

# HISTORY OF MITCHELL COUNTY, IOWA

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# THE BOHEMIAN COLONY

T13

In the summer of 1854 the Madera, Bohach, Bednar, and Cerney families left Bohemia for the United States. It cost \$50 per person for transportation. All except the Cerney family left from Bremenhaven on a French ship, reaching New York in 58 days, in a sailing vessel. Lack of proper food and water caused many to become ill. They did take dried bread, prunes, noodles, saffron, and butter with them. This prevented a critical food shortage. After two days of rest they started for Watertown, Wisconsin, by boat, train and team.

The Cerney family sailed from Bremenhaven on a German ship and were three months at sea. They came to Cuba, thence to New Orleans, up the Mississippi River to Cairo, Illinois, then by train to Watertown, Wisconsin.

John Peshak left Wisconsin in 1861. He bought a farm 3½ miles northeast of St. Ansgar. He was a man of great ability. He was interested in public education, and it was mainly through his efforts that Spring Valley No. 4 had the reputation as the best school in the township.

In 1868 the Madera's (Peshak relatives) came to the county. The Bohachs and Bednars also came. The first winter they lived in a sod house on beans and wild meat.

In 1865 Frank W. Krulish immigrated to America. They stayed in New York City four years, making cigars to earn enough money to start farming in Iowa. When they came to St. Ansgar, they brought five of their children: Anna (Mrs. Anton Suchy), Mary (Mrs. Joseph Specht), Frank, Louis, and Barbara (Mrs. Joseph Peterman). Joseph, the oldest, remained in New York City. They came by train to Adams, Minnesota, and someone met them with a wagon. They bought a farm three miles east of St. Ansgar.

Frank Zemanek of New York City bought land from John Peshak, sight unseen. He came out by train in 1868 to Adams, Minnesota, and was met by Joe Madera with a wagon. He stayed in the Madera home until he had built a sod house. He then sent for his wife and three daughters, mother-in-law, and brother-in-law Joseph Jedlicka.

Later the following joined the community: Anton Libersky, V.F. Zemanek, Anton Kumbertz, Sedlacek's, Joseph Varous, Wirths', Anton and John Suchy, Joseph Peterman, Barzl's, Eukel's and Pete Turek.

John Vacha settled in St. Ansgar, where he operated a harness shop. His daughter Francis taught in the St. Ansgar school system many years.

In 1902 a few Bohemians decided they should have a place where they could meet, have dances, put on home talent shows and enjoy picnics. Some farmers took time out of their busy schedules and erected a building. This was later known as the Bohemian Hall. It was located east of St. Ansgar between the Frank Krulish and Joseph Varous farms, now the Lloyd Fox and Marck's farms. It stood there until Highway 218 was built to St. Ansgar. It was then moved a little south to the northwest corner of the Anton Suchy farm.

Wedding receptions were given, home

talent plays were put on by different groups, and dances were held over the years. Some orchestras were the Kelley Brothers, the Lenckes Brothers, Heiney Brothers, and Suchys. Many a night was spent dancing to Frank Krulish and his accordin. Later a stage and a kitchen were built on. A stage curtain was painted by George Saalmiller of Mitchell. This hall was later torn down, the lumber sold and hauled away.

The descendants of these pioneers have scattered to many part of the United States, remembering their heritage, but also being loyal, productive citizens of the United States.

Anita Suchy

## DOUGLAS TOWNSHIP

T14

Douglas Township is comprised of sixteen sections of land. The Little Cedar River flows through the western sections in a southwest-erly direction. The Wapsipinicon River flows through the northeast sections and into Howard County. There are numerous small creeks, one of which is Soap Creek in the north central part of the township. The name "Soap Creek" was derived from the story of a wagon load of soap that tipped over while crossing the stream.

One of the first settlers in what is now Douglas Township was Eben Cummings. In the Spring of 1855, F.A. Sprague and M.W. Cummings camped out in Burr Oak Twp. The following day they took over what was known as the old Brink house, the only house in Douglas Township at that time. The Sprague family lived there for about a year and provided lodging to weary travelers in search of land and a home.

When the township was being settled, the country between the "Wapsi" River and the Little Cedar River was a prairie wilderness, and the early pioneers often asked if they would ever live to see it settled. Gradually the families came and built their first log cabin homes. The rivers and creeks provided water and wild game was plentiful.

In 1858 the first school was held, in the home of Mrs. Lavina Hunt, with seven pupils attending. The following year it was held in a log house with Maggie White as teacher. In 1860 a school was built on DeFord's Corner, near the present Gerald Francis home (Hwy 9 and the New Haven bridge). The lumber was hauled from McGregor 100 miles away. Schools were built as they were needed and by the late 1870's eight schools were in operation in Douglas Twp.

The first election in the township was held at the home of John DeFord on Oct. 11, 1859. The township was then comprised of 54 sections and was called Richfield. The first township officers were: Merrill W. Cummings, Milford Hunt and G.N. Holbrook, trustees; A. Hunt, clerk; S.J. Morris, assessor; John Marshall and F.A. Sprague, justices of the peace; Silas Yunt and Harry Council, constables.

