

The Newcomer

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INDIANA'S youngest COUNTY

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WINTER ON THE PRAIRIE

By John J. Yost



As the raw winter winds buffet the flatlands of the grand prairie of the midwest, each generation experiences severe weather that it determines to be the worst winter of all time.

For many of us the blizzard of January, 1967 will serve as our all-time worst. Then there was the record-breaker of 1978. Even the highly-touted threat of global warming is said by meteorologists to be capable of producing extremely powerful winter storms. We know from the written record left to us by our predecessors that residents of our particular section of the grand prairie suffered seriously from Old Man Winter's wrath.

We do know from one of the earliest residents of this region the prominent Potawatomi Chief Shaubena, that it was one such extreme winter that virtually wiped out the buffalo in this area. Historian Elmore Barce relates this tale in both his *Land of the Potawatomi* (1919) and *Beaver Lake - A Land of Enchantment* (1937). It was, in part, the buffalo that drew the Potawatomi to this area from their earlier homelands of Northern Michigan and the Green Bay area of Wisconsin. Barce cites Shaubena as his source when he wrote of the extraordinary blizzard of 1790, "According to Shaubena, 'a big snow, about five feet deep, fell, and froze so hard on the top that people walked on it, causing the buffalo to perish of starvation.'" Adding further to the plight of the doomed buffalo was the presence of the vastly more mobile gray wolf. Barce writes of the wolves "tearing at the great buffalo herds floundering in the snows of the year 1790 on the prairies of Indiana and Illinois, almost exterminating them, and left their bones bleaching upon the plains." "Next spring a few buffalo, poor and haggard in appearance, were seen going westward, and

as they approached the carcasses of the dead ones, which were lying here and there upon the prairie, they would stop, commence pawing and lowing, and then start off again in a lope for the west," wrote Barce.

One of the most poignant tales of the hardships experienced by the early settlers of this region during winter on the prairie was set down by Jane Frame Kenoyer. Mrs. Kenoyer had the distinction of being a pioneer in both Iroquois County in Illinois as well as in Newton County. The Frame family came from Ohio to settle in Iroquois County, IL in 1834 when Mrs. Kenoyer was 13 years old. In 1901, at the age of 80, Mrs. Kenoyer wrote a memoir of her pioneer experiences. One portion of her memoir concerned the story of her oldest brother Thomas Frame. After residing on the Frame homestead in Iroquois County for two years, Thomas Frame had been able to put aside enough money through the sale of some cattle to purchase a 40 acre tract of land from the government. The land was sold for \$1.25 per acre. In December 1836 Thomas set out on horseback for the land office in Danville. According to Mrs. Kenoyer, her brother set out on the return trip home the next morning "when he fell in company with a trader named Hildreth, who was also on horseback and on his way to Milwaukee. In conversation Thomas learned that he (Hildreth) was a distant relative and invited him home with him to spend Christmas, to which Hildreth readily consented.

"It had been raining since early morning and the creeks and sloughs they had to cross were very high, consequently their clothing was soon wet through. Sometime along in the afternoon it suddenly commenced to snow and blow a perfect blizzard; it grew intensely cold and with night rapidly coming on, they could no longer keep the trail and were soon lost in the darkness.

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"They were compelled by the cold to dismount, which they soon did, but being unable to make any progress against the awful storm and realizing that they were freezing, they resolved to kill their horses and hoped by cutting them open and putting their hands and feet inside the carcasses, they might keep from freezing.

"They killed my brother's horse by cutting the jugular vein with a knife which one of them carried. They tied the other horse to the dead horse's foot to keep it until necessity compelled them to kill it also, but when they went to kill it, they could not find the knife. They tried to cheer each other as best they could through that awful night, but just before daylight Thomas spoke and said, 'My time has come,' and thus died.

"The sun soon arose clear and bright, but it was terribly cold. Hildreth, by standing on the dead horse was able to see a timber about three miles away, and, although his hands and feet were badly frozen, he managed to untie his horse and get upon him and reach the timber where he saw a house on the opposite side of the creek. He 'hallowed' and a man, a Mr. Busey, came down to the creek. Hildreth told his story, but the man seemed not to believe it.

