

Early Cass County Town Histories, p.2

HISTORY OF PHILADELPHIA - The Cass County Historian, June 1996, source Jessie McNEELY, The Virginia Gazette, March 14, 1930 - Submitted by Marcia Cox -

Readers of the Gazette will remember that some time ago an article written by a good man, John J. PASCHAL, who as now passed away appeared in this paper. Title of Mr. PASCHAL'S article was the "The Deserted Village". A few weeks after this article, William J. HIGGINSON, of Virginia, was talking to the writer, asking what is new in Philadelphia? How is business, etc.? The first thought that occurred to me was "The Deserted Village" by Mr. PASCHAL.

I suggested to Mr. HIGGINSON that he write and tell people what he knew about Philadelphia. He agreed to furnish some "pointers" if I would do the writing. While this is not what would be termed a real thrifty village, it is not deserted by any means, thus we will entitle this article "History of Philadelphia, IL."

A great part of the information in this writing was supplied by Wm. J. HIGGINSON, his son Dedru and a few items by L.E. SHAFER. If there is anything of interest to the readers of this, you are indebted to these gentlemen for it.

About the time Philadelphia was laid out, there was a nation wide movement to lay out towns, build railroads and improve rivers. The State of Illinois as well as many of the citizens borrowed heavily and when the crash came the State Bonds were worth 14 cents on the dollar.

While Cass County was still a part of Morgan County, the School Trustees of Township seventeen, range nine, as a means of selling some of the school lands had a tract of land in section sixteen platted and called it the town of Philadelphia. One of the promoters was March AYERS of Jacksonville, Illinois who named the new village after his native city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The surveying was done in 1836 by Stephen DOUGLAS, who afterwards became a famous statesman.

Philadelphia was formerly in the northwest corner of Lancaster Precinct, Ashland being in the southeast. The first voting place was the then site of Panther Grove school house. About one mile east of its present location. In the last year or two, before the Precinct was divided, the voting place was Gurney.

The first murder in Cass County after it was organized, was in front of McCLAIN'S store located a few rods northwest of where our school house now stands. Mr. FOWLER was sitting on a log outside of the store talking to Alexander BEARD, one of the early settlers, when Nathaniel GRAVES rode up on horseback and without a word shot FOWLER dead.

Richard MCDONALD, a relative of the MCDONALD'S now living in Panther Grove, persuaded GRAVES who dismounted and drew a knife when overtaken. GRAVES struck MCDONALD in the neck, narrowly missing the jugular vein. Others coming up, GRAVES was overpowered and taken to the Beardstown jail. The case went to Green County on a change of venue but GRAVES relatives came up from Kentucky and got him out by pulling a log from the building. GRAVES was lost sight of for years and the case never came to trial.

A short time before the Civil War, corn was 10 cents per bushel, hogs, 2 cents per pound and eggs 4 cents a dozen.

Before the railroad came to Virginia in 1857 and Ashland in 1858, Philadelphia had a few stores and shops and did a thriving business. Henry BEVIS had a store on the southeast corner of the cross roads where the present filling station occupied by J.E. BROWN now stands. The sign on the BEVIS store was slats, places at right angles to a board and part of the letters being on them gave a different reading three ways. The front view was "Cash Store", one side was "Groceries" and the other was "Dry Goods".

In 1860 Joseph F. BLACK had a blacksmith shop in which gang plows, corn cultivators, reapers and headers were manufactured. Joseph BLACK was assisted by his brother, W.L. BLACK in inventing the gang plow and binder elevator arrangement. They would probably be invented the binding mechanism if they had tried a twine binding instead of straw binding. The elevator patent was sold to Woods Co. which manufactured a reaper known as a dropper. That machine would drop enough bound grain to make a bundle. The original reaper required a man to rake the grain off whenever enough had accumulated to make a bundle. The first self binder used wire. The Woods Co. merged with one of the larger companies. W.L. BLACK invented the automatic dropper for the corn planter, made by marking lines crossways across the field and pulling a lever whenever the planter came to that mark. The first drop line had buttons on a rope and the planter left the line behind on the opposite side of which it took it in.

The shop operated by BLACK BROS. was formerly located between Philadelphia and the north side of the road. The few years

of board fence instead of hedge on the crest of the hill marks the exact spot. From there it was moved to a location a few yards southeast of the old church building now occupied by D.E. KING for an implement shed.

Dr. G.V. BLACK, a brother of W.L. and John BLACK, became a world renowned dentist. His statute occupying a prominent place in Lincoln Park, Chicago. He invented the dentists drill, several amalgams for filling teeth and many discoveries. The list of his writings on Dentistry fill thirty five pages of the Medical Records. He gained the reputation abroad of being the best dentist in the world.

Llewlyn DAVIS who is remembered by many around Philadelphia, was a blacksmith in the 114th IL Regiment during the Civil War. A mule turned up that all the blacksmiths in the Division could not shoe. Finally one day, when all was quiet, DAVIS took the mule to a dark tent and covered himself with a sack on which there was a coating of bran and salt. When the soldiers came back the mule was shod. The Regimental Band was assembled and DAVIS much made over.