The first birth in Douglas Twp. was Henry H., son of Jehial George, born Oct. 4, 1857. The first death was a child of Richard Pritchard in 1863 and buried at Burr Oak. The first marriage was Walter B. Talcot to Chloe S. Holbrook on July 4, 1856. The first

land broken in the township was on Sec. 19 by Frederick A. Sprague.

The first postoffice in Douglas Twp. was at Nelson on Sec. 15 with N. Holbrook as postmaster. It remained there until the railroad was completed to Osage. The stage line from Charles City, on the Walker's Route stopped at New Haven, then traveled north-east to Nelson and Holbrook's Tavern, an inn for travelers. The intersection at Holbrooks Tavern became known as Holbrooks Corner. (It is two miles north of the New Haven bridge and two miles east. Only a grove of locust trees and the well remain.)

The first religious denomination in Douglas Township was the Methodist Episcopal, formed in 1869 with twenty families. As late as 1883 a traveling minister held services at the school. Later they built a church next to the school at DeFord's corner. The location would be approximately where Hwy 9 curves N of New Haven (1988). By the early 1900's the Methodist congregation had transferred membership. They then sold the church building to Mike Loftus and he used the lumber in the construction of his new house, the present Gerald Francis home. St. Peter's Catholic Church was built in 1877 and the rectory in 1879.

The original New Haven bridge was built in 1871. Highway 9 was graded in 1926 and a new bridge was constructed in 1927. This bridge was replaced in 1979.

Weather disasters in the township include the drouth years of the mid-1930's and the Armistice Day Storm of 1940. June 1971 brought hail and wind damage to Douglas Twp. In 1974 after a "cloudburst", Soap Creek flooded with much soil erosion and livestock loss. There was also cattle loss by farmers along the Little Cedar River. The 1988 drouth was severe in Douglas Township.

The "Lone Tree" was a landmark in Douglas Township. It was a burr oak that stood alone in the northwest corner of Sec. 23, two miles south of Jahnel's corner. This very old tree was about 18 inches in diameter in 1899. On November 1, 1964, vandals destroyed the tree. The stump measured 34 inches in diameter.

On Feb. 10, 1967 the voters of Douglas Twp. authorized the township trustees to levy an annual property tax for fire protection. At this time, Douglas Twp. became part of the Riceville Fire District. The township board consisted of Jim McCarthy, clerk; and trustees: Peter Brandt, Gifford Swan and Aloysius Reicherts.

The population of Douglas Twp. in 1890 was 693, in 1970 it was 591. The 1980 census lists the Douglas Twp. population as 481.

## A SIGN THAT HAS BEEN USEFUL FOR OVER 111 YEARS

T15

A signboard in East Lincoln Township in Mitchell County has been directing travelers where to go for over a century. It is located on a century farm presently owned by Wallace Wright. The farm is four miles south and two miles east of New Haven.

There have been at least four different

House where we stayed when we went down. have milk now, & make butter. sold what was left here last fall. dont expect to find a very good market for what I make. I was over Jennisons one evening was so cold I slept all night they have a cold time this winter. twas late when they moved the house so it was banked up very well. Mrs. Jennison says they have got a minister at Saratog he was sent out by the House Missionary Society to some place in Minnesota but here were so few people they were not able to pay him enough. so they have got him to stay at Saratoga for one year. says he will come up here occasionally.

You need not get any hooks for the cloths press there were some come in the Box. I have found the white steer that strayed off last spring it had gonen to Minnesota not more than ten miles from here.

Wentworth, April 8th 64

I shall not have time to make any inquiries about work for Edward but think there is no doubt but that he would find work enough though I do not know of any one about here that would want to hire a man for the season he would be likely to find work enough near McGregors or about Osage or Mitchell.

Have got about half done sowing wheat it has been rainy for the last twenty four hours & no prospect of its clearing off at present. everything mud mud. I hope who ever comes with you will help with the babies much as possible.

by Mary Noble

## GLIMPSES OF WAYNE TOWNSHIP IN ITS BEGINNINGS

T20

To one who takes a leisurely drive through this section of country today, there is such an appearance of thrift and prosperity, he would scarcely realize that forty yrs. ago, it was an unbroken wilderness. The pretty Wapsie' wh. takes its rise in the central part of the township, flowed just as peacefully on, as now - But its banks bore traces of savage life. The miniature bluffs echoed to the tread of deer, wolves, and other wild beasts - & here & there, were the ashes of some Indian campfire - telling unmistakably to the first white settler, that he was on the frontier. Just what drew the first white settler to this locality - probably he could not tell you. The spirit of unrest had taken possession of many men, young & old, in the East, & some, from an adventurous spirit - others, a desire to find a better country for farming - pushed westward. Of course, having started, the journey was pursued, till something desirable - to their untutored senses - presented itself. "Could anything be lovelier than the vast stretches of prairie, which burst on their vision, as they were whirled along by rail to the border land of civilization - then the vicinity of the Mississippi? At Dubuque & Gregor the R.R. lines ended. He who would go further, must provide himself with horses or oxen - or, if he simply travelled for pleasure - he might go by "Foote & Walker's" Stage lines inland, as far as he desired. So it came to pass, that as early as 1853 one