"Hildreth asked the man to bring a rail and lay it across the channel to help him thus to cross as he was afraid the ice would not bear (his weight), but the man refused and went back to the house. Hildreth got off his horse, crawled over the ice and went up to the house where he found the man and his family at breakfast. Hildreth went to the fire, but as his limbs began to thaw, he was in great pain.

"About this time a neighbor, Isaac Williams, happened to come on an errand. Hildreth told him that this was the house that he and Thomas had hoped to reach the night before. Williams went home, got a sled, put a bed in it and with a neighbor came and took Hildreth to his house and kept him until he got well which he finally did though he was a cripple for life by the loss of fingers and toes.

"Williams sent us a messenger to tell us the sad news. We had to send to the lower settlement for a Mr. Flesher, a blacksmith, to come and show our horses as no horse could travel on the ice without being shod. He came and brought his tools with him. They took the horses into the house and shod them.

"Father and two other men went to Mr. Williams and there found that three men had previously been sent for by Mr. Williams to find my brother. They found him and brought him in. They brought him home, and he was buried on the 40-acre tract that he had entered (purchased). He was the first person buried

in what is now a large cemetery."

It was the extreme winter of 1918 which serves as the jumping off place for the final portion of this examination of winter on the prairie. The winter of early 1918 saw a cold wave strike much of the nation. The harsh weather set in in mid-January and lasted over 20 days into early February. The cold wave produced blizzard conditions which produced "snow blockades" which brought to a halt train traffic which was at that time the primary source for the delivery of coal. Adding to the misery was the fact that this occurred during World War One which saw the diversion of fuel to war industries. The country was observing "heatless Mondays" which saw the cancellation of such unessential activities as club meetings. In addition, due to the scarcity of coal, in Kentland a community effort at chopping wood to provide fuel for those most needy.

The severity of the winter of 1918 prompted old-timers to tell tales of winters past, tales that may in some cases have been embellished a bit by the memories of the story-tellers. In the Feb. 1 edition of the *Brook Reporter* editor Marcus Foresman wrote that Uncle John Foresman visited the *Reporter* office on Wednesday, and the elder Foresman reported that "Some of the people who say they never saw the like of the weather have short memories. In the winter of 1884-85 we had as much snow as this and for weeks most of the roads were blocked most of the time." Every day for a week John Foresman scooped a road to the cattle pen to feed the cattle. He then dug the snow away from the shock fodder and cut it loose from the ground with hoes to feed the animals.

Following the appearance of the Foresman account in the *Brook Reporter*, in the Feb. 1, 1918 the next week's edition of the *Enterprise* carried this tale of the winter of 1867-68: Having noticed Uncle John Foresman's story published in the *Brook Reporter* concerning the cold winter of 1884-85, John G. Davis stopped writing Court records long enough to say, "either Uncle John (Foresman) was too young to remember or else he has forgotten the extreme cold weather we had during the winter of 1867-68. That year, for nearly 40 days (starting) in January the mercury never got higher than zero and most of the time it was so low one was unable to tell how cold it was. The January blizzard that year would make the recent cool spell seem like a May zephyr, and the cold spell of which he speaks, just bracing enough to be comfortable. That blizzard started with a 48-hour sleet storm coming from the northeast, and it was some sleet! Chickens roosting out-of-doors for want of shelter were found frozen still, every one with one toe stuck in his nostril in vain endeavor to (Continued to page 4)

Family History Division News

By Gerald Born

The Family History Division of the Newton County Historical Society was organized to collect and preserve the history of specific families who live or have lived in Newton County. Among its goals is to encourage the recording of family histories and the publication of supporting data, such as cemetery records, Bible records, genealogies and source materials that will be useful in writing family histories. Under the leadership of Gerald Born and Joyce Kay, who is the secretary/treasurer, the division is currently working on compiling the cemetery records of Lake, McClellan, Beaver and Washington townships. Two other publications are also contemplated, one encompassing the townships of Lincoln, Colfax, Jackson and Iroquois, and another which will detail the townships of Grant and Jefferson. Dues are \$3.00 per year and may be paid with the annual dues to the Society.

As an ongoing to out into print the rich heritage of Newton County, one family will be featured in each issue of *The Newcomer*. The current history was supplied by Marjorie (Irvin) Elgas, a member of the Newton County Historical Society. Other members are encouraged to submit their families as well as those who have not yet become members, but who wish their families to be remembered. They will be published as space allows.

