store, and in the same year Wm. Walker built the first brick dwelling.

Havana's improvement in trade and the erection of new buildings, has been equally slow. A reason for this is readily seen in her manner of doing business. Manufactures of various kinds have been undertaken here and failed for the want of patronage, and from being driven out by competitive articles being brought in and sold at such rates that an honest workman could not compete with shoddy articles, and from a determination of the people to buy nothing at home that could be shipped here from abroad. This system of business has been felt here in every department of trade. We aim to state *facts* and *facts* only, and the preceding we would gladly have omitted had candor allowed it to have been done.

No city in our knowledge can claim more beautifully laid out or better improved streets than Havana. All are regular and crossing each other at right-angles, corresponding to the four cardinal points of the compass, and beautifully ornamented with trees. Our town viewed from some of the fine elevations within its limits, presents the appearance of a densely peopled forest, many of the buildings being entirely obscured by trees. Among the many fine improvements we can name, are the residences of Adolph Krebaum, R. R. Simmons, C. G. Krebaum, F. H. Cappel, L. Dearborn, S. C. Conwell, and others.

The Irish population of Havana deserves especial notice. The United States and every locality thereof is indebted to the older countries of Europe for a part of their inhabitants. To Germany more than any other for a rare development of muscle, and for persevering industry; but to the emigrant from the Emerald Isle, and the descendants thereof, for both the *quantity* and *quality* of the brains and business energies of her people. Irish wit has become proverbial the world over. The energies and ambition of the Celtic race are as proverbial as their wit. It is no rare thing to find a street or a railroad laborer a man of education and various attainments. We have always sympathised with the man who lost the following, containing a lock of tangled hair:

“Och, Judy, me darlint,
Here’s a lock of me hair,
And if there’s a snarl in it,
Sure I don’t care,
Any how.

For now I’m going off
For to work on the track,
You may take it and keep it
Until I get back,
If ye like.”

The Irishman who awoke in the unfinished dream, has always had our sympathies. He dreamed that St. Patrick called on him, and he felt honored. St. Patrick asked him, “Would he drink something?” He replied, “Would a duck swim?” St. Patrick asked him, “If he would have it cold or hot?” “Hot, to-be-sure,” he replied. “St. Patrick went below for the hot water, and before he returned I woke up, and now it’s troubling me that I did not take it cold.”

The Irish population of Havana is about two hundred, and for education and intelligence, honest industry and good citizenship, will compare with any other equal number of citizens. They more readily than any other nationality become assimilated with the institutions of the country of their adoption, and attached to its institutions and government. To them and their descendants is this country indebted for some of the best minds in the army and navy, the halls of legislation or the pulpit.

THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF HAVANA NOW CONSISTS OF—

I. N. MITCHELL.....	<i>Mayor.</i>
H. H. HANRATH.....	<i>City Clerk.</i>
J. H. KNOBBE.....	<i>Treasurer.</i>
L. R. HAACK, MAX MEYERS, P. E. LIMBURGH, W. S. DRAY, J. W. BOGGS, JABEZ DUNBAR,	} <i>Aldermen.</i>

→ In 1848 a canvass was made of the number of voters and the number of inhabitants in Havana, in view of its incorporation, and at the same time a note was made of the manner in which they would vote. The original paper, brown with age, is now before us, by the kindness of Dr. E. B. Harpham, in whose possession it has been.

The voters were—N. J. Rockwell, N. Rockwell, L. Dearborn, M. Dearborn, J. Criswell, George Walker, Wm. Walker, Robert Walker, B. Krebaum, Wm. Krebaum, F. Krebaum, H. Cease, W. Eldred, S. Judd, E. B. Harpham, C. W. Andrus, A. Swing, K. Sykes, A. Bowers, A. Ganson, H. Umphrey, G. Hony, J. Drone, J. Cheshire, J. Moyer, J. H. Hole, — Wilson, G. Christian, S. Baldwin, R. S. Patterson, S. C. Conwell, N. Powell, G. Robinson, M. Robinson, E. Thornburg, P. L. Beckstead, J. D. Cross, B. Grubb, J. D. Hays, S. Osborn, A. Stuart, W. Stuart, J. Lane.

These were voters, and the number in each family is also given. The following are also given as residents, but not voters, and the numbers composing each family:

Phelps, Ashmore, Graham, Neil, Dr. Loveland, Mrs. Owens, Mr. Melton, Mr. Litchfield, Catharine Baylor, Bowers, Taylors, Sykes, and a girl at Robison's.

Census taken October 1, 1848—total number 191.

The town was incorporated with E. B. Harpham, President of the Board of Trustees, and Frederick Krebaum, Clerk. The first ordinance was signed by the above officers, and bears date March 2d, 1848, the original draft of which is now before me.

. FOURTH OF JULY IN HAVANA—1876.

