

Henderson County Genealogy and Family History Society

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Spring 2025

NOTE FROM THE LIBRARY

The Digitization of Historic Newspapers Project and How It's Going

Back in 2023, the Henderson County Public Library started the process of digitizing all the historic newspapers published in the county. With this transition, anyone is now able to access the newspapers online from their home, another state, or our library computers, rather than having to use the microfilm machine. Having this online database has also made it easier for patrons that come in to search for specific names and years to find what it is they are looking for. Although digitizing the microfilm had long been discussed, getting started was difficult due to financial constraints. Nevertheless, through networking with other library directors and attending conferences, we learned about Newspapers.com, an incredible resource made possible by Ancestry. Through their amazing program for libraries our digitization project was completely free. Since August 2023, we have been working with Ancestry to digitize all our microfilm and bound newspapers to complete this process. We have completed the digitization of all the microfilm, and they hope to be finished with the bound newspapers by September 2025. You can find all the information and access a video on how to navigate the database using our library website hendersoncolibrary.com. Just click on the community tab on the homepage and go to our Henderson County Genealogy and Family History Society page to find everything. We have already gotten great feedback from this online resource and are so thankful to the Henderson County Genealogy Society and Newspapers.com for this collaboration.



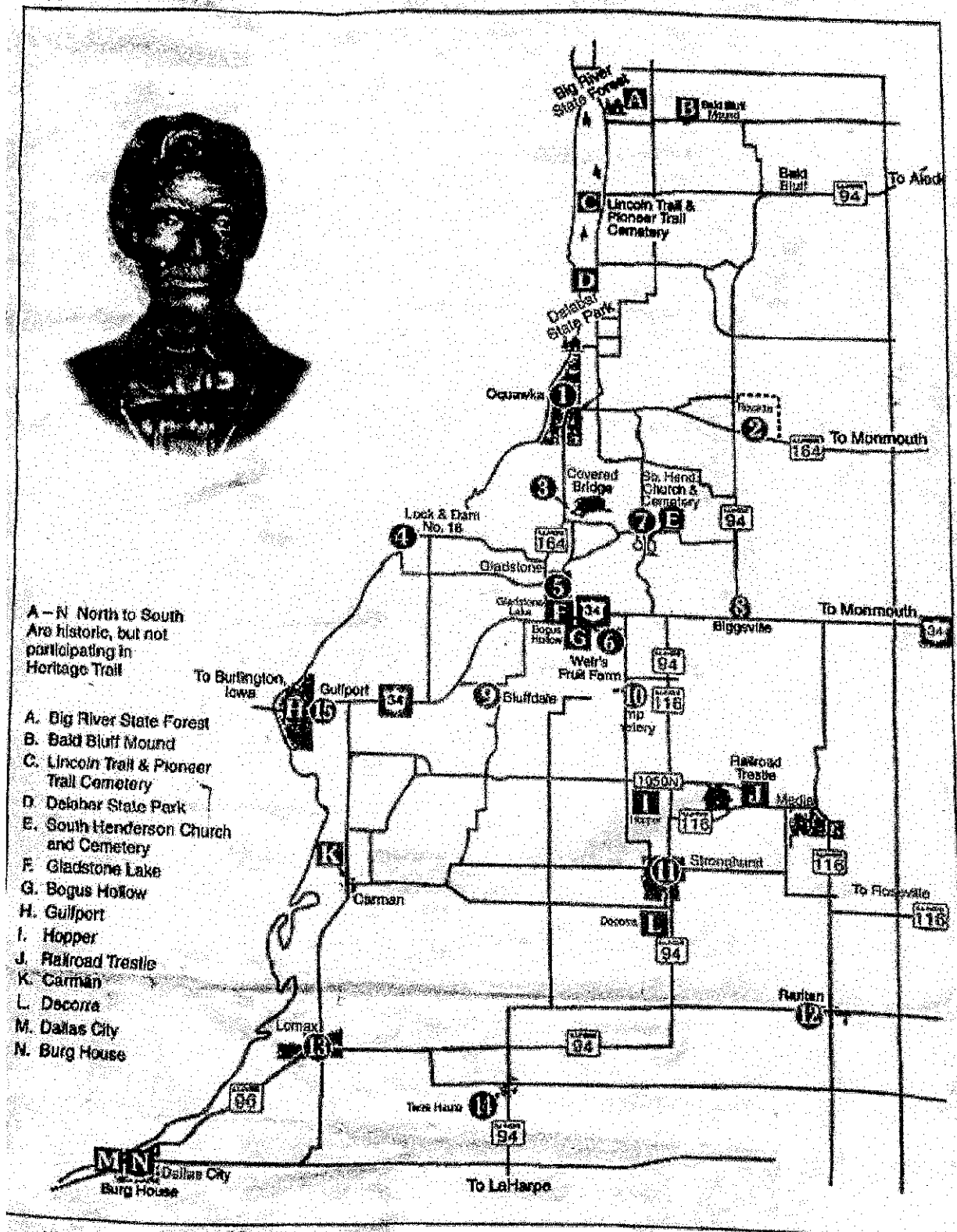
Newsletter Information

A goal for this and upcoming issues is to highlight the history/reasons behind names of places in the county. We will highlight community names, and also the names of some locations in our community that seem to be names used only locally, and don't always show up on maps. If you have corrections or additional information to add, we are very open to your input. Please reach out to Trish at buzzardwest@gmail.com. **Upcoming Meeting**, due to Maundy Thursday services, the April meeting will not be held. Instead, the next meeting will take place on **JUNE 19, at 7:00 pm at the library**. As always, your ideas and suggestions are welcome. Contact Trish with ideas or questions. Fran puts notices about meetings, etc., on the Henderson County Public Library Facebook page and in The Quill. For those wondering about Fran, her health is much improved and she is home from the hospital.

