

Prairieton Township

This is a fractional township, on account of its location on the river, which runs diagonally across the sections from northeast to southwest. The land is very rich, being mostly prairie and bottom, and peculiarly adapted to corn, especially across the river. The southeast part of the township is somewhat rolling and is more or less sandy, yet the whole township is one of the richest and most productive in the county. The land lying in Secs. 2, 3, 4, 34, 35, 36, 25, 26, 27, 28, 24, 14 and 13 is almost proof against drouth or wet seasons, as it is composed of a sandy loam which expels the surplus moisture and retains a sufficient quantity to mature crops. The low bottom land along the river is subject to overflow whenever the Wabash rises to full banks; although the bottom land lying in Secs. 1, 4, 5 and 6 is protected by the big levee, and when there is no overflow of the river-bottoms the corn crop is very large, sometimes yielding as high as seventy-five to eighty bushels bushels per acre. The wheat crop, and others usually, is generally good. There is only one stream of importance besides the Wabash, Honey creek, which derives its name from the fact of there being a great many wild bees found along its banks at an early day. There are several anecdotes related about the naming of this stream. One is as follows: A hunter was out hunting on the banks of this stream, and after tramping for some time became weary and lay down to rest himself, and after awhile began to look about him as he lay down on his back, when he discovered seven bee trees before he got up. Another story, probably the correct one, is told by Mr. Wm. R. Bentley, son of old Elisha Bentley, one of the first settlers, who relates that his father, Elisha Bentley, was one of the scouts of Gen. Wm. Henry Harrison's army, and as he was on his way to the Black Hawk war he and several others left the camp (Gen. Harrison had encamped for the night on the banks of this stream), contrary to orders, for a hunt, and finding a bee tree proceeded to fell it, and as it fell it went into the stream and broke open, scattering the honey out into the stream, which floated away on the water, on seeing which the party named it Honey creek. The stream enters the township in the southeast corner of Sec. 18, T. 11, R. 10 W., running nearly south for half a mile, thence southwest across Secs. 24, 26, 34 and 33, emptying into the Wabash in the south part of Sec. 33, T. 10 N., R. 10 W. There is an old bed of the stream which leaves the creek in the west part of Sec. 24, running west into Sec. 23, thence south to the south line of the section, thence west and northwest to the Wabash in Sec. 22, leaving about 2,000 acres that forms an island in high water, as the water from the Wabash sets up the old bed to the main stream and thence down that stream to the mouth of the creek. The township is bounded on the north and west by the Wabash river, on the east by Honey Creek township, and on the south by Prairie Creek township.

Among the first settlers that came to this township may be mentioned David M. Jones, James Wilson, Moses Hoggatt, Enoch Harlan, old Jeremiah Hayworth, Ezra Jones and some others who came as early as 1816, or before. David M. Jones settled on the farm now owned by Harvey E. Bentley. He was a rough pioneer, but a man of some influence; he was sent to the legislature from Vigo county. James Wilson lived about half a mile from the residence of James Ferguson. Moses Hoggatt entered a section of land where the town of Prairieton is built; he divided his land among his children at his death. Enoch Harlan came to the township in 1816, and settled on Sec. 1, in the southeast part of the township, where he still resides. He is one of the oldest men in the township, being nearly eighty years old. Old Jeremiah Hayworth settled in Sec. 36, one mile south of the town of Prairieton, and lived in a log cabin, part of which is now standing. He was a great hunter;

he and old Enoch Harlan were cronies, and spent much of their time hunting and trapping, in which pursuit they were very successful. Enoch has now the first clock which was brought to Prairieton township, an old full-length wooden one. They Hayworth's are quite numerous in the township. Ezra Jones and William Winters came about the same time, in 1816, and Mr. Jones entered eighty acres of the farm that Dr. J.W. Ogle now owns; also William Winters entered a large tract of land, including the J.W. Ogle farm, but not being able to pay for it turned it over to the settlers. Old Jeremiah Raymond entered a large tract of bottom land in the southern part of the township, but has been dead many years, and the land has been bought up by a number of men and is divided into small farms. James Strain was here at an early day and lived on the bottom land of Sec. 6. His son, John Strain, was a captain of the militia, and the settlers used to meet at their general muster to train, and the barnyard and part of Dr. Ogle's farm used to be the old muster ground. Capt. Strain, when in the United States service as a common soldier, was sentenced to be shot for sleeping while on duty, and it is stated of him that he had been brought out for the purpose and was seated on his coffin, when a reprieve came from the commander-in-chief just in time to save his life.