Preparations for an appropriate observance of a Centennial Anniversary having been entered into with enthusiasm by our citizens,

all were desirous that an enjoyable time should be the order of the day, with our guests who might favor us with their presence on that occasion. To this end, many of the buildings were ornamented with shrubbery and flags; wreathes and arches spanned the streets.

The morning was rendered unpropitious by a slight rainfall, and the two first trains brought but few guests.

The skies brightened, and the faces of our people partook of the same blessing. Wagons and carriages brought their hundreds from the country, and the later trains brought other hundreds.

A band of music enlivened the scene. At the park, all was life and enjoyment. A tall liberty pole, with the national emblem, graced the summit of the mound in the park. The tables were being loaded with the abundant supply of food for the assembling mass.

In the streets processions were formed by the benevolent orders of the city, and others, who marched to the already well filled park.

To omit a reference to the decorations of the engines and the passenger coaches would be unjust. The employees of the P., P. & J. road took especial pains to make their display of evergreens, wreaths and bouquets tasteful, while hundreds of banners were attached to all trains. A passenger coach on the fast express, Mr. McSherry, conductor, was especially tasteful. The inside of the coach was a profusion of wreaths, bouquets, evergreens, flags, etc., etc., commendable alike to the taste and patriotism of this gentlemanly conductor, who spared no expense to make it attractive.

The proceedings at the speakers' stand were opened by the president of the day, in a few introductory remarks, followed by a brief prayer by the chaplain. The reading of the Declaration of Independence, by Judge J. A. Mallory, was preceded by a few well timed remarks by the Judge that were as happily conceived as they were beautiful in their expression.

The reading was followed by an oration by Prof. Williams, of Wabash College, Indiana. For conception, delivery, matter, language, intonation, etc., we have heard few to excel it. Space forbids even a synopsis.

After the speaking, ample justice was done to the large supply of viands. All had plenty. The five thousand were fed, not with five loaves and two fishes, but with five hundred loaves, eight hun-

dred pounds of dressed fish and four fatted cattle. All were well done and in every way satisfactory.

The old squatter sovereignty doctrine was amply illustrated during the afternoon, to-wit: that every body should enjoy themselves as their taste and inclinations dictated, and most thoroughly and effectually was that done.

It is with pleasure that we are enabled to add that the day passed without accident or hurt to any.

In the evening came the display of fire-works, but these were superceded and displaced by a most magnificent display of the pyrotechnics of the heavens, and the booming of the artillery of the skies. The vivid lightning blaze, and the reverbration of nature's heaviest ordnance continued most of the night, accompanied by the extraordinary rainfall of three and one-half inches of water.

We hazard the opinion that the 4th will be long remembered by those who partook in these centennial festivities, and as time rolls on into the second century of our National existence, ushered in this day, it will be with gratification and great satisfaction, that we can all look back on our participation in the celebration of July 4th, 1876.

METEOROLOGICAL.

I append an abstract of Meteorological observations, taken in Havana, on latitude forty, longitude ninety, above the sea level four hundred and seventy-five feet, by the author of this work, who is observer for the Signal Service of the United States Army:

The annexed table exhibits the annual aqueous precipitation at the several points named, from observations taken during the various lengths of time, ranging from one to eighteen years. By comparing the amount of actual rainfall, the latitude, the elevation, the proximity to lakes and rivers, or the per cent. of timber in the vicinity of the point of observation, we have been unable to fix any rule or cause for the variableness of amounts.

There may, however, be a slight observance of increased precipitation in the line of extended river bottoms covered with timber. From our own point of observation we have abundant reason for arriving at this conclusion. Havana is situated on a high, sandy bluff, on the east bank of the Illinois river, averaging about seventy feet above the river. The west bank of the river is low bottom

Should any of our citizens visit Peoria—which they do every day—they should call and see the *Transcript* office, as it has recently been adorned by a new steam press.

THE HERALD.—W. W. STOUT, EDITOR.

Havana, October 2d, 1857.

CANDIDATES.

Adolph Krebaum announces himself as a candidate for the office of county clerk, subject, however, to the decision of a democratic county convention, to be held at Havana on the 12th day of September next.

I. A. Hurd announces himself as an independent candidate for county clerk, at the ensuing election.

We are authorized to announce Fletcher Coppel as a candidate for clerk, at the ensuing election.

We are authorized to announce Selah Wheadon as a candidate for school commissioner of Mason county.

Editor of the Herald: Please announce J. B. Paul as a candidate for school commissioner, at the ensuing election, and oblige
MANY VOTERS.

Robert Anderson is a candidate for treasurer, at the ensuing election.

Mr. Editor: Please announce N. Powell, Esq., as a candidate for the office of county judge, at the ensuing election, and oblige
MANY VOTERS.

We are authorized to announce G. H. Campbell as a candidate for county judge, at the ensuing election.

THE AGRICULTURAL FAIR.

Are our readers aware that our county fair is to be held in this place during the ensuing week. We have heard so little said in regard to it that we fear many of the citizens of the county have forgotten that we are to have an exhibition of articles during the