Horace Irvin

Horace Stinson Irvin was born near Sedgwick, ME on Nov. 25, 1850. He was one of eight children born to John and Mary Irvin.

In 1866 the family consisting of his mother, stepfather, two half sisters, and one half brother, moved to Manteno, IL. In 1874, while working in the Donovan, IL area, he met and married Amanda Hedge, a teacher in the Iroquois County schools.

Amanda Hedge was born in Hayden, IN May 4, 1850 to Harrison and Elizabeth Hedge. She was one of seven children.

In 1892 the Irvin family moved to a farm two miles west of Morocco where they lived until 1898 when they moved into town where Mr. Irvin operated a harness shop until his death on May 21, 1930. Amanda and Horace Irvin reared four children: Elizabeth Broncheon, Edith Don, Laura Schenberger and Harry

Irvin. They also reared one grandson, Sinclair Irvin.

Harry Irvin

Harry Sinclair Irvin was born in Iroquois County, IL May 3, 1876 to Horace and Amanda Irvin. In 1892 he moved with the family to Morocco and lived there until his death Feb. 2, 1947.

In 1901 he married Ella May Lowe, the daughter of George Ervin "Winnie" Lowe and Alzoa "Allie" Bridgeman. She and twin daughters died at birth in 1904.

In 1912 he married Aurora Hansen. They reared three daughters, Maxine Killmer, Marjorie Elgas, and Mary Leah Griffin.

Aurora Hansen was born Mar. 24, 1898 at Momence, IL, one of ten children born to Hans Peter and Mary (Christenson) Hansen. She died July 14, 1976.

Mr. Irvin served as a mail carrier in the early 1900's and delivered the mail on horseback. In 1923 he was appointed postmaster of the Morocco post office and served for nine years. He also served as justice of the peace and was member of the Morocco Town Board for a number of years. He was a great lover of flowers, and his block on the west side of Morocco was well known and admired for its landscaping.



Julia East recently brought to the Courthouse the scrapbook kept by her mother-in-law, the late Mrs. Paul East. The book contained a wide range of material including items from the turn of the century to 1996. Among the items was a clipping from the Feb. 25, 1904 *Newton County Enterprise* which stated, "Kentland's first motor car arrived Thursday and is the property of Col. J.U. Wildasin. The machine is a Runabout Glide manufactured at Peoria, and cost \$750. It weighs 1,250 pounds and is propelled by a six horsepower gasoline motor." J. U. Wildasin was the father of Pearl East.

MORE ON PRAIRIE WINTERS

(Continued from page 2) dislodge the ice so it could breathe, and all encased in a coating of ice more than an inch thick.

"The wind veered to the west-northwest and then came a real sure genuine blizzard which lasted for nearly a week. Most of the time a 70-mile (per hour) gale heavily laden with fine snow (which) prevailed to the extent that every living thing that could find shelter remained where the shelter was. In some cases where the key had been removed from the door, the houses on the morning of the second day were filled to the ceiling with snow that sifted through the keyhole during the night. (Live)stock in the slough-grass covered stables tramped snow until, when the storm ceased, they were found on top of the stables where the roof had been, and it was a task to ever get them down owing to the drifts surrounding the premises. Much livestock was impaled on the icicles when the thaw came. It was our first winter on the prairie, and would have been our last if my paternal ancestor had been able to get away and take his tribe with him; but crops had been poor, the grasshoppers had eaten up everything but the mortgage on the premises, and that they left, so that thanks to a kind providence that shapes our ends, we had to remain and I'm glad to relate there has never been such a rip roaring blizzard from that day to this. Many of the younger generation may doubt the severity of the above mentioned storm, but if old Bill Jones was alive I could prove it."

EDITOR'S NOTE: A WORD ABOUT OUR SOURCES:

Thanks to the staffs of the Brook and Kentland Public Libraries for their assistance with the microfilmed newspapers.

Elmore Barce was a teacher, newspaper editor, lawyer, historian, orator, novelist, poet and judge from Fowler, IN. His books in addition to those cited include six volumes of Benton County history, a novel about Indian life called *Little Bear*, and *Land of the Miamis*. Many of his books are available in the libraries in Newton County. Elmore Barce was the great-grandfather of this writer.