man, Smith by name, took up his abode within the limits of Wayne Township. He brought wife & children & all household belongings, & located in section 27. His house of logs with roof of "shakes" made a home for the family for several years. In 1855 came Woodman, McIntire, Grace & French & settled in the South East part of the township. Soon after these, from the eastern part of the state, came Munson, Ammon & Hale - who saw charms a little further on - & a little later, Bailey, Barker, Kimball, Crockett, Robinson, & Jennison joined the ranks. It may be we shall not put them in the order of their coming - For each one was so busy making the acquaintance of the soil & some mark by wh. he should be able to hold his claim - that no note was made of specialties. In talking it over, one is surprised at the want of exact data - But this may be in part accounted for - when we remember there were as yet, no house, & hence no cellar-doors on wh. to chalk important events in order of occurrence. Each one knew his own personal share in it all - & together, it would have made - could it have been recorded, a volume of rare worth to future generations. On the West of the Wapsie' were several families, as early as any on the east, among them, the Jordans & Murrays, while neighbors Corbett, Carter, Jenkins & Mulverhill, helped to form quite a settlement from the Erin across the sea. Then we must not omit the Kennedys, Griffins, Proctors, Wheelers, Shepards, Lamberts, & Halls - who, because they brought, in many cases, wives & children - counted for more in the census of the town. There were also Knight & Converse, & Gilmans, two & one Krafft - & Wentworths three & Piper, & Mooney, & Gardner, Brownell & Andrews, & one Foote who had the first store & dreamed of a mill - & was first Postmaster - & in whose store & P. Office building was held the first Sabb. school in the township. This man was restless Foote, & did not stay long - but many can call to mind the Post Office (Durea by name) not far from the present village of Bailey. A few years made great changes. When the Durea P. Office was discontinued - or rather, removed to the S.E. part of the township - & the contents of the store moved also, into McIntire's spacious long house - the P.O. became known as Wentworth - & was continued under that name until the junction of the Great Western & Winona R.R.'s at McIntire (1893), necessitated the opening of an office at that point - when the old office, through which channel had flowed so much correspondence to keep us in touch with friends far away, passed into history. About this little settlement, known outside for several years, as McIntire's gathered a number of families - the nucleus of pleasant social life. There was the Hotel, the boarding house of the men single & double, who were enjoying what would now be called a boom - but these had not passed beyond the first or second stages of fever. Here was a blacksmith shop - a store, owned by Barker & Wentworth the building used temporarily for a store - while the new firm were putting up one more substantial - in wh. after the new building could be used, was the first public school in the township taught by Mrs. Henry Gardner. On the Sabbath, it was sometimes used as a preaching place - & the Elder Griffin, of what was known as the Bailey neighborhood, used to preach there. It was used afterward by Barker for a granary -

when having retired from mercantile life, he moved it on to his farm, in the suburbs. There were several dwellings here, beside the hotel - some of which were moved out, when the owners had tried living in town & working land in the country, till they decided the growth & promise of the town, would hardly compensate for the inconvenience of going to and fro - & eating a cold dinner during the farming season. Some families moved away permanently, quite early in the history of the township. Some of the young men took to themselves partners, after a time, & left the felicities of boarding house life - for homes of their own. Some had means to get away - some preferred to remain. Some remained because they could do no other way - not discerning there "the Divinity that shaped their ends." Words are inadequate to portray the experience of those early days. The privations endured - the passionate longing at times, to look upon the dear faces, & hear the voices once familiar - about the old hearthstones. The yearning of soul for the privileges - too lightly esteemed when possessed, maybe, but now, valued by the sore want of them. Did one ever realize what a blessing is toil - till, perhaps, all these longings & yearnings were put in the background - by the inevitable struggle for bread & clothing? The children began to come to the homes - bringing care to be sure - but care so full of blessing in the joy of life's unfolding - & the promise of its future, that gladdened the hearts & hands which had share in this precious ministry. Very real were the sorrows of those early days. The sorrows, which, falling specially on some bereaved hearts - into which the shadows of death had come - drew out & enlisted, the sympathies of all. The children left motherless, were tenderly cherished in somebody's heart of love. And while some pictures of destitution, could they be given the artist's touch, would wring tears "from eyes unused to weep" - still, there was a most wonderful & hearty willingness to share ones little, even to the last crust - which would make a companion picture, worthy a place in an artist's studio - or a more enduring niche in the temple where choice relics are stored.

I opened with beginnings - Beginnings of everything which goes to make up life as we find it today - except, what every man was after, The Land. Beginnings of farms, houses, highways, schools, churches. It is well, for the few who are left, to meet together & look backward. Well to hand down something of the story & to those of coming generations. Well for boys of today, who think life is incomplete without a double turnout - or a bicycle - to be reminded that their fathers were thankful for an ox team - & the wagon was not always furnished with a spring seat even. Well, for the girls, as they enjoy their music & drawing in the comfortable homes of today - or enjoy with their companions the easy carriage, or delightful wheel - to be reminded that it is because of the industry & frugality of the mothers whose music was largely found in kitchen, pantry, or cellar - feeding the household, or caring for the dairy, that by these means they might do their part to eke out the not over abundant living - that young life today, is what it is. Well to suggest to these who are quite apt to want to learn life considerably in advance of the point attained by their fathers & mothers, that industry & frugality are just as needful in the

perpetuity of blessing, as they were to its acquisition. Say to them God expects better things of you because you have more propitious beginnings.