The County

The Henderson County Quill printed the following map for Heritage Trail

~ Map Your Way Through Henderson County's History!



1. Henderson County

According to familysearch.org, "the county was named for the Henderson River. Large numbers of Kentuckians settled in frontier Henderson County, Illinois. The name of the county (Henderson) is reminiscent of Henderson (KY) - the previous residence of many pioneer settlers. The county seat is Oquawka and the county was organized in 1841."

2. Oquawka

Mississippivalleytraveler.com states that "The village's name is derived from the Sauk and Meskwaki word Oquawkiek, which means something like yellow banks, a reference to the color of the bluff faces along the Mississippi River in these parts.

Dr. Isaac Galland was the first European to build a cabin at Yellow Banks (in 1827), but it was really two Phelps brothers who were instrumental in getting Oquawka rolling. Stephen Sumner Phelps was born in Palmyra, New York in 1805, the fifth of seven kids. The Phelps family moved to Illinois around 1820. Alexis went up to Galena and mined lead, inviting his brother, Stephen Sumner, to join him, who did for a while, but got sick (probably from lead poisoning) and had to quit. While ill, Sumner learned from Jerry Smith, who lived near Yellow Banks, that Galland was discouraged and ready to sell his claim. Sumner sent word to his father, Stephen, to buy Galland's land, which they got for \$400. Galland moved across the river, while Sumner, his wife, Phebe, brother William, and an enslaved person moved in on September 10, 1828. Another Phelps brother, William, went up to New Boston to establish a trading post near the Sauk and Meskwaki Indians who were led by Chief Keokuk. Sumner got into the fur trade (competing with Astor's American Fur Company) and became friends with Meskwaki leaders Kiyo'Kaga (Keokuk), Taimah (Tama), and Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak (Black Hawk). The Meskwaki gave Sumner the name Wah-wash-e-ne-quah (Hawk Eye).

During the Black Hawk War, Tama stayed at the Sumner Phelps House for a few days. When word got out that he was there, a group of drunken soldiers surrounded the house and demanded that Tama be turned over to their custody for arrest. Sumner refused. The soldiers threatened to fire on the house, but Sumner found a way to get them into town, maybe by promising them whiskey. Once in town, he threatened to shoot every one of them, a threat that seemed more plausible when a group of 50-ish armed townspeople showed up.

