

Riley Township

Riley township is situated on the eastern side of the county, its boundaries being Lost Creek township on the north, Clay county on the east, Pierson township on the south, and Honey Creek township on the west. It contains thirty-six sections of magnificent land, fenced off into large and carefully cultivated farms, and is thickly dotted with handsome residences and commodious farm buildings, while numerous droves of cattle, sheep and hogs roam in rich pastures, the whole forming a picture of taste and wealth unexcelled in the county. The township is well watered by the stream known as Little Honey creek, and its tributaries which flow in a southwesterly direction through it; it consists of equal portions of timber and prairie land, though little is now left of the former but small groves, which have been retained for fencing and firewood.

The earliest settlers located in the timber and upon the highest land, avoiding the prairie on account of its marshy nature and consequent unhealthiness, in fact at that time it was not considered possible that it ever could be settled upon as farming land. The only way in which it could be utilized in their mind was as pasture land. The first settlement within the boundaries of this township were made near the southern line in 1818, when Samuel John and William Ray arrived with their families, being accompanied by John Pierce, Caleb Trueblood, and William Harris. At this time the Indians were still in possession of the country. On arriving here the Ray family erected a kind of stockade to guard against surprise by their aboriginal neighbors until they got their cabin erected, and slept with their rifles at the head of their beds. On one occasion grandfather Ray got up in the night to look after the horses which were making some noise, and on returning stumbled, and woke his son William, who, thinking that the Indians were entering the camp, jumped out of bed, seized his rifle and demanded who was there. The old gentleman being somewhat flurried with his fall did not make immediate reply, and William was in the act of pressing the trigger, when the thought flashed upon him that it might be his father or brothers; so he hailed again, when to his horror he found that he had been within an ace of killing his father. The Indians, however, did them no harm beyond frightening them, yet all were well pleased when they moved away, the women folks particularly being glad of the exodus, as they lived in dread of some of the children being carried off, two little boys having been kidnapped from the Prairieton neighborhood some time before.

Soon after 181 Deacon Jackson and family arrived, accompanied by his son John and his family. The next to settle were Samuel and James Thompson, who arrived in 1822, and were shortly followed by Thomas Green, Isaac Pierce, John Harkness and Ferrill. At a later period arrived the members of the settlement east of where Lockport now stands, among whom were Davis S and Nathaniel Lee, John Reece, George Armstrong, Davis Toby, Reason T Mattox, David Holston, and George and William Brill.

The settlers in the northern division began to immigrate about 1830, among the earliest being John Rector, Stephen Hawley, John McGriff, Thomas and Benjamin Mewhinney, Joshua and Elisha Wyeth, Martin Bratt and Phillips, the majority of them ahiling from Ohio and eastern Indiana. The first deaths which occurred in the township were those of John Ray (uncle to Mr John Ray, at present residing here) and his son Elias. They had gone to a neighbor's two or three miles off to grind their axes and grubbing-hoes. The day being cloudy and threatening storm, they did not notice that it was so late until darkness settled upon them before they had got far on their way home. The storm of snow and sleet which had been hovering around all day broke at last, and the driving snow blinded

them so that they lost their way and wandered aimlessly around until exhausted, when the terrible cold finished the work. Next day they were discovered frozen to death by their sorrowing relatives and friends. We are unable to give the date of the occurrence, as our informant, Mr Ray, was very young at the time it took place. It was, however, shortly after their arrival here.