First settler Wm. Smith from Illinois

First frame building the "preemption shanty" built so as to be occupied by both parties (G.W. Barker & D.W. Kimball) on sections 25 & 26 summer of 1856. Now used for fowls on the Kimball "ranch."

First marriage Geo. Gilman & Kate Downs at home of L.G. Munson - whose wife was sister of the bride - ceremony performed by Justice of Peace Foster of Jenkins tp. wh. was then joined with Wayne as a precinct

First birth, a son to Thomas & Julia Corbitt  
First death - adopted child of Tho. & Julia Corbitt - from hydrophobia - the child having been bitten while moving into the country

First store, Le Roy Foote sec 21

First religious service, spring of 1856 in Foote's building conducted by Rev. Holbrook a Meth. minister.

First election, Aug. 1856 in house of Wm. Brown at that time used for sch. house - Purpose of said election - To vote on Co. seat removal.

Jenkins Tp set off in Winter of '57

1857 Apr. 6th First election of tp. officers held in Foote sch-house - O.E. Hale, John Bailey & L.G. Munson, elected first trustees.

Geo. Barker & Wm. Bachelder Justices of Peace

J.A. Wentworth, Clerk. S.L. Woodman & Stewart Kennedy constables.

1st P.O. spring of 1856

1st Ch. organized July 1865 - Baptist

1st Permanent S.S. organized in Wentworth school-house, May 1866

1st school, a private one, taught by Miss Malissa Allen, in the log house built by Wm. Brown on sec. 34.

1st school-house built in Summer 1859 on section 36. This building was used for all public purposes except elections for many years.

(Written by Sarah Moore Kimball around 1895)

by Mary Noble

## EARLY DAYS "ON THE WAPSIE" WAYNE TOWNSHIP

T21

In the "History of Iowa" in 1876, Professor Charles Tuttle wrote about Osage in Mitchell County: "The United States land office was moved to this town in 1856 and its presence was beneficial until in 1859 when Des Moines succeeded to that honor. One land sale in 1857 brought 2500 visitors to Osage".

The "History of Mitchell County in 1883" states: "During the land Sales, one township of land was sold each day. As soon as the bid reached \$1.25 per acre, the hammer came down".

There were several settlers in Wayne Township before 1857, however, it was the big sale of 1857 that covered most of Wayne Township with settlers. Many came from the New England states and as many more were emigrants from Ireland. The largest concen-

tration of the Irish settlers was on the banks of the Wapsipinicon River in the northwest corner. They called their community "The Wapsie" which reached from a few miles into Mower County, Minnesota, south along the Wapsie River to Riceville, Iowa. They built their church in 1858 and named it St. Patrick's.

Following are names and locations of settlers of this area taken from the Book of Original Entry and also some earlier settlers documented in the 1876 and 1883 histories of Mitchell County.

The first settler in Wayne Township was William Smith who settled on the SE ¼ of Sec. 34 in July, 1853. He built a log house, 13X18 feet and lived there until 1859 when he and his family returned to Illinois. In 1855, Cornelius Mulverhill settled on the SE ¼ of Section 28; Thomas Corbett settled on the NE ¼ of the same section. The first birth in the township was that of his son, William Corbett in 1856.

In 1857, Sec. 7 was taken up by Patrick Moran, John Cavanagh, Michael O'Hara and Patrick Bourke. Sec. 8 went to George W. Hinds, John Cavanagh, Edward Jordan and Patrick Cannon. Sec. 9 was taken by Edwin Proctor, Weeden Holloway, John Smith and Levi Munson. According to the Auditor's book, there is no record of sales on Sec. 16, prior to 1868, when it was sold to O. Cole, George Ives, D.W. Goodrich, George Briggs, John Peterson and C.M. Blackman. Sec. 17, in 1857, was settled by Edward Jordan, William Jordan and Patrick Moran. John Hopkins purchased the NW ¼ of Sec. 17 and the next year sold the S ½ of the NW ¼ to Anthony Galagher.

In 1857 Sec. 18, was taken by John Murray, Michael Moran and James Moran; Sec. 19: Michael Moran, John Hopkins, Moses W. Page and Michael O'Hara; and Sec. 20, went to Jonathon Jenkins, Isaac Carter and William Jordan. LeRoy Foote settled on the NE ¼ of Sec. 21, in Nov., 1856. In 1857, the other three quarters went to Moses Page, Thomas D. Bailey and William Page. Sec. 29, in 1857, went to Joshua Aldrich, James M. Young, John Wiley and Charles Converse. Section 30 was all taken in 1857 by John Murray, Harry B. Wildman, Thomas Corbett, and John P. Foster.

Many of these original settlers are shown on the 1860 census with their families who remained "on the Wapsie" for several generations.

by Helen Ragen Shepard

## WAPSIPINICON RIVER

T22

The Wapsipinicon Rivers head waters start south of the Minnesota-Mitchell Co. border about five miles NW of McIntire; it flows through Howard, Chickasaw, Bremer, Buchanan, Linn, Jones, Clinton, and Scott Counties, emptying into the Mississippi River between Clinton and the Quad Cities.