After the Black Hawk War, Alexis Phelps left Galena for Oquawka. In 1834, Colonel John B. Patterson moved to town. A veteran of the Black Hawk War, Patterson helped write Black Hawk's autobiography, based on Black Hawk's own dictation and with translation help from Davenport's Antoine LeClaire. Patterson also founded a newspaper, the *Spectator*, in 1848 that published for 60 years.

Patterson's son, Edwin, nearly scored a major coup when he negotiated with Edgar Allen Poe to edit a literary magazine. Edwin worked with his father at the *Spectator* and was quite a fan of Poe's work. In December 1848, Edwin wrote a letter to Poe inviting him to edit a literary journal that was to be based in Oquawka. Edwin waited for a reply for four tortuous months, a wait that was longer than necessary because Edwin had misaddressed the letter.

Poe's response was cautious but encouraging; he offered to meet in person to discuss the idea. Poe preferred to have the magazine based in St. Louis instead of Oquawka, but Edwin wasn't convinced. He insisted that he had access to all the same distribution routes as if he was in St. Louis and that he could manage the publication much more cheaply in Oquawka than St. Louis. They exchanged a couple more letters and Edwin even sent Poe \$50 to help him get started and to cover travel expenses for a meeting in St. Louis. Edwin's hopes for the magazine were dashed when Poe died unexpectedly on October 7, 1849.

Sumner and Alexis Phelps surveyed and platted part of their claim for the village of Oquawka in July 1836, but the physical rendering was drawn by Nathaniel Currier of Currier and Ives fame. The Phelps brothers made a lot of money selling those lots, as expectations were high for Oquawka. Perhaps those expectations might have tempered if they had read a letter written by Alexis' brother-in-law. In 1836, Richard Day wrote the following about Oquawka:

You can wade through the streets of the city of Oquawka in sand up to your knees, and oh, those noble, majestic and magnificent prairies of which you hear so much. They do, it is true, look magnificent, but of what use are they so long as they can never be inhabited?

Even with those sandy streets, Oquawka got off to a pretty good start. By the 1840s, the village was a busy Mississippi River port. The riverfront, a half-mile of graded rock that served as boat landing, was lined with warehouses. A report in 1848 listed significant quantities of the following products shipping out of Oquawka: corn, wheat, oats, barley, flax seed, white beans, potatoes, lard, tallow, and other pork products.

The Phelps brothers donated land for the county courthouse (Alexis also managed to win the contract to build it), churches, a school, and a cemetery. Sumner Phelps built a big house on the river in 1840 similar to the one Alexis built a few years earlier on the north end of town. Both houses still exist: Alexis's as a museum and Sumner's as a private residence.

When Alexis died on December 11, 1846, the funeral was held at the brand new Presbyterian church. Workers hurried to install the bell that had just arrived courtesy of the Phelps family (it is still in use today but that building is now the Oquawka Methodist Church). Abe Lincoln attended the funeral, although many people assumed he was just another Phelps brother because they looked so much alike.

Lincoln became close to the Phelps family around 1830 when the brothers' father, Stephen, ran a trading post in Sangamon County. Lincoln, it is said, went with Sumner back to Oquawka and got stranded there during a snowstorm, spending several weeks with Sumner and his family in the cabin. While there, Lincoln and Alexis became good friends, spending hours every day reading together. Years later, Sumner was quoted as saying: "I can still see Alexis and Abe sprawled on the floor in front of the fireplace with the books."

There's another fun, perhaps apocryphal story, about Lincoln and Sumner Phelps that appears in many books. Lincoln is said to have handed Sumner a pocket knife during a visit, telling him: "Sumner, this knife was given to me to keep until I found a homelier man than myself, so now I present it to you."

Lincoln returned to Oquawka during his Senate campaign for a debate, sort of. On October 4, 1858, Stephen Douglas addressed a crowd in town; Lincoln did the same thing, but not until 5 days later.

Fun fact: If you visited Oquawka in 1849, here's what you might have spent on a few necessities: lodging: 0.125 cents per night per bed, plus 0.25 cents per meal; a half pint of whiskey cost 0.125 cents.