After the war, Mr. DAVIS operated a blacksmith shop here and made more than \$1000 per year which at that time was considered a mountain of money.

Until 1843, Lancaster was the halfway stop between Beardstown and Springfield. The inn was built by a sea captain by the name of DUTCH and is now occupied as a residence by Granville SMITH.

Lancaster postoffice was moved to Philadelphia in 1870 and the P.O. name changed to Philadelphia. Shortly after the railroads were built in 1871. Mrs. ENGLISH had charge of the Postoffice until the station agent, Elijah STOUT, took over. Philadelphia Precinct was organized in 1876 and Ashland at the same time, thus making Lancaster a thing of the past.

Washington school house was built in 1854 and Charles HIGGINSON was the first teacher. A new building was erected in 1889 and moved to the present site in 1901. A Disciples church was moved from Princeton to Philadelphia in 1867 and set up in 1868. The Bell telephone line was extended through Philadelphia in 1896.

It would not be out of place to mingle a story. During the Civil War there was a Democate speaking in Petersburg. A train was made up on a few freight grain cars but mostly flat cars without any covering and with boards for seats. It was a time when it was mania for carrying revolvers. At Tallula a bevy of dogs came out to bark. volleys were fired but how many dogs were hurt I never heard. Coming through Tallula in the evening the train passed close to the water tank. Some one on the grain car pulled the rope and a stream of water poured on the people in flat cars. The train stopped and the man who pulled the rope would have been mobbed if he had been known. The conductor said he would do best to find the man and have him fined. The man who pulled the rope was from Philadelphia but this was not known until long afterward.

In the early days on the old George VIRGIN homestead, a Kentuckian, James HILL was owner and operator. Mr. HILL had a Kentuckian as a helper. The church, afterwards brought to Philadelphia, was then at Princeton. When going to church Mr. HILL drove his carriage team of high grade Kentucky roadsters. His helper on horseback, wearing a shining silk hat would take the team at the stiles and have them back then it was time to go home. One day, when HILL'S man was currying the team, one bit him. He took the whip to teach the horse a lesson, just then Mr. HILL appeared on the scene and started to chastise the man but HILL was soon across the manger in the grip of the groom. HILL shouted "enough" and that settled the matter. They remained friends and when he was married HILL gave a team of horses.

During its infancy a family by the name of SLOAN lived in Philadelphia. One day the father had been drinking, he came home with a new broadcloth suit, his wife told him he was foolish and that he had better save his money. He became offended and began to abuse her but there was two boys, almost grown and when they took a hand, the old gentleman was out of the door shouting murder. The town gathered together and lulled the disturbance. Judge MATHIS came and bound SLOAN over to keep the peace.

Another time SLOAN had some ground rented and his sons were harvesting the crop. SLOAN came out and complained of the progress. He then got up on the old fashioned reaper to throw off grain. His son James drove very fast over the rough ground. SLOAN shouted but Jim paid no attention and finally SLOAN ordered Jim home. A family was going to Iowa about that time and one of the boys invited Jim to go along which he did. SLOAN and James SUFFERN started in pursuit and overtook them at Beardstown. They left Jim to hold the team while they stepped in to get a drop but when they came out, Jim had left the team and swam over the river. They then continued the pursuit and the next time they overtook Jim, he was at the top of the hill opposite Keokuk, Iowa. At this place, the second wagon was waiting for the first to reach the bottom of the hill so that it could follow safely. SLOAN and SUFFERN then appeared with an officer and hand cuffs and this time they took Jim back home.

In 1874, Wm. BAKER and S.M. HARDING operated a store just across the road west of B.O. SPRINGER now lives. They sold out to Mr. BRAWHILL who conducted business until the building burned. About this time John DAVENPORT erected a building on the spot where the Phila Farmers Co. store now stands. Mr. DAVENPORT'S idea was to conduct a saloon there but the feeling was against this so the idea was abandoned. He then sold the building to George RICKARD who operated a general store. This

building also burned.

About 1880 Wm. ROSS and John J. HIGGINSON erected a building on the corner just west of the present voting place where they operated a store until selling out to Charles MATHIS and W.O. SYBRANT.

In 1884 J.H. HINCHEE had a store on the lot now occupied by John SHAFER. Mr. HINCHEE continued business but a shoer time and then bought out MATHIS and SYBRANT. In 1887 J.J. HIGGINSON bought the lot on which the RICKARD store was burned and erected a building for handling implements. His partner for a short time was A.G. EPLER. HIGGINSON also bought grain and was agent for the R.R. Co. some three years.

In 1898 Gilbert McDONALD built a store just north of B.O. SPRINGER's house. Well, this building burned down and then McDONALD erected a combined dwelling house and store town blocks north and across the road from the burned building.

My first visit to Philadelphia was in 1891 where a protracted meeting was in progress conducted by Rev. BOWLES. The church was packed nearly every evening. It was a thriving condition then and continued so for many years. The officers of the church were, Abraham BAILEY, Mrs. John BUCKLEY, Wm. J. HIGGINSON, Harvey SHAFER, A.W. ELDER and Wm. McLIN. All except Mr. HIGGINSON have passed away. