

Fayette Township

The township of Fayette is one of the oldest organized townships in Vigo county. The name is derived from or an abbreviation of La Fayette, but by whom bestowed is not now known. The township is in the northwest corner of Vigo county, and is bounded on the north by Vermilion county; the Wabash river on the east separates it from Otter Creek township, forming on that side a very irregular boundary. Sugar Creek township is on the south, and the State of Illinois on the west. Fayette township comprises all of T. 13, R. 10 W. of the 2d P. M., and that portion of T. 13, R. 9 W., lying west of the Wabash river, constituting an area of about a full congressional township and a quarter. The township was originally covered with a growth of heavy timber; of course much of this has disappeared during the progress of settlement and cultivation. The soil is mostly clay, well adapted to the growth of wheat and grass. The township is well watered by numerous streams, the principal of which is Coal creek. This creek has its source near the northwest corner of the township, and following a generally southwest course, finds its way into the Wabash in Sec. 28. Coal creek, with its tributaries, drains by far the larger part of the township. Three miles north we find the outlet of Salt creek, which also flows from the northwest. Broulette creek crosses the northeast corner. The small streams in the southern part flow southerly into Sugar creek. The surface of Fayette township is undulating, while along Coal creek it is broken into abrupt bluffs and ridges. These bluffs abound in deposits of coal and iron. Excellent quarries of sandstone also abound. It will thus be seen that this township furnishes many and important elements for the growth of material prosperity, and it has already become one of the best cultivated sections in the county. The natural beauties of the country, especially the scenery along Coal creek, are worthy of observation. The iron deposits alluded to are already attracting attention. The coal existing here is bituminous in character, and of excellent quality, and is found not only at the surface, but in thick layers or strata at a depth of over 200 feet below the surface.

Fayette township has been known as such since about 1821, although it had a political existence under another name (Independence) for some time previous. The first man to pitch a tent or build a cabin within the limits of this township was Jacob Newcomer, who located on a spot just northeast of Sanford, in 1813; he did not, however, purchase land, or indeed attempt a permanent settlement, and after a few years moved away. The first permanent settler was Daniel Barbour, from Jefferson county, New York, who, with his family, settled on Sec. 18, in the latter part of 1817. About the same time Dr. John Durkee settled in the same neighborhood. In 1818 other families came into the township; Elisha Parsons, Col. Baldwin, Mrs. Holmes, Joshua Martin, and perhaps one or two more. All these were from the State of New York. These were the first who bought land, and they were of a class who have made a lasting impression upon the character of the people of this township, than which none stands higher. For several years the population received no accessions to its numbers by immigration, but the township was afterward extensively colonized by Virginians and North Carolinians, principally the former. Prominent among these were the Shirleys, Funkhousers, Hays, and Whitesels, also Frederick Tysers. Afterward his half-brother, Orrin Dowdy, became a prominent citizen of the township. The Barbours were a leading family for forty years. Corey Barbour was probably the first magistrate in the township, or among the first, this distinction being also claimed for Elisha Parsons. Barbour served prior to 1830. One of his decisions has given rise to a somewhat whimsical adage. It is a matter of fact on

record among the archives in Terre Haute that a road was laid out from Terre Haute to Sec. 10, in Fayette township, terminating at a "red-oak tree". Some had fenced in this tree, claiming that it was on the side and not in the center of the line of the road. A lawsuit grew out of the dispute which arose. The saying referred to expresses the idea that when a road is so indefinite as to go *nowhere*, "it goes to a red-oak tree".

Mrs. Dr. Ketchum (née Eliza [Barbour\[pjy1\]](#)) was the first white child born in this township, October 27, 1818. The next was Harriet Parsons, about two months later. The first marriage celebrated was that of Cheesbro Taylor and Catherine Nettleton. The first death was that of Sarah McCollough, who was buried in the first graveyard established in the township, on Sec. 18. The first school-house was of logs, and was erected in 1818, on Sec. 18. John Miles taught the first school in this house, and the first sermon was preached in the same place by Rev. Joseph Curtis. The first post-office in the township was established at Newmarket, a place at one time of considerable importance. E. S. Wolf, postmaster. Here also Wolf kept the second store opened in the township. A castor-oil mill was also at one time in successful operation at this place, operated by Henry Calder.

The first mill erected and operated was a horse-mill built by one Revenaugh, in the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 21, T. 18, R. 10. The first water-mill was the old Clark mill on Coal creek, at the crossing of the Darwin road. A man named Washburn built a mill on Broulette creek more than forty years ago. Mallory's mill was on Coal creek, in the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 14, T. 18, R. 10, now owned by Samuel Whitesel. A horse-mill in the olden time stood on land belonging to J. H. Shank, S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 10, T. 13, R. 10. The first store kept in the township was opened by Henry Clark, on Sec. 7, T. 13, R. 9, who also ran a distillery, the first and only distillery ever in the township.

Dr. John Durkee was the first physician to locate in this township. After him came Dr. Hubbard. They had so few patients, however, that the first-named turned his attention to farming, and the other to chair-making.

A tannery, built by Stevens & Carson, in the northeast part of Sec. 22, is still in operation. One in the south part of Sec. 9, T. 13, R. 10, was built at a still earlier date by James Farnham, and managed by John Farmer. Elisha Parsons built a tannery in 1821 or 1822, on the northeast corner of Sec. 1, T. 13, R. 10. Durkee's ferry, on the Wabash, was established in August, 1818. This franchise was granted to Salmon Lusk and John Durkee. The first ferryman was Col. Baldwin, who afterward became a prominent citizen in Edgar county, Illinois.