According to Indian legend, this river was named for a beautiful Indian maiden, Wapsie (the favorite child of Black Hawk chief, Good Heart) and a handsome neighboring Indian brave, Pinicon (son of Chief Blackfeather).

Although Wapsie's mother had died long ago, Chief Good Heart has done his best to raise his favorite child in a gentle way, she was trained to paddle, swim, run swiftly, and in woodcraft - she was unspoiled, loving and generous. So it was no wonder that all the young braves sought her eye.

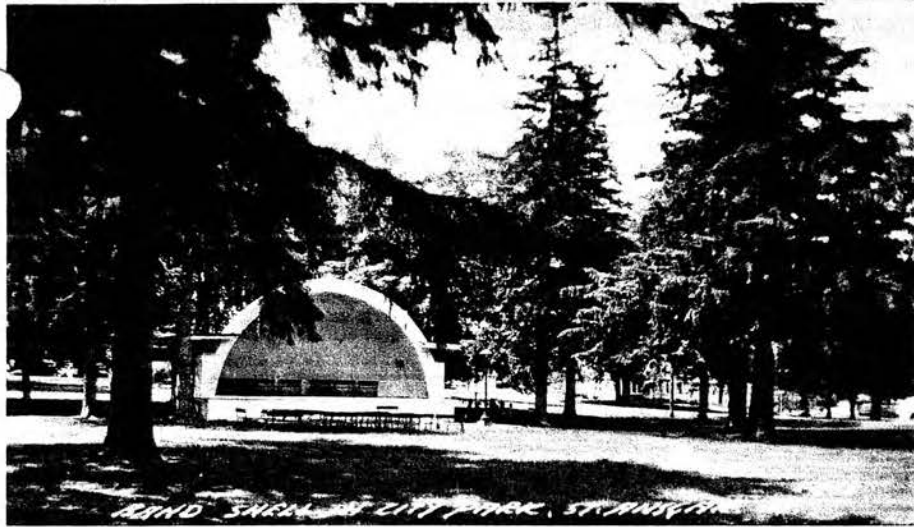
The long peace was broken one day when a Black Hawk warrior was found dead, pierced by arrows that were soon recognized as used by the tribe of the Crows. The Black Hawk tribe at once summoned the Sioux to help them punish the Crows. Pinicon responded to the call. It was only natural that Wapsie and Pinicon, two children of allied chiefs, would meet and fall in love.

Once retaliation against the Crows was completed, Wapsie and Pinicon soon announced their plans to marry. While most of the Black Hawk braves were envious, they accepted the arrangement in good friendship with the Sioux - all except one, called Fleet Foot, who was unwilling to forget the warring between tribes in the past. On the eve of their wedding Fleet Foot followed Wapsie and Pinicon as they paddled slowly up the river that bears their names. The jealous Indian kept hidden from view as he walked along the bank observing them. Suddenly, as the legend goes, at some word of Pinicon, Wapsie put her hand to his lips. The caress angered Fleet Foot, who shot an arrow into the heart of Pinicon. Wapsie sprang to aid him, unfortunately overturning the canoe. The two lovers were drowned.

The translation of Wapsipinicon means white potato. Large numbers of wild artichoke grew in profusion on its banks, which makes the name logical. Even so, I believe the legend of the lovers being drowned is true because of the story my father, Wm. H. Marr (born 1875), told. My grandparents, William and Rosaly Yager Marr, came to Howard Co. from Lafayette Co., WI about 1869 They built their log cabin a short distance east of where the Wapsie crosses the Howard - Mitchell Co. border, five miles south of Riceville. Grandmother Rosaly heard, and possibly could see, the two tribes of Indians. Wapsie's tribe on one side of the river calling Wapsie, Pinicon's tribe on the other calling Pinicon, as they walked along the river looking for their lost children. That's the story Grandmother told her children. My father added, "I know the story is true, as my mother never told a lie."

(Research on this article has been taken from the Waterloo Courier article in 1966 featuring the Wapsipinicon, *Iowa Across the River* by Don Doyle Brown, *Hawkeye Lore* by Bernice Reida and Ann Irvin, and *Discovering Historic Iowa*.)

by Gertrude Rosaly Marr Meirick



City Park, St. Ansgar, early 1950's.

## ST. ANSGAR MILLS

T116



St. Ansgar Mills and Dam. (Photo courtesy of Omar Toye.)

The old saying "a lot of water has gone over the dam" is quite true of the Old Mill on the Cedar River southwest of St. Ansgar. The driveway and warehouse still stand but the mill itself was demolished in 1986. Vandals had made the place an "attractive nuisance" and the Kleinworts were fearful someone would get hurt exploring the building. The three turbine-type water wheels were salvaged. One still belongs to the Kleinwort's, one was donated to the Mitchell County Historical Society and the other given to a restored mill in Clayton County near Elkader on the Turkey River.

Water rights were issued in 1854 and the following year a Brewery and Grist Mill were erected along the river by M. Sorenson and N.H. Lund. Very little work was done there, and later it was sold to the parties who moved the machinery to Minnesota.

In 1861, the first mill was erected by W.P. Bowan. Considerable changes have taken place, but water powered the mill for many years. This was one of the last mills in the area to use water power for grinding.