Oquawka's early promise began to fade around 1851 when county voters rejected a measure to invest in a new railroad line. Instead, in 1855 the railroad bypassed Oquawka, building to Burlington, Iowa and adopting that city's name as part of its corporate identity. (It could have been the Chicago, Oquawka, & Quincy Railroad!)

A railroad finally reached Oquawka in 1869 (the Rockford, Rock Island, and St. Louis, later purchased by the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy), but by then it was not a major route. Nevertheless, Oquawka residents had twice daily passenger service and freight service until the 1950s.

During the peak years, Oquawka's leaders made a pitch to attract a new college. In 1853, trustees of the Illinois Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church were making plans to start a university that would be based in the area. Oquawka tried to snag it, but the founders of the college didn't want to locate in a river town, because they feared there would be too many distractions that would undermine the ability of students to focus on learning. River towns were apparently the place to live if you were a person with loose morals. Monmouth Academy opened in 1853 about 20 miles east in Monmouth, Illinois. It is still going today as a private school called Monmouth College with about 1,300 students.

By the 1880s, just three Mississippi River boats a week stopped at Oquawka. The region's economy was centered around agriculture; apples, especially. Other exports included grains and cider vinegar. If you lived in the region around that time and needed to buy farm equipment or a wagon, you went to Oquawka. There were also quite a few commercial fishermen and a part of town called "fish row" with eight fishing houses. Residents of Oquawka didn't want for choice when it came to food and commercial goods, because so much was shipped on the Mississippi River at that time.

For many years, warehouses lined the riverfront, as goods were stored while they awaited transportation on the Mississippi. Local folks ate a lot of river fish and spent recreational time on the river. In the 1880s, residents could take a Saturday afternoon excursion on the *Maggie Reaney*, dancing to the sounds of a string band and snacking at the lunch counter.

Vacation cottages were built along the river beginning around 1919 and extended north up to Delabar Mississippi River Youth Park. These made the region a popular vacation destination in the 1920s, even for Chicago gangsters, who liked to duck hunt here. Al Capone is supposed to have been fond of nearby Benton Island.

A mile north of Schuyler Street there was a very popular sandy beach that attracted up to a thousand bathers on peak summer days. If you got tired of swimming or sunning, you could visit one of the beachside dance halls. No one swam on Sundays, though. While some folks might be open for business on a Sunday (like excursion boats, trains, and saloons), swimming on city beaches was prohibited between 5am and 10pm. The beach fun ended in the 1930s with the construction of the lock and dam system, which raised the river level and covered the beach.

Like many communities in this part of the river, Oquawka was tied into the button business. In 1906, the city bought clam shells from button factories and crushed them into a material that was used to pave city streets. John LaFond operated a button factory in the 1920s. He brought in clam shells by rail, stamped out buttons, then sent them away for finishing.

In more recent years, the town rushed to put out a big downtown fire (1976) and cheered when hometown hero Todd Hamilton won golfing's British Open in 2004; he was later named PGA Rookie of the Year (he was 39 years old at the time!). Oquawka today still attracts a lot of pleasure boaters and other folks who prefer to spend their leisure time along the Mississippi River."

3. Gladstone

The Mississippi Valley traveler identifies the following history of Gladstone. "The village that would become Gladstone began around 1856 when a place named Sage Town was platted. It was named after farmer

Gideon Sage, a native of New York who moved here in 1848 with his fourteen children; people named Sage must have accounted for the lion's share of the area's population at that time. When the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad built a station at the village, good times rolled in. Farmers brought their goods to the station and the railroad moved them to ports on the Mississippi.

Sage Town merged with its neighbor Lynn (named for Ezekiel Lynn) in 1881 and officially became Gladstone. By that time, the village had already been around twenty-five years and had become a commercial center for the surrounding area. It's possible that the city was named for British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, like the small city in Michigan and the town in North Dakota.

In the 1870s, several quarries opened, followed in short order by the Gladstone Refinery, which processed sorghum, grape sugar, and glucose. In 1880, the village counted two schools, two hotels, a post office, two saloons, a physician, and a feed mill. According to a county history, Gladstone's residents in the early 1880s (when the village's population peaked at 524) were employees of the railroad or the quarry, and the village had a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than most other towns in the county."