Among the early settlers from New York state were Mrs. Warren and her three sons, Chauncey, Levi G., and William B.; also Henry Clark and his brothers, Howell and Uriah. The Ryan and Shuey families were from Virginia. William Bandy and Drummer Davis participated in the defense of Fort Harrison. Davis died about 1850. Bandy was a Virginian, and had served in the eastern department during the war of 1812. Frederick Tyser, already mentioned, fought at the battle of New Orleans. He was from North Carolina. All these were men of strongly marked characters. All acquired a competency, and lived to a good old age.

The southeast part of the township is, generally, settled by Irish farmers, who are a sober and industrious class, and generally well-to-do. Prominent among them are the McCaffreys, Butlers, and Wards, who are wealthy, and command the respect and

confidence of all who know them. Among the old settlers must be mentioned Peter Mallory. He settled here in 1818. He was one of Gen. Harrison's soldiers, and participated in the active scenes of that interesting period. No one knew anything of his history beyond the fact that he came to Vincennes in 1806.

Dr. B. W. Swafford came to New Goshen in 1850. He commenced the practice of medicine there in 1855. The doctor is well and favorably known throughout this entire region, and has, doubtless, borne his full share in developing the resources and moulding the character of the population. He is a native of North Carolina.

The annals of Fayette township seem to be remarkable free from the tragic events that so frequently are found in the records of other townships organized at a more recent date. But one murder was ever committed within its present limits, and it is said that but one drunkard was ever known to have lived here.

Broulette creek is so named for a Frenchman who traded with and lived among the Indians in the "early time". Broulette once was obliged to "run the gauntlet", after the Indian fashion. These Indians had a village on the south side of the creek and the event took place on Barbour's prairie near the banks of the Wabash.

About two miles above the mouth of Coal creek is a singular elevation called "Clark's mound". This mound is about twenty-five feet high and one hundred yards long by thirty wide. From the fact that burnt clay is found around its base, and that the ground seems to have been scooped out on the north side of it, the opinion is entertained that the mound is of artificial formation.

The first graveyard was located on Sec. 18, and known as Barbour's graveyard. There are others in the township; Rosehill cemetery, on Sec. 22, is the largest; Shephard's graveyard is on Sec. 4, T. 13, R. 9; that of the United Brethren is on the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 6, T. 13, R. 9; one is on Carson's land, Sec. 22, T. 13, R. 10; and still another on the S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 36, T. 13, R. 10.

The township is at present divided into eleven school districts, in each of which is a good frame building. Much attention has been given to the subject of popular education, and the constant aim of the people has been to have the best. The superior character of the people of this township may be clearly inferred from the truly remarkable fact that no saloon or whisky shop has been able to maintain itself since 1856. This result has not been accomplished through any legislative action, by means of the great law of public opinion. No patronage is given to any one who sells intoxicating drink, either alone or in connection with the sale of general merchandise. The simple process of letting alone has thus effected what Maine liquor laws and prohibitory enactments fail to secure.

Fayette township is dotted with churches, principally of the Christian and United Brethren denominations. The first church, however, was organized on a log house, by the Predestinarian Baptists. It has long ceased to exist. The Christian church at West Liberty was organized about the year 1856. Trinity Methodist Episcopal church, on Sec. 5, T. 13, R. 9, was organized about 1870. The first house was burned, but the society have rebuilt. The United Brethren church at New Goshen was built in 1858. The Maple Grove Christian church at the same place was erected in 1871. The United Brethren society at Rose Hill erected their first house about 1848. They have, however, rebuilt on a larger

scale. The Methodist Episcopal church at Sanford was first established about 1860. Their house was afterward burned and then rebuilt.

The only incorporated village in the township is Sanford, a station on the Indianapolis & St. Louis railroad, and situated on Sec. 28, on the state line between Indiana and Illinois; in fact, a portion of the village is in Illinois. This place contains a thriving population of about 200. It contains two churches. The first Masonic lodge established at this place was the Sanford Lodge, No. 330, organized in the latter part of 1865, with a membership of seven persons. The first officers were: A. P. Davis, master; B. F. Swafford, senior warden; L. S. Calder, junior warden.

New Goshen, a hamlet of about seventy people, is situated about one mile north of the center of the township. It contains one Masonic and one Odd-Fellows lodge. It is surrounded by wealthy farmers, and it constitutes a center of social and political influence, giving character and tone to the entire township. The settlers in this section are nearly all from Virginia.

Libertyville is situated near the northwest corner of the township, and is a mere postal station.

Tecumseh is shown on the map as situated on the Wabash. Considerable business was formerly done here, Durkee's ferry being located at this point.

It is certainly to the credit of the people of Fayette township, and a strong endorsement of the patriotic impulses that moved them, to state that out of a voting population of about 450, 183 three years' men were sent into the field. Three of these only were commissioned officers: Benson Rippetoe, captain; A. J. Thompson, lieutenant; and B. W. Swafford, surgeon. A full statement of the war record of this township will doubtless be given in the general county history. The present population of the township is estimated at about 2,500. There are two voting precincts, one at New Goshen and the other at Vermilion school-house, in the south part of the township.

" [pjy1] Other versions give the name as "Mary". The writer has given it as above on the authority of Dr. B. F. Swafford, to whom he is indebted for the leading facts in this sketch.

Source:

History of Parke and Vigo Counties

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by H.W.Beckwith

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