Many were the vicissitudes, dangers and privations experienced by those pioneers, often without bread, in fact biscuit or flour bread were rarely seen, while coffee and tea were the rarest luxuries, only indulged in on great occasions, and were articles to dream or talk about. Owing to the distance to mill, and the lack of roads, even cornmeal was a rarity, the greater portion of the time their bread was made from corn which had been pounded in a mortar. The great difficulty was in getting sieves; the best substitute they had being a piece of deer skin, with the hair off, stretched upon a hoop, and punched full of little holes with a hot wire. The finer particles which passed through this were used for baking purposes, while the larger were boiled and eaten like rice. After a year or two they obtained a small grinder which was operated by hand. This was an improvement on the mortar, but at the best was a slow process. The most of the early settlers here being religious men, would not grind on Sunday, so Saturday used to be a day of hard work, and the little grinder was kept in constant operation from "early morn to dewy eve" to get enough of meal to last till Monday. At that time the nearest mill was twenty-five miles off, and no roads but bridle paths to reach them. The nearest trading point was Terre Haute, at that time in its infancy, and giving no promise that it would ever attain to its present greatness, only consisting of a few log cabins and a log gaol.

The first children born in the township were John Pierce, William McCaw and William Ray, while the first weddings were those of Richard Brock to Ann Maynard, and Felix Evans to Elizabeth Perkins, which occurred about 1822, the ceremony being performed by William, father of Mr John Ray, who was the first justice of the peace in the township.

The educational interests of the rising generation were early looked to and provided for by the pioneers, by erecting log school-houses in which the rudiments of knowledge might be imparted. The first of those halls of learning was erected on Sec. 19, shortly after the arrival of the first settlers, and here the young Rays and their youthful companions were marshaled under John Dickie, to whom belongs the honor of being the first teacher in this township.

In the northern settlement, which was later in being peopled, we find the first school-house to have been constructed in 1834. It, like all the other public buildings of that date, was a log structure, in size 16 x 16 feet, primitive in style and furniture, and was situated on the Clay county line, the sessions held therein being presided over by Eleven Woolan and George Rector, who taught the first and second terms respectively. The second school building in the neighborhood was a hewed log one erected in 1840, one and a half miles west of the Mewhinney place.

The mills to which the citizens of this neighborhood had access were Rolla's mill on Eel river, which was simply a corn-cracker, the journey to which had to be generally performed in the night to avoid the countless swarms of green-head horse-flies which infested the long prairie grass through which they had to pass. Another mill which they patronized was Markle's, on Otter creek, and sometimes they were compelled to take their grists to Roseville and to Racoon, the latter journey occupying two days and two nights.

RELIGIOUS

The forefathers of the people of Riley were religious men in every respect, and held Christianity as the great civilizing power, without a recognition of which the country would not be fit to live in. Consequently, we find that on their arrival here they began holding services of public worship, such as they had been taught and trained up in in the part of the country from which they had emigrated. They early secured the services of the pioneer preachers, those grand old characters whom nothing daunted while in pursuit of their mission, and to whose teaching and labors must be attributed the present high state of religion and morale in this community. The first of those gospel messengers to arrive here was Brother Hamilton, who was shortly followed by Joseph Baker. The former preached the first sermon in the township, and constituted a society of Methodists, numbering six persons, shortly after the advent of the pioneers, 1820. The services were held in the houses of the settlers, in the school-houses, and in the open air, the first meeting-house of this congregation not being built until 1857. In that year they erected Hamilton chapel, in size 36 x 46 feet, at a cost of \$1,500, it being named after the organizer of the congregation. The first trustees of the church were John Ray, Joseph Johnson, Samuel Robinson, Caleb Jackson and John Cumming. Those now in charge are David Joslin, Solomon Franklin and John Ray. The chapel was dedicated by Rev. William Dailey, and under his care and that of other preachers who have been in charge at this point the society has grown and flourished. The present membership is sixty, now under the care of pastor William Davis, with Solomon Franklin as class leader.

The first meeting-house erected in the northern settlement was a log building situated on Sec. 1, which was put up by the Methodist society organized at this point at an early period under the preaching Elijah Long, who constituted several other societies in the county. In 1872 the society, which now numbers over one hundred members, erected a handsome brick church, costing between \$5,000 and \$6,000, and being the finest church building in Bloomington conference outside of Terre Haute. It is known as Plymouth chapel, and has a live Sunday-school in connection with the meeting, with an average attendance of thirty. Henry Lawson, superintendent; Etna Lawrence, class leader.