4. Bogus Hollow

HISTORY OF BOGUS HOLLOW (Provided by Jane Weir)

The Following Article was SPOTLIGHTED DURING HERITAGE TRAIL at a date in the past at the Weir Fruit Farm Museum.

"A new addition to this year's Trail, is Bogus Hollow, the tourist stop started by the Frank Winters family in the 1930's, several miles southeast of Gladstone. This is a drive-by only viewing for this year's Trail-goers Mr. Winters built several tourist cabins on old Rte. 34, as it wound through that area, described by some motorists as the "most scenic stretch of highway in Illinois." alongside a stream with hills in the background. He also constructed a stone windmill, much admired by visitors. (Rumor has it it became overgrown with brush and lies buried there). Lawn ornaments hand made by Frank were also very popular with passersby. Following the death of his wife, Elsie, Frank and his family, Jessiebelle, Virginia, and Frank, Jr. (Bud) moved to the State of Washington. Their oldest daughter, Madeline, had married Edwin VanTine, and remained in Illinois. The business was sold to the Scott family. That family installed a swing high on a hill behind the tourist campground, which swung "out over the world, much to the horror of mothers watching in horror below", said one of those who experienced the thrill of the swing. Later, Duke Burrell & his wife operated the gas station there, selling their specialty, hand-dipped ice-cream cones, to the delight of their customers. After Duke died, his widow continued to serve up the generous-sized cones. It was a sad day for many when she retired to live near her daughter in Burlington. "Bogus" Hollow pinpoints an area where newly-arrived immigrants from Kentucky, the Burnside clan, began a crude counterfeiting operation in the 1850's, southeast of what is now known as Gladstone. American currency was scarce in that era where barter was king. The operation was briefly successful, before charges were brought by county authorities, but confusion in the frontier justice system allowed the charges to be dismissed, and the perpetrators moved further west. A son, John Burnside, died in 1870, from injuries received in the Civil War, and lies buried in the South Henderson cemetery. Once described as the most beautiful section of Rte. 34 in Illinois, the cutoff (east end) of that mile-long Bogus

Bypass will be marked by yellow ribbons at the 1350 East marker, one and one-half miles west of the Country Fun Restaurant. Another ribbon marks the entrance to the old Duke Burrell service station." (Thanks to members of the VanTine family and to historian Virginia Ross for the above information.)



BOGUS
HOLLOW

CAMPGROUND

(Built by Brian Winters)

To visit the approximate entrance to Old Rte. 34, and other attractions in Bogus Hollow, look for yellow ribbons at 1350 E (one-half mile west of Teen Store Cafe). Volunteers have placed ribbons at the approximate entrance to Scotty's. NO TRESPASSING, PLEASE. This is a drive-by to revive memories to many of their good times here during this century.



ICK VAN TINE
1935



MADELINE WINTERS
VERNA MILLEN
1930'S



VIRGINIA +
BUDDY WINT
1930'S

5. Gulfport

History of the village can be found on Mississippi Valley Traveler. "The village formerly known as East Burlington has long had a reputation as a place where folks could go to indulge in certain socially shunned behaviors, as long as they did it quietly. Founded in 1855 as the western terminus of the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad, the village grew into a popular place to gamble and buy sex, a vice trade that catered primarily to men who worked on the river or railroads, as

well as a few local farmers. In the early years, these establishments worked out of log cabins and under trees until proper buildings went up. The East Burlington Hotel was one of those places, a popular two-story brothel near the river.

The De Hague family ran another popular establishment, a tavern and boarding house. The patriarch, Joseph, would have been an interesting guy to have a beer with. He was apparently an associate of pirate Jean Lafitte when he was a teenager, but he got out of the pirating business with the help of an official pardon for fighting with the United States during the War of 1812. De Hague mined lead for a while in Galena, then worked on a few riverboats. In the early 1830s he bought land at Gulfport and set about building a life for his family. He farmed for a short while, then built his establishment near the river, making good money until his death in 1856. Oh for a time machine to spend just one evening in that establishment!