Jane Frame Kenoyer was born in Senacaville, OH in 1821. She migrated west with her parents Col. James and Mrs. Mary Frame and her seven siblings in 1832, first settling first near Crawfordsville, IN, and

eventually moving on to Iroquois County, IL, locating there near Spring Creek in 1834. In 1843 she married a circuit riding minister of the United Brethren Church, Jacob A. Kenoyer. He was the son of Frederick Kenoyer who was also a circuit rider. The elder Kenoyer built the first church in Newton County, which was located in Washington Township north and east of the present fairgrounds. The elder Kenoyer was also a leading abolitionist speaker in northern Indiana in the pre-Civil War era. In 1901, when she turned 80, Jane Frame Kenoyer wrote her recollections of coming to this area, and they were serialized in four editions of the *Newton County Enterprise* that year. These articles were collected and included in *John J. Yost's Second Helping* (1991).

The village of Foresman was laid out by John B. Foresman on Dec. 1, 1882. It was in that year that the Chicago and Indiana Coal Rail Road was built. The line hauled coal from Brazil, IN to the Chicago area, and Foresman Station was an important stop along that line. John B. Foresman, at the age of one, came to Tippecanoe County with his parents in 1833. He came to Newton County to farm ground he rented there. Eventually his holdings grew to 650 acres in the vicinity of the village, and an additional 200 acres just south of Goodland. He routinely raised between 100 and 200 head of hogs per year and was described in the 1883 county history as "a large and constant shipper" of hogs. The 1883 history further states that "He has perhaps the largest (drainage) tile manufactory in the State, with a capacity for making 6,500 (tiles) per day." He and his wife Minerva had nine children.

John G. Davis was born in Miami County, Ohio in 1854. According to the 1883 county history, he was a student until age 13 when he left school to become a newspaper editor. He moved to Newton County with his parents in 1868. Here he worked in the family farming and tree nursery business. He spent two years on the road as a traveling tree salesman. After farming for two more years, he was appointed Deputy Clerk serving under Andrew Hall and W.W. Gilman. Active in Republican politics, he served two terms as County Clerk (1881-1888) and one term as County Auditor (1921-1924). Davis was married in 1876 to Allie M. Ade, daughter of John and Adeline Ade, and sister to playwright George Ade.

Relatives of County War Dead Sought for Memorial Dedication

Veterans Service Officer John Shafer has asked *The Newcomer* to assist in locating the families of three deceased soldiers from Newton County. Shafer made the request in connection with the upcoming May 1996 dedication of veterans memorials in Indianapolis. The whereabouts of the relatives of these deceased servicemen is requested so that they may receive invitations to the public memorial dedication. The three deceased servicemen are:

—Jack O. Walker, who died on Sept. 30, 1951 of wounds he received in Korea;

—Manley R. Hand, killed in action in Korea on Sept. 23, 1951; and

—Hollis G. Maple who died on Aug. 31, 1969 in Viet Nam.

Anyone having information about the families of these three deceased war heroes, please contact Veterans Service Officer John Shafer at 607 N. Sixth St.; Kentland, IN 47951 (219) 474-6958.

Correspondence



EDITOR'S NOTES:

—To Col. J. W. Williamson of Bradenton, FL- Many thanks for your notes of Oct. 16 and Dec. 5. The item you sent in Oct. is currently buried in the editor's archive. It should surface in time for inclusion in the Spring edition of *The Newcomer*. I apologize for the delay in getting this published. -JAY

—The Historical Society recently received information from the Illiana Genealogical & Historical Society of Danville, IL. The packet includes a flyer about the organization and a list of publications which are available from that group. If you would like more information, contact *The Newcomer* editor or that group directly. Its address is: The Illiana Genealogical & Historical Society, P.O. Box 207, Danville, IL 61834-0207.

—The Society has received an inquiry from William Mason of Renton, WA seeking information concerning his family members who have resided in Newton County. He lists as families to which he is

related as the Russells, the Deardruffs and the Penrods. Among the relatives he cited specifically in Newton County are his great-grandfather James B. Kay and Selina Butler. Mr. Mason's address is 13111 156th Ave. SE; Renton, WA 98050.

