



Brown County Journal

March 15, 2014

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society Dinner Meeting
April 7

Brown County Genealogical
Society Annual Meeting
April 8

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Where Was Georgetown?

I'm sure most of you who have lived in Brown County or have family that originally came from Brown County have heard of the town of Georgetown. There still is a road going east from Bean Blossom towards Columbus called Georgetown Road. Whatever happened to Georgetown? When I first moved here I learned of Georgetown Road, but wondered what happened to the town of Georgetown, where was it, and did it even exist? Well I assure it still does exist, at least the natives in the area still knows where it is and it still may be called Georgetown by the old-timers in the area.

First we need to learn a little bit of the history of this area. In 1836 Brown County was created from parts of Bartholomew, Jackson, and Monroe Counties. The area that was formerly part of Monroe County in the northwest section of our county became Jackson Township. One of the first towns to spring up in Jackson Township was a village which came to be called Georgetown, which later came to be called Bean Blossom. This was in a good fertile lowland with a creek running through it called Bean Blossom Creek. One of the very earliest land grants was obtained by William Snider "Kentucky Bill" in 1833 before Brown County was created. He was one of the leading business men in the area. John Gillaspay and Henry Taylor came later in 1836 after Brown County had become its own county. Other settlers kept coming to look for good land to farm and raise their families, even maybe to start a business. Other early settlers included Christopher Stump, George Grove, William Murphy, Calvin Mosier, Thomas Waltman, and Joab Brummett. Other families with surnames such as Barkes, Parmerlee, Dawson, Richards, Prosser, Adams, Kennedy, Weddle, King, Robertson, Anderson, and Banta. If you know these family names the town



Georgetown School

starting a tannery. William Taylor built a water-powered mill east of town. In 1838 the first log school house was built for the children of the settlers. It was run and taught by John C. Marshall. One of the first church gatherings was preached by a Circuit Rider, Minister Eli P. Farmer. In the early days the schools doubled as churches on Sunday. That was quite possibly true for here as well. In the summer sometimes church meetings were held outdoors. By the time 1842 rolled around it came time to establish their first post office. When they applied to the government for a post office address they gave the name of Georgetown. It came back rejected, apparently there already was another post office in Indiana with that name. They finally had to settle on a new name for their town and post office so it became Bean Blossom.

The origins of the name Bean Blossom has been described as coming from at least two different explanations. First of all you must remember that the creek was named Bean Blossom Creek first, then the town's name came later. Bean Blossom Creek runs from the hills of Brown County through the lowland south of town onto Monroe County before Lake Lemon was constructed. The one explanation that seems to hold a little more weight goes back to the beginnings of our state. Even before our state was established, the land which comprises Brown

cemetery, Weeping Willow, reads like a page in the history of the Georgetown pioneers. As it grew the good citizens wanted their town to prosper so they decided the town needed a name. George Grove was such a well-known and respected man they decided to name the town after him, Georgetown. Several stores had been established such as the Adams & Kennedy store in 1836 with about \$1500 in merchandise. George Grove had a horse-powered mill northeast of town to grind grain. Jacob McNeeley went into business



Covered Bridge Road



Helm's Store

the same name of Beanblossom. During research of the men in his service there was found to be two men as previously thought by this name. One of them did indeed drown, but from the research it is not known which one drowned and what his first name was. One other explanation for the name of Bean Blossom comes from a local colloquial explanation. One time when a wagon load of beans was crossing the creek it overturned and shortly afterward there was an immense growth of bean plants just covered in bean blossoms all up and down the creek bank.

Bean Blossom

So from 1842 onward the town of Georgetown became known as Bean Blossom. By the 1840s it had become a thriving town with many businesses going. There were numerous stores selling groceries, merchandise, and liquor. The pioneers had a fondness for liquor and many stores doubled as taverns. By the 1870s two major factories had been started that kept many locals in a job. The Parmerlee Brothers started a tannery after the demise of the McNeeley Tannery. Their extensive steam tannery used nearly 5000 cords of chestnut bark yearly. Their leather was said to be of superior quality having won many prizes at competitions and state fairs.

The next most important business was the Staples Jewelry and Spectacle

County, was obtained from the Indians by the Treaty of Fort Wayne, also called Harrison's Purchase, in 1809 and the Treaty of St. Mary's in 1818. In 1811 a Captain Jack Beanblossom was fighting under General William Henry Harrison against the Indians. While attempting to cross the creek while it was flooded he was drowned. Subsequently, the creek was named in the Captain's memory. Another account was given of two other men that also served under General Harrison by



Georgetown Presbyterian Church



Yankee Bill Waltman & family

The Masonic Lodge was a two-story building where the Lodge members could hold their meetings up stairs and other businesses could run on the first floor. Part of the first floor was also used to house the school and church at different times. William “Yankee Bill” Waltman was quite a colorful character and was instrumental in starting the Lodge in Bean Blossom. He became a lawyer, helped to cofound another newspaper, and started a large orchard just south of town. He was also one of the principal characters in promoting the Old Settlers Reunion that still meets today. The Old Settlers Reunion was held for many years just north of town at Clupper’s Grove on Old Settlers Road which is now named for it. One of the favorite pastimes of the residents was horse-racing. Bean Blossom had a good long straight stretch of level ground for the horses to run on and many bets were made between its citizens. Some even got in trouble with the law for betting like George Grove. By 1884 there were nearly 100 people living in Bean Blossom. There were plenty of good things here to help the town grow and attract new people.