In the 1860s and 1870s, much of the vice trade floated on gunboats, which were basically shacks built on top of barges. They would tie up along the Mississippi near a town, where they were either ignored by local authorities or moored just beyond their jurisdiction. If they attracted the enmity of local folks, they just untied and floated down to a new location. The gunboats weren't always quick enough to get away, though; sometimes local folks got to them first. In July 1870, Charles Coburn killed Fred Watson on a gunboat. Coburn was arrested and eventually convicted of murder and sentenced to 14 years at Joliet. The night he was arrested, a group of vigilantes from town raided the gunboat and seized two women, then torched the boat. The women were tossed in jail for 6 months. When another gunboat tried to establish itself in the area a couple of years later, vigilantes raided it, too, complete with the seizing of the women and burning of the boat, before catching the owner, a man known as Chippewa Jack.

The village had other businesses besides vice, like a busy stockyard that operated from 1867 until 1920 and a grain terminal that opened in the 1960s for river shipping. When the village incorporated in 1928, East Burlington became Gulfport, a name that was reputedly chosen to emphasize that the town is on a waterway that links to the Gulf of Mexico.

During Prohibition, Gulfport was a busy place for bootleggers. Gulfport had a dance hall called Turner's Hall where booze was served without any attempt to hide it. After Prohibition ended, one of Gulfport's main industries remained booze and bars, and the city was nicknamed "Sin City." Some clubs had strippers (many were students earning money for their tuition at nearby colleges), but music was also a big draw. Country singer Johnny Paycheck once played an impromptu show at a Gulfport bar. The bars clustered on the south side of town, which is why residents who lived on the north side of town could insist that Gulfport was a quiet place to live.

Flooding eventually took a big toll on Gulfport, though. A big flood in 1965 destroyed some businesses, but it was the 2008 flood that really hurt. When two levees failed on June 18, water rushed into Gulfport, separating the village hall from its foundation and submerging many buildings and cutting off US Highway 34. Aside from the loss of businesses, Gulfport lost much of its already small population, as the village shrunk from 207 residents in 2000 to just 54 permanent residents ten years later. Many people left because they didn't have flood insurance and therefore couldn't afford to rebuild. Federal rules at the time didn't require them to own flood insurance, because they had a big levee between them and the river."

6. Biggsville

According to the website illinois.outfitters.com, Biggsville was "laid out by Andrew and Samuel Douglass Oct. 3, 1855. Named in honor of John Biggs who was born in Manchester, England in 1802 and is buried in Cumberland Cemetery 5 miles northwest of the village. Mr. Biggs purchased the Grain Mills near what is now Biggsville in 1843."

By Jane Gibb 1906

EARLY HISTORY OF BIGGSVILLE

The early settlers of this county, like those of the state, had no thought that their solitude would be so soon invaded by the greatest of all improvements, a railroad. Yet such is the case, and today train after train goes hurrying past their doors with their many cars heavily laden with the vast productions of the then unknown country, far beyond the Father of Waters. Though they waited patiently for the development of their country and watched with pride and joy every phase of its onward march and improvement, yet few for a moment anticipated that soon would they be in communication with the great outside world by means of anything other than the old time coach. But in 1852 surveyors and engineers looking for a route for the Peoria and Oquawka railroad (later bought by C. B. & Q.) put in an appearance and the talking of railroad by day and dreaming of cars by night was but an infantile anticipation of what was in waiting for these sturdy sons of toil.

A line was soon established entering this township from Warren county at the center of Sec. 13 and leaving the township near the N. E. corner of Sec. 18, a route which would seem to the minds of ordinary men the most inaccessible as it followed the bottom lands of Henderson creek thru Sec. 16, 17 and 18, necessitating bridging the stream in several places. The line being located, grading was at once begun and soon the great iron horse put in an appearance and infused into the inhabitants new life and vigor. But it was not until 1854 that the Peoria & Oquawka railroad was completed that there was any marked change in this part of the country.