—The Editor has recently received two items related to the Goodland community. Calvin Huhn of Rensselaer recently came across a copy of the Jan. 10, 1891 edition of the *Goodland Saturday Herald*. The fragile paper is especially interesting because it contains line drawings of the businessmen of Goodland as well as drawings of several business houses and residences in Goodland. The edition will be on display at the Historical Society's February meeting at the Goodland Public Library in the Mitten Memorial Building.

The other item related to Goodland was a collection of old photographic portraits the subjects of which are believed to be Goodland residents. There are 14 photos in the collection. They are in excellent condition and were all taken by local photographers. The photographers were Charles Hunt, J.H. Sawyer and "Shesler" of Goodland, "Harnish" and "Sharp" of Kentland, and E. Bonebrake of Fowler. There are no identities on the pictures. One of the subjects is deceased. The photos were sent by Dick Skidmore of Hanover, IN who included the following note:
Dear John,

It was nice to make your acquaintance this afternoon, and I have enclosed the old portraits we discussed. You will note that they are in remarkable condition, although the subjects are unidentified.

The following is what little information I can provide in the way of clues as to possible identification. I cannot even come close on a date, although the clothing and the photographer's mark may help in this regard. These images were found in what I believe to be my grandmother's photo album. There were some pictures that had been identified by my now-deceased mother, but these were not. This leads me to believe that these pictures are friends or acquaintances of my grandmother and not relatives. My grandmother was Mary Larsen Bigger Bogan. Mary was born in Goodland on Sept. 18, 1875, the daughter of Stephen and Pauline (Nelson) Larsen. She married Anderson Bigger on Jan. 1, 1901, and that marriage ended in divorce in the 1930s. Two children were born of the marriage, Ethel (my mother) and George. Mary Bigger Bogan died Sept. 15, 1955. My mother spent little time in Newton County, although George farmed almost all his life on 160 acres of land northwest (Continued to page 6)

(Continued from page 5) of Goodland. My grandmother, mother and uncle are all buried in the Goodland Cemetery.

I have fond memories of Goodland and Newton County. As a young boy I spent my summers with my Uncle George and Aunt Vadie Bigger "on the farm." Otherwise I was a city boy in Speedway. Also, I attended Goodland High School as a junior for one semester (1951), and lived with my grandmother in an apartment above Green's "Dime Store" on Newton Street. Living with a not-very-strict grandmother allowed for many good times at the Idle Hour restaurant and pool room, just across the street.

Good luck with the restoration of the Ade Home. How did you get all that money?
s/Dick Skidmore, Hanover, IN.

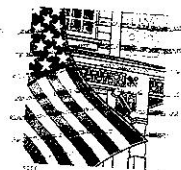
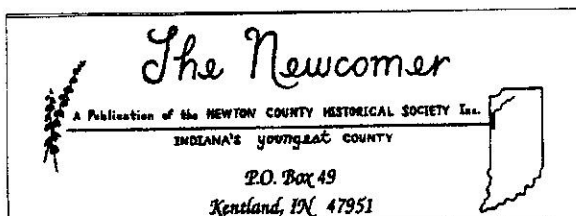
Mr. Skidmore's letter and contribution of the photos underscores an important note that all of us as history enthusiasts must keep in mind. It is very important to identify photographs in your possession. They provide an important link in the heritage of our families. Without identifications, they become merely "pretty pictures." —ed.

The Newcomer

A publication of the Newton County Historical Society, Inc., *The Newcomer* is published quarterly. Articles for submission are encouraged and may be sent to editor John J. Yost, 508 North Third St., Kentland, IN 47951. Articles may be edited or delayed to accommodate space constraints. Composition of *The Newcomer* is undertaken with the cooperation of Bartlett Press.

Membership dues to the Newton County Historical Society are annual from July 1 to June 30 and are structured as follows: Student, \$2.00; Individual, \$5.00; Family, \$8.00; Institutional, \$25.00; Contributing, \$50.00; Individual Life, \$100; Family Life, \$175.00.

Membership includes receiving the quarterly issues of *The Newcomer*. Gift memberships are always welcome. Meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month. Officers of the Newton County Historical Society are President, John J. Yost; Vice President, Sue Humphrey; Secretary, Robert Williamson; and Treasurer, Janet Miller.



TO:

508 North Third St.
Kentland, IN 47951