There was a large increase of the population in 1817 and 1818. Among those who came in about that time was Thomas Ferguson and family, who settled on Sec. 2; Otis Jones, at Greenfield Bayou; Elisha Bentley, on Sec. 34; Geo. Southard, John Thompson, Sanford Hayworth, the Montgomery's, Joseph Benight, Joseph Thayer, John Cox, a blacksmith, James Lee and family, the Paddock's, old Moses Reynolds and brothers David and Robert, Amos P. Balch, Gen. Henry French, Henry T. Irish, Ralph White and others. John Campbell had a child stolen by the Indians, who was not recovered, although his father spent a large part of his means and years of time searching for him.

Mr. Alford Hale, a son of Bradford Hale, now occupies the farm formerly owned by his father. He can recollect when he had to go to Terre Haute to vote, and the parties each set out a barrel of whiskey, one labeled Democrat the other Whig, and as a man voted so he was entitled to a drink. He cast his first vote for Gen. Jackson. The township of Prairieton at first was attached to Sugar Creek township, and settlers had to cross the Wabash river to vote. Afterward it was cut off from Sugar Creek and joined to Honey Creek township, then it was set off by itself, and a strip of land across the north end of Prairie Creek township, one mile wide, was cut off from that township and joined to Prairieton, which shape it retains at present.

The village of Prairieton was for a long time called Hoggatt's store. It was platted and laid out in 1836 by Robert Hoggatt. There was an effort made on the part of the citizens of the township to have it laid out in a rectangular form, but Mr. Hoggatt persisted in his plan, and, as he owned all the land that lay within the plat of town save what had been sold as village lots, he succeeded in establishing the plat of the town in the irregular form that it now assumes. The town was incorporated in 1870. Among the first to do business here was Moses Hoggatt, his son Robert Hoggatt, B. Ogle, Marks, Harrison Bryant and John Bell. J.A. Foote, who is now in business in Terre Haute, kept one of the best stores that was ever in the town. Ewing Isbell kept a stock of groceries.

There has never been a licensed saloon in the place, and there is now no place where liquor is retailed by the glass. The population of the village of Prairieton is about 250, and of the township, 1,021. There is but one colored person in the township, Mrs. Eliza T. DAVIS, who is very old.

There is a fine graded school at Prairieton. The school-house was built in 1870, and is 42x54 feet and three stories high. Two stories are devoted to the school, and the third story was built by the A.F. and A.M., and is used as a hall by that order. The cost of the building was \$4,184.80. The school attendance is about 100. There are three grades. Mr. Chas. W. Finney took charge of the school as principal in 1871, and retained the position until the fall of 1879, when Mr. J.A. Boyer, of Terre Haute, assumed the office as principal, which position he continues to hold.

The first school in the township was taught by Duncan Darow, in a house built about 1820 in the north part of the town. Soon after other schools were started in private houses, one on the bottoms in the south part of the township, one at Greenfield Bayou, taught by Mr. Joseph Thayer. A log school-house was built near where the New Harmony church now stands; afterward it was removed and a brick school-house was built in its place. Both are gone now, the brick one having been taken down many years ago. There are now five districts in the township. The costs of the school-houses ranges from \$500 to \$4,184.80.

The township officers before the year 1859 consisted of three trustees, a clerk, justice of the peace and constable. The first trustees of which there is any record were Moses Reynolds and Wm. R. Bentley. Jacob Shirley was first clerk, and the first justice of the peace was either Ashley Harris or Archibald Davidson, for both filled that office at a very early day.

The first church of the denomination of United Brethren was first organized in the southeast part of the township, in what was known as the Brush school-house, somewhere about the year 1857. The first preacher was the Rev. Mr. Hedge. James Paige now has charge of this church and the circuit. They have no church building, and hold their meetings in the school-house, but are making preparation to build. The church has a membership of about sixty. Another church of this denomination was organized in the village of Prairieton, in the fall of 1865, by A.J. Nugent, pastor, Jeremiah Hayworth and his wife, Elizabeth Hayworth, Sarah St. John, W.D. Malone, and Lydia Shirley. The building they now occupy was built by the Methodist church about 1838 or 1840. It was sold to the United Brethren church in 1866. The first membership was small, but it increased rapidly until it numbered some 150. Of late years there has been some falling off of members for various causes.