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In that year (1854) Andrew and Samuel C. Douglass plotted the first lots in the town on the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$, T 10, R4, and named it Biggsville, in honor of its early founder, John Biggs. This plot consisted of one row of lots on the north and one on the south side of Main Street and from the depot on the east to the mill race on the west. Thus matters stood until 1856, when Solomon Essex, George and Smith Wax came to the newly laid out, but yet unsettled, town. They each bought lots and built houses which are now occupied by Joe Rodman, David Shook - other vacant. The same fall Michael Farley built two houses on the south side of Main Street near the west end of the new plat. Grain was bought at and shipped from this point by Robert Muir and John McKinney of Oquawka and it was not until the summer of 1857 that the grain trade became a commercial attraction. In that year B. H. Martin purchased the old South Henderson ¹⁸⁵⁷ United Presbyterian church and removed it to Biggsville and where it kept up its former reputation by doing good service as a grain warehouse. Here Mr. Martin actively embarked in the grain trade, which soon grew to large proportions. The first corn bought here by Mr. Martin was shelled by hand, weighted in a flour barrel on a small pair of Fairbanks^k scales and loaded on the cars on track. The growth of business can be better illustrated in giving these figures as the transactions of one day: Three hundred and ninety eight loads of grain received, twenty six cars of grain loaded, twenty two cars of stock loaded, making two full trains of twenty two cars each which was pulled out at night, leaving four cars of grain standing on the side track. The same day Mr. Crosthwait removed the furniture from his parlor and filled the room with grain and then turned his horses out and filled the stable. But in later years Biggsville boasts of no such days of trade. Grain however is still raised in large quantities and

firm and steady market here. ^{F.E.} ~~Mr.~~ Abbey now being the buyer.

Up to 1858 the Peoria and Oquawka and Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroads then operating on the now great Chicago, Burlington & Quincy line had no agent and only sold tickets at Monmouth, Kirkwood and Oquawka junction carrying passengers between these points without stopping at Biggsville unless to take water at the tank then located near the bridge northwest of town. The only passengers sure of an accommodation were large shippers of those expert enough to get off a moving train. In the same year 1858, one Noah Purcell removed a small shanty (called a store) and a stock of goods here from Kirkwood and in a small way engaged in merchandising in calico, tea, coffee, soap, molasses and whiskey. His stay, however, was of short duration and between two days for forgery he left the country, leaving the constable, asleep in the bed they were both to occupy.

After considerable correspondence, Mr. Martin induced Mr. H. W. Crosthwait of Iowa, to come to Biggsville and put in a stock of goods. This was also in 1858. This stock was only such as was most needed, such as tea, coffee, molasses and other groceries and opened out to trade in a corner of Martins's warehouse. It was the custom of Mr. Crosthwait to go to Burlington and purchase his goods by wholesale and bring them back in his arms. Notwithstanding all the difficulties that then presented themselves, Mr. Crosthwait did a flourishing business. He soon ~~the~~ after built a house just opposite the depot, on the extreme east end of ^{Wm} ~~Mrs~~ street, on the south side (now occupied by Clyde Ervin).

The next to enter into the mercantile trade in town was Isaac Myerstine, who occupied the third house west of the east

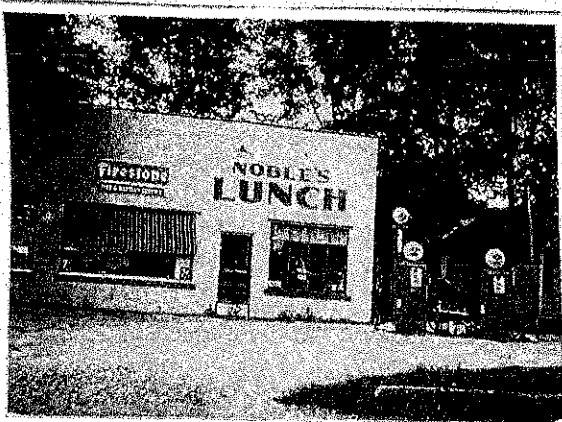
end of Main street, on the south side. He opened up a stock of dry goods, groceries, hardware, drugs and medicine. Between him and Crosthwait on the same side of the street, a hotel was built by A. Talcott and occupied by him as such till the time of his death, in about 1866. A year later the house was sold to James Paul, who ran it until after 1876 when it passed into the hands of other ~~parties~~ parties and is now the property of W. Wiley and occupied by Howard Mekenson.