Another Methodist church is located in the township on Sec. 4. This is known as Christie's chapel, the congregation having been organized about the same time as Plymouth chapel, and by the same preacher, Elijah Long. In 1862 they erected a frame meeting-house 24 x 36 feet, in which they worshiped until 1873, when, finding it too small to accommodate the large congregations which assembled there, it was sold and the present one erected. The one now in use is 36 x 42 feet, cost about \$2,000, and was dedicated by Rev. Mr. McCormick. The congregation, which has lately fallen off in number, is now in charge of Rev. Ashberry.

On Sec. 33 is Liberty Christian church (Disciples), which was organized about 1840, south of Lockport, but, not doing well, the place of meeting was moved four or five miles south, and in 1864 it was again changed, when the building, 36 x 46 feet, which is now in use, was erected on Sec. 33. It cost about \$1,000 in money, and a great deal of labor and material was donated. Among the early preachers who taught here were Job Coleman, Joseph Wilson, father of present preacher, Andrew Ward, and Robert Allen, and here also came the venerable Benjamin Franklin, one of the great pioneers of the modern reformation, and held meeting for some time. The present elders are Mr Wilson and Warren Neet. A live Sunday-school which is conducted by the brethren here is

doing a good work.

About a mile east of Lockport is Simpson's chapel, a Methodist meeting-house, the congregation of which was organized about the same time as the other societies of this denomination in the township. The house was erected about 1840. The Rev Mr Ashberry is the present preacher.

On Sec. 1, beautifully situated on the SE corner of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$, on rising ground, is the Mewhinney cemetery, deriving its name from the original owner of the land. It contains one acre of land neatly fenced and tastefully laid out, and bearing evidence of careful attention being bestowed upon this, the resting place of the loved ones. Numerous beautiful and expensive monuments are here situated, tokens of love and respect to the characters of departed friends and relatives.

Oakhill cemetery, situated on the SW corner of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 14, comprises three acres of land, and is the most beautiful cemetery in the county with the exception of those of Terre Haute. It was laid out July 20, 1871, by the late Dr H D Lee, of Lockport, the original trustees being P H Lee, Fred Lee and T H Hartley. The first mentioned having died, William H Connelly was chosen to fill the vacancy. To effect an interest in the cemetery the trustees drafted articles of association by which it might be governed and its rules carried out according to the statutes of Indiana. The grounds are under the care of J B Richy, who takes great interest and pride in having them in good order, and to him must be ascribed the orderly and tasteful appearance of the grounds. There are 404 lots in the yard, of which 186 have been sold, and since the date of opening 214 interments have taken place. The large number of expensive monuments and tablets which mark the graves add greatly to the appearance and beauty of the cemetery.

The construction of the Wabash and Erie canal through the township helped to develop its resources greatly and opened up a direct communication with the eastern markets for the products of the farms. On the close of this commercial highway business languished, but was again revived on the construction of the Terre Haute & Worthington railroad through the township.

LOCKPORT

Lockport, the only village in the township, was laid out and settled during the construction of the Wabash and Erie canal, on which it was located. The land on which the town stands was originally owned by Nathaniel Donham. The first stores were opened by Manning, J W Penn and Samuel Dodson, the former dealing in groceries and whisky and the others in general merchandise. During 1847-48-49 and '50 an enormous business was carried on at this point, and in fact up to the close of the canal this was considered one of the best trading points. Business was quiet for a year or two until the Terre Haute & Worthington railroad opened a station here, and the town is again making rapid strides forward. The business now in operation here are three general stores, a drug and shoe store, two saloons, two blacksmith shops, a saw-mill, and the Tryon Hotel. The town has suffered greatly in her business interests from fire, three mills and a tannery having fallen a prey to the destroying element. In 1865 a large flouring-mill was erected by Fred Rotman and run by him until his death. The mill was then sold to Henry Brand, who controlled it until 1875; when he disposed of it to Whitten and Toby, and threem onths after the change of proprietors it took fire and burnt down. There had been \$3,500 insurance on the building, but payment was refused on account of the policy not having