The first church building that was built in the township of Prairieton was by the Methodists, in 1838 or 1840. It was afterward sold to the United Brethren church somewhere about 1866. They then bought a church that had been built by the Presbyterians in 1860, but was not finished. The Methodists finished it, and it was dedicated April 29, 1866. The first pastor was the Rev. G.W. Bower. W.E. Davis is now on the circuit.

The council to organize the New Harmony Baptist church was called to meet January 21, 1852. It was called from the churches of Terre Haute, Salem, Mt. Zion, Union, Friendly Grove, and Fairbanks. Elder Asa Frakes was elected moderator, and John E. Bell clerk. Letters from eight brethren and sisters were presented: James H. Cowan and wife, Nancy Johnson, Andrew and Gracia Ann McPheron, Joseph McDonald, Thomas McPheron and wife. From that, its organization, the church grew rapidly, until it reached a membership of 135. There has also been a Sunday-school connected with until within a year past. Of late years the membership of the church has fallen off, until the present attendance is only from twenty to twenty-five, and they have no pastor or regular stated meetings. The

church building is about 30x40 feet in size. It was built in the year 1858, and dedicated in the fall of 1859, and cost about \$300.

The Society of Friends (or Quakers) was probably the first church organized in the township, as some of the first settlers that came to this and adjoining township were members of that society, among whom were the Hoggatts, the Reynolds, the Durhams, the Coxes, the Jones, the Noblets, and others. The first meetings were held in 1818 or 1819, in a log house in the north part of the town of Prairieton, which was built for a winter school. A log church was afterward built in 1820, on the township line between Honey Creek and Prairieton townships. There was a split in the church about 1830, some calling themselves the orthodox, and the others styled themselves Quakers or Society of Friends. They were called heretics and were disowned by the orthodox party. In consequence of these dissensions the society has diminished in number; the children of the members have married out of the church, and in consequence have been read out of the society, so that now no meetings are held, and the church as a church has ceased to exist. The church building was destroyed a long time ago, and they have now no church.

Lodge No. 178, A.F. and A.M., was organized in Prairieton, in 1871. The first officers were: Henry Fortune, W.M.; M.S. Gunn, S.W.; James Myers, J.W.; S.S. Henderson, treasurer; G.W. Finney, secretary; Thomas Robertson, S.D.; G.W. Kruzan, J.D.; B.F. Flesher, Steward; J.B. Walker, Tiler. The charter was granted May 29, 1872. The membership at first consisted of only the officers, but the order has grown steadily, and although there have been some deaths and dimits?, as well as some removals, the membership now numbers forty-six. They built a third story to the high school building in Prairieton, which they use as their hall. The present officers are: S.S. Henderson, W.M.; J.M. Hunt, S.W.; F.M. Matherly, J.W.; Geo. C. Olem, treasurer; O.M. Curry, secretary; J.W. Reynolds, S.D.; T.D. Simmons, J.D.; E.E. Glover and J.M. Risley, stewards; John DeBaun, tiler; L.E. Carson, chaplain. The order is in a flourishing condition, and is one of the permanent institutions of the township.

The date of the first charter of Prairieton Lodge, No. 16, A.O.U.W., was June 17, 1876. Afterward another charter was granted of the date of November 14, 1876. The names of charter members are: Joseph Reynolds, P.W.M.; Sturgis Yeley, M.W.; C.D. McPherson, G.F.; Geo. F. Neff, O.; Jacob Woods, recorder; Lewis Hahn, financier; John Manhart, receiver; Wm. Wigginton, G.; Levi Dawson, I.W.; W.P. Kramer, O.W.; and Ferdinand Volkers. The lodge was organized by G.W. Hill, G.M.W., and John T. Francis, grand recorder. The membership has been as high as thirty, but at present it is but ten. The present officers are: G.W. Kruzan, M.W.; J.W. Reynolds, P.M.W.; T.D. Simmons, recorder; J.T. Reynolds, receiver; Ferdinand Volkers, financier; O.M. Curry, G.F.; Alfred Kruzan, O.

History of Parke and Vigo Counties
1880
by H.W. Beckwith