By the 1890s it was a prosperous and busy town. Another important family set up their first business in Bean Blossom at this time. In the

Manufactory. George T. Staples moved his business from Philadelphia to Bean Blossom after his sister, who had married a Parmerlee, told him that it would be a good place to set up a business. He had machinery that manipulated gold, silver, and nickel like wax, drawing them out like wire. He also had dies that moulded the different parts to be able to solder them together. He also had a store and a workshop in town.

A newspaper was started in Bean Blossom also in the 1870s by A. S. Helms. By 1876 the town revolved around the Presbyterian church, the school, and the Lodge Hall.



Herb McDonald’s Huckster truck



McDonald's Store (young Jack in front)

early 1890s Charles Kessler McDonald ran a huckster wagon for Hammond Rund, who operated a store in town. He traveled the countryside taking merchandise out to the rural folk. He sold them his wares or traded for other items such as eggs and chickens that he could take back to the store to sell. Cass decided to go into business for himself and his store was built by 1909. It was the oldest family-owned and continuously operated business in Brown County. Some of the other major products that came out of Bean Blossom

were the manufacture of ties, hoop poles, and staves from the surrounding forests. There was a lot of good forest in the surrounding hills and it was a good way to make extra money when farming wasn't enough. The tannery business was an important occupation in those times as well. Another tannery was started up by the Rund family west of town. They also operated a leather and harness shop in town.

The Georgetown Presbyterian church was the center of the community for many years in the later part of the 19th century. The town now needed another good size church for its growing population so Thomas and A. E. Waltman deeded a lot off of the town plat to the Trustees of the Goodfellow Church from whence they built another church. By 1910 the church was sold to the Methodist Episcopal Church and this ran until the 1940s. By this time the Mennonites came to town and needed a church so they took over the church in 1949. It has run continuously ever since.

In 1909 the town decided to build a proper schoolhouse and it was named the Georgetown School. David and Saline Adams sold a portion of their land for the new school. Over the years the teachers included Clarence Zody, James Cullen, Gladys Snider, George Barnes, and Sylvester Barnes. (from Democrat article by Deloris Hamm, Jan. 12, 1983). When the school system was consolidated the school building and the land was purchased by St. David's Church. The building was moved to one side and is still being used as the Fellowship Hall of the church. Some of the doctor's that served the community were Dr. James G. Ward, Enoch Arwine, A. C. Spencer, and A. F. Wright. In 1951 Elmer Strode compiled a plat of Bean Blossom in 1900 from memories he recorded from the old-timers that were left. Many of the old businesses are on the plat. (See the last page.)

The old road that went between Bean Blossom and Nashville used to run a different course. Just south of the junction of State Road 45 and State Road 135N there is a road that Y's off to the right, now



Old Post Office/Barbershop 1927

Blossom is the one to go.” The building was built by William Waltman who was an undertaker at that time. He made the coffins upstairs in the old building. Found hanging in on the wall of the old Post Office was a United States Recruiting poster. The poster is now located in the Archives of the Historical Society. Also on the lower floor, William Prosser operated a grocery and a Barber shop. Later Orval Kain was barber and postmaster about 1904.

Aside from the many small businesses that sprang up and disappeared over the last 100 years there was one more major change to the town after the state highway was built through. Music had always played a major role in the lives of Brown Countians. With the increasing popularity of back home type music such as bluegrass and country so did Bean Blossom attract some major musical events. Bill Monroe, a bluegrass musician, visited Brown County’s Jamboree to do a show in 1952 which just so happened to be at the same time that a fox hunt was being held on the grounds. Some say that was the impetus for his buying the Jamboree which became Bill Monroe’s Music Park. The Bill Monroe Bluegrass Festival is one of the longest continuously held music festivals in the world.

Many remnants of the old stores and homes still stand in Georgetown. I’m sorry,

called Covered Bridge Road. This runs along the valley west then turns south to the valley toward Grandma Barnes Road. In the 1930s the state put the new road through straight across Bean Blossom Creek and up the hill.

A Democrat article of August 3, 1956 tells the story of a Bean Blossom landmark, the old post office. “We all know that progress is a wonderful thing and that old things must pass away to make way for the new. But it always leaves us with a bit of sadness when we see them go. Now the old Georgetown Post Office at Bean



Bill Monroe’s Jamboree