been changed to the new firm. The matter is still before the courts. The tannery of Mr Nattkamper was burnt down in June 1878, and shortly afterward rebuilt, when he run it six months and then changed it into a grist-mill. As a mill it was in operation until June 1880, when it caught fire and was entirely consumed. The Cook and Abbott flouring-mill was erected at a cost of \$7,000, in the fall of 1879, and was only in operation a short time when, in April 1880, it, too, caught fire and was a thing of the past. The town is now left without any manufacturing interests, and is dependent on the grain trade as its attraction. Three grain merchants purchase and ship the produce of the farms, and have made this quite a noted market, in which large quantities of all kinds of grain and stock are handled annually.

There is but one church in town; the Lockport Christian church (Disciples), which was built in 1879, and the congregation organized the same year. The building is a very handsome frame edifice, 36 x 48 feet, and cost \$1,500. It is tastefully fitted up and comfortably seated with chairs. The trustees are Jerry Tryon, N Rumley, I E Woodruff and William Crossley. The preacher under whom the congregation was organized was Elder A Elmore. Its membership is now over 125, is in good working condition, and alive to the interests of the cause it represents. The present preacher is Mr Laudermilk.

The I.O.O.F. have a lodge in this town known as Lockport Lodge, No. 500. It was instituted August 14, 1875, and received a charter from the Grand Lodge of Indiana, November 18, 1876. The first officers and members were: N G, John Hathorn; V G, E A Foulke; secretary, J B Wallace; permanent secretary, G J Smith; treasurer, John Fox; H W Smith, H D Milus, Samuel Hathorn, J P Fowler, G R Shultz, John Schumacher, Fred Nattkemper, George Hathorn, and J W Rumley. During its existence the society has initiated seventy-five members, some of whom have moved away, some dropped, some expelled and one died, leaving the lodge with a present membership of forty-five. It is in splendid working order and great interest is manifested in the objects of the society by all the members. It has done a great deal of good among the resident and sojourning brethren in relieving cases of distress among them, every member acting manfully up to his obligation in this matter. This is one of the finest lodges in the county, and under its present efficient officers is still progressing. The officers are: N G, Paul Romas; V G, Elijah Staggs; secretary, J P Fowler; treasurer, H W Smith.

Riley Lodge, No. 390, A. F. and A. M., which meets at Lockport, was granted a dispensation in June, 1868, a charter being issued by the Grand Lodge of Indiana May 25, 1869. The charter members are: J M Sankey, S J W Forster, S Hedges, J A Gibson, S K Bundy, J M Hull, I Lake, Benjamin Deal, W A Connelly, William Curry, G W Hickson, W H Pearcey, and T C Wilson. The first officers of the society were: W M, J M Sankey, S W, S J W Forster; and J W, Simeon Hedges. In the few years which have elapsed since the granting of the dispensation the society has made a rapid growth, having now a membership of 112. Its financial affairs are in a prosperous condition, peace and harmony prevailing among the craftsmen at this point. The lodge owns and has full control of the third story in the handsome brick school building in which their lodge and anterooms are situated. W P Foulke is the present presiding officer.

This township has nine school districts with eleven school-houses, all of which except one have been erected by the present trustee. The handsome school building situated at Lockport, in the center of the township, is a substantial three-story brick structure, which was erected at a cost of \$9,000, the township paying five-eighths, and Riley Lodge, AF and AM, the remaining three-eighths, of the expenses. The institution was planned and

carried to a successful termination through the enterprise and energy of Dr O W Russell, then, as now, trustee of the township. The third story is owned and controlled by the Masonic fraternity, the first and second stories being the property of the township, and are divided into three grades for school purposes. The contractors were Mesars, Teaney & Wilson, of Terre Haute. About eight months per annum is the length of the school year, in which the wages vary for \$2 to \$3 per day.

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by H.W.Beckwith

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