After Bowan sold to SVR Smith & Co., it changed hands several times before G.W.P. Bowan acquired it and built the first dam and a fine stone mill. Farmers donated their time and helped build the first brush and log dam. This original dam is still there about 20 feet back of the present cement dam.

Pioneer farmers who had hauled their wheat to McGregor, Iowa, which was a several day trip, thought it best to have their own mill close at hand, and their object was to sell the wheat they raised and get flour back in return. S.V. Smith again acquired it in February 1871 when Mr. McCarthy purchased it. There was excellent water power to run by five run buhrs and three sets of Patent rollers. During his operation he made and shipped flour in Old Betz brand bags to Chicago. In 1876 the old mill was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt.

Mr. McCarthy sold to Mrs. Emily J. Haines in July 1887. She was sole owner, but it was operated by tenants. In 1893 the bridge over the Cedar River was erected just north of the mill. Later the mill was destroyed by fire. Records show the tenant in possession at the time fled the country after threatening a slander suit against one of the insurance agents, who had placed insurance on the grain — supposed to have been on the mill.

Martin Klindt bought the dam and power in 1900 and built the mill that was dismantled in 1986. Mr. R. Helfritz bought the mill from Klindt and operated it until 1914 when it was sold to Otto & Robert Boening. Several years later Otto took over the business alone.

Flour grinding during this period was the main business. At first it was operated under an exchange schedule of 37 lbs. of flour for one bushel of wheat (no charge) or 32 lbs. of flour and 14 lbs. of bran and midds (no charge). His flour capacity bins held 14,000 pounds ready for exchange.

Lowest prices for 50 pounds of flour was 85¢. During World War I the price went up to \$2.50. Wheat came from all parts of Mitchell County and surrounding counties. When the mill operated on a steady weekly run Monday through Saturday, grinding

capacity was 24,000 bushels of wheat per year.

During 1915-1916, Mr. Boening built a 10-foot concrete dam which is still in place today. This dam at one time furnished electricity for the town of St. Ansgar on a limited basis — from dusk to 9:00 p.m. daily. It was the town's only source of electricity at that time.

(Compiled from earlier histories of St. Ansgar and Mitchell County.)

by Robert F. Kleinwort

## JOHN R. HALVORSEN, EARLY ST. ANSGAR PHOTOGRAPHER

T117

Of Norwegian origin, John R. Halvorsen was established as a photographer in St. Ansgar in the late 1870's. Born about 1850, he was married to Annie Marie Nelson, daughter of Norwegian immigrants Peter and Sarah Nelson. Her birth in 1857 was the first of a white child in Rock Township, Mitchell Co. An 1878 advertisement in the St. Ansgar Enterprise promoted Halvorsen's work at "Hard-Pan prices in accordance with hard times." Customers wanting portraits taken were encouraged to come in between 11 A.M. and 2 P.M. to take advantage of natural daylight. Halvorsen also took photographs outside of his studio: in 1880, for example, he offered a "fine new view" of Mr. Lubiens' new brick building, a dry goods and grocery store. In his gallery rooms next door to the Enterprise office, he had for sale an assortment of wood or silk frames, mouldings, stereoscopes and views, albums, easels, and chromo motos. Portraits were advertised at the reduced price of \$2.50 per dozen for the December, 1880, holiday season. During the summer of 1881, he closed shop and set up his business in a tent in Mona "to diagram the faces of some of the people in that section." A violent storm during the period convinced him that for such travel he needed to replace his tent and he planned to have a regular photographer's car built. His imminent return to St. Ansgar was reported late in July with the information that farmers up Mona way were so downcast and longfaced over crop prospects that it took two sittings to get their faces. Always eager to keep up with new technological developments, in 1882, Halvorsen gave up the wet plate for the new "instantaneous" dry plate photographic method, which could be worked in all kinds of weather. The services of copying and enlarging, finishing in India ink, oils, water-colors, etc. were offered "cheaper than travelling bummers." In January, 1883, Halvorsen and his wife left for a few months in Florida where he'd acquired an orange grove, and he left his new assistant and trainer, Lizzie Rossiter, in charge of the operation of the St. Ansgar gallery. In his absence a new photograph gallery was started in town by the painters Christian M. Clausen and his son Axel J. Clausen. Halvorsen returned to St. Ansgar in May and perhaps found the new business more than he cared to compete with. In any case, in August, 1883, he was looking in Albert Lea, Minn. for a suitable place to

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Public School, built in 1928 at Washington and 5th. Currently used as the grade school. (Photo courtesy of Marjean McKinley.)

## STACYVILLE

T237



Stacyville Public School. (Photo courtesy of Omar Toye.)



Catholic School, Stacyville, circa 1914.



Visitation Catholic School, Stacyville. (Photo courtesy of Omar Toye.)

## UNION TWP. #3

T238

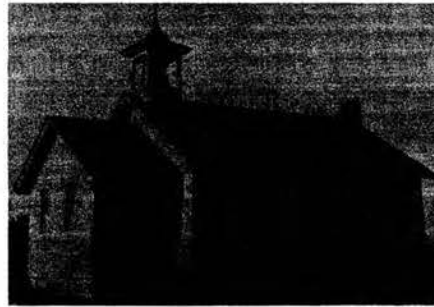
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Union Twp. School #3, Sec. 19. (from Roehr Scrapbook.)