In 1858 the place began to assume an air of importance as a commercial point, but no postoffice had yet made its appearance and accordingly the people in this vicinity concluded to ask Uncle Sam to grant them one and thus obviate the necessity of going three miles south of town for a weekly mail. After getting the required number of petitioners that old distributor of postoffices quietly dropped a commission as postmaster into the lap of B. H. Martin, who kept postoffice for a few years in one corner of his grain warehouse and the people congratulated themselves hereafter on a daily mail, and that in town. About the same time G. H. Martin was elected and commissioned a justice of the peace, though up till this time there seems to have been but little need of a court of justice, as most all difficulties were settled in a friendly way or the parties would adjourn to some convenient place and knock the difficulties off each other's face.

Biggsville had no resident physician up to 1865 or about that time, when Dr. David McDill came and permanently located here, where he soon built up and enjoyed an extended and profitable practice. The first blacksmithing done in the town was during the building of Biggs's mill in 1844, by John D. Birdsall. This, however was only a private affair and the earliest business of the kind was started in 1856 by Patrick Shaw, whose business it was to mend forks, shovels

iron and steel plows, which had taken the place of the pioneer's rude wooden implements for it must be borne in mind that the first plow used on the prairie was made of wood, with a steel share and drawn by from four to six oxen. These were followed by Len Fuller and J. H. Wiley and later by Dixon and Rodman whose anvils still ring under the muscular stroke of the hammer.

Written by Jane Gibb in 1906, for some of her school work. Material taken from the History of Mercer and Warren Counties.



THIS PICTURE SHOWS NOBLE'S CAFE

CHARLES NOBLE PURCHASED BUILDING AND SMALL HOUSE MIDDLE 1950s. HE PURCHASED FROM LEE ALLAMAN. WHEN FIRST PURCHASED CHARLIE SOLD AND REPAIRED TIRES, SOLD BATTERIES AND PUMPED GAS ALONG W/OPERATING A CAFE, SOLD SOME GROCERIES AND SOLD SCHOOL SUPPLIES. LATER HE DISCONTINUED TIRE AND BATTERY SERVICE AND DISCONTINUED PUMPING GAS. BUILDING WAS THEN USED FOR SELLING GROCERIES, SCHOOL SUPPLIES ALONG W/RUNNING A CAFE. HIS WIFE, RUTH, OPERATED THE CAFE AS CHARLIE CONTINUED TO BE THE AG TEACHER AT BIGGSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL. CHARLES NOBLE CAME TO BIGGSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SPRING OF 1942 AS THE AG TEACHER AND STAYED THRU THE SCHOOL YEAR OF 1957/1958. CHARLES STEVENSON AND FAMILY WERE RENTING THE SMALL HOUSE IN THE 1950s. IN FEBRUARY OF 1965 CATHERINE SMITH MOVED INTO THE SMALL HOUSE AND BEGAN OPERATING THE CAFE. I THINK CATHERINE RENTED THE BUSINESS AND HOME FROM CHARLIE. SOME YEARS LATER CATHERINE'S HEALTH WENT BAD; SHE HAD TO GIVE UP THE CAFE AND EVENTUALLY CHARLIE SOLD BUSINESS AND SMALL HOUSE TO CLIFFORD KNAPP. AS OF THIS DATE, 12/24/04, BOTH BUILDING AND SMALL HOUSE ARE STILL STANDING. OLD CAFE HAS BEEN USED AS A RESIDENCE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND THE LITTLE HOUSE IS STILL BEING USED AS A RESIDENCE. BUILDINGS ARE LOCATED NORTH SIDE OF ROUTE #34, CORNER LEFT OF ROAD THAT GOES BY THE OLD BIGGSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL GYM. CATHERINE SMITH PASSED AWAY IN 1986. CHARLES AND RUTH NOBLE BOTH PASSED AWAY IN 1987 AND CLIFFORD KNAPP PASSED AWAY IN 1981.

Henderson County Family and Genealogy Society
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Library hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Thursday – 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. (open through noon hour)

Closed Sundays and holidays

Genealogy meetings held on the third Thursday of February, April, June, August, and October