## UNION #4

T239



Union #4 School, north side of road across from railroad tracks in Toeterville, part of the elevator complex in 1982. (Sec. 32)

by Dolores Kittleson

## WAPSIE SCHOOL

T240



Wapsie School (Sec. 17, Union Twp.)

Education for the children was very important to the pioneers and for many years school in Wayne Township was taught in private homes. Probably it was the influx of settlers in 1857 that prompted J.A. Wentworth to donate an acre of land and the first public school building was erected in 1859. The 1870 and 1880 census of Wayne Township show that the children are "in school". The 1883 History of Mitchell County states that "In 1883 there were six sub districts in Wayne Township, each provided with a comfortable school house."

The Wapsie School, Wayne Township, District #3, was one of those erected during this time. It was a small sturdy building on the northwest corner of SW 1/4 of Section 17, a short distance north of St. Patrick's

Church. The bell in the belfry called the hour for school to begin. The front door opened into a hall or entry way in which we took off our "wraps" and hung them on designated hooks. There were two doors leading into the one large room; a blackboard covered the wall between the doors. There was a double row of desks the length of the room with a potbellied coal stove between the rows, in the middle of the room. Each desk would accommodate two students. There was a small library stocked with books such as Hans Brinker, Tom Sawyer and several by Horatio Alger.

The students took turns each morning, carrying a pail of drinking water from the well across the road at Pat Nugent's. We all drank from the dipper which hung on the wall by the water pail until one day the County nurse brought a set of rules to our school, asking each student to bring his own cup. She also brought toothbrushes and small tubes of toothpaste. And so we were introduced to health care.

Noon hour and the two recesses were times to go outside and play games such as tag, hide and seek and there were always races to be run. Sometimes there would be a baseball game with a sponge rubber ball; any flat board that was handy would make a good bat. The long months of winter confined us inside and quite often we made games of mental arithmetic and spelling bees. We learned to sing the national songs, folk songs and some of Stephen Foster's melodies, with the teacher leading the tunes on the old organ. Some of this time was also spent learning poems and parts of plays for programs that we would have for our parents, especially at Christmas time.

Many of the older children, especially the boys, left school in the early spring to help with the farm work at home and their school year was further shortened by helping with harvest in the fall. School buses were unheard of in those early years and many students walked two or three miles each way. During the winter, especially on a snowy day, a parent would come with a horse drawn sleigh and take us all to our homes.

Most of the teachers were young, just out of "normal school". Sometimes it would be a young man but more often a young lady. They would live with a local family for the school year. Some of the teachers in the 1910-1930 period were Lula Moran, Agatha Burns, Helen Keston, Ruth Crouch, Francis Papach, Nora Weigen, Grace Murray, Kenneth Fair, Alyce Doran, Anna Mae Benson and Margaret Pint. During its 50-60 years, the Wapsie school was a learning place for two or three generations of some families. There were many Murray's, Jordan's, Moran's, Ragen's, Nugent's, Haehn's, King's, Retterath's, Fair's, Blake's and Goergen's who spent childhood days here. They received a very good basic education and learned from their geography books about the world outside the Wapsie.

With the improvements of the roads and better means of transportation, the small schools were closed and the students were bused to town. The Wapsie school was closed in 1942; LaVerna Rawson was the last teacher. The building was taken down in 1950.

by Helen Ragen Shepard

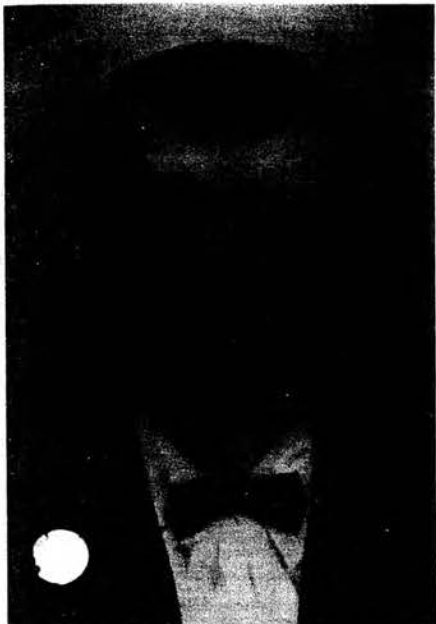
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other brothers, Carl, Gustav, and Henry were born in this country.

by Halvor Leraaen

## LEWIS, MARY ANN AND SIDNEY S. FAMILY

F353



Sidney S. Lewis.

Sidney S. Lewis was born on April 10, 1862 in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa to John R. and Mary Anne Vanvoltenburg Lewis. Sidney attended the Orchard Public School and the Cedar Valley Seminary in Osage, Iowa.

Mary Ann McCarty and Sidney Lewis were united in marriage on October 15, 1885 in Mason City, Iowa.

Mary Ann was born on January 8, 1861 in Cudahy, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin to James and Anna McQuillan McCarty. She moved to Delona, Wisconsin with her parents in 1867. Mary Ann was the oldest of six children. She moved to Osage, Mitchell County, Iowa in 1878.

Sidney and Mary Ann made their first home on a farm east of Orchard, Mitchell County, Iowa. They then purchased a farm on the north half of Section 6, West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. It was only a quarter of a mile from his boyhood home. They resided there until moving to Orchard about 1930.

Mary Ann and Sidney were the parents of five children. A baby girl died as an infant.

John Clayton was born on July 8, 1886 in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. He married (1) Ann Hobkirk in 1913. Ann passed away on February 22, 1951. John married (2) Pearl Fisk Sullivan in 1952. John passed away on May 5, 1961 in Ben Lomond, California and is buried at the Osage Cemetery, Osage, Iowa.

Ada May was born on February 14, 1888 in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. She married Adam Lawrence Mark on April 7, 1908 in Mitchell County, Iowa. Ada passed away on June 30, 1967 in Osage, Iowa and is buried at the Osage Cemetery, Osage.

Lancy Lyman was born on March 3, 1892 in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. He married Fern Morse on March 3, 1915 in Orchard, Iowa. Lancy passed away on October 29, 1967 in Iowa City, Iowa and is buried at the Orchard Cemetery, Orchard, Iowa.

Laura B. was born on January 21, 1896 in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. She married (1) Eugene Sprague on January 6, 1915. Laura married (2) Gerald McClain on October 11, 1934. Laura passed away on January 21, 1957 in Osage, Iowa and is buried at the Osage Cemetery, Osage.

Sidney S. Lewis passed away on February 8, 1931 at home in Orchard, Mitchell County, Iowa and is buried at the Orchard Cemetery.

After the loss of her husband, Mary Ann moved in with Ada and Adam Mark. Ada cared for her mother after she suffered a paralytic stroke. Mary Ann was confined to bed for over a year. She passed away at the home of her daughter Ada in West Lincoln Township, Mitchell County, Iowa on April 8, 1932. Mary Ann is buried at the Orchard Cemetery, Orchard, Iowa.

by Marjorie Mark

## LEWIS, MARY ANNE AND JOHN R.

F354



John R. Lewis, taken about 1890 in Mitchell County.

John R. Lewis was born on October 22, 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut to Samuel and Mary Hull Lewis. The family moved to Pottsville, Pennsylvania in 1819. In 1821, they moved to Athens County, Ohio. Samuel purchased a farm and worked at his trade of harness and saddle making. John lost his father, when he was killed by the falling of a bridge, in 1825.

John lived with his mother until he was fifteen, then spent 18 months in Nelsonville,

Ohio as a shoemaker and driving team on the Hocking in the winter. He purchased 130 acres of land and spent over a year buying cattle for contractors in Virginia. John took a flat boat load of tan bark down the Ohio to Cincinnati where he sold the boat and bark before going to Louisville, Kentucky where he worked as a ship carpenter.

In 1834, John went to Florida and with 60 others purchased three condemned war vessels from the government. They went on a whaling voyage for six years. In 1842, he went to Texas on an exploring expedition in search of land. He left in February and walked to Keokuk, Iowa, arriving in June. John continued north to Elizabeth, Jo Daviess County, Illinois and engaged in farming and carpenter work.

John married Mary Anne Vanvoltenburg on December 7, 1843 in Elizabeth, Illinois.

Mary Anne was born on November 13, 1828 in Elizabeth, Illinois to Henry and Sarah Vanvoltenburg.

After their marriage, John started a stock business and operated a saw mill in Elizabeth. Mary Anne and John were the parents of thirteen children: a baby boy died as an infant, Henry (born February, 1847), Seth (born December, 1849), Silas (born December, 1851), Sarah (Mrs. Ben) Hart (born June, 1853), Mary ann (born December, 1854), Wellington (born January, 1857), John (born December, 1858), Rose (1861-1864, buried; Osage), Sidney (born April 1862), George (born 1864), Leath (Mrs. Louis) Peck (born April, 1868), and Charles (born December, 1870).

The Elizabeth, Illinois area was rapidly growing in population. John decided to look for land on the Iowa prairie. In the summer of 1854, he left Mary Anne and his four young children in her father's care in Elizabeth and headed west.

John found the rich land he was searching for in Mitchell County, Iowa. In the fall of 1854, John purchased 480 acres of land in Lincoln and Douglas Townships, Mitchell County. After remaining part of the winter splitting rails, he returned to Illinois.

The Lewis family, including their new baby Mary ann, moved to Mitchell County, Iowa. They arrived on May 6, 1855. On August 6, 1855, John purchased the southwest quarter of Section 31, West Lincoln Township from George Colton for \$1000.00. This is the first real estate mortgage on record in Mitchell County. This was the site of the Lewis home.

One of the greatest hardships of the early settlers was the lack of good water. John hauled water for more than a year from one to two miles. In the summer of 1856, John hired Wayne and Henry Morris to dig the first well in the township for him. They worked all summer and fall as it was a difficult job. In some places the blasting was twelve feet across. They found good water at a depth of 84 feet. John paid them \$200.00 cash and \$800.00 in accounts against Illinois debtors.

In 1857, John built a frame house and a large barn. William Bellville, who lived in a little cabin near by, did the carpenter work and Tinker Allen helped with the mason work.

John found the land of his dreams in Mitchell County, Iowa. He succeeded in his investment in the Iowa prairie and by 1883, owned over 1000 acres. John was content to spend his life in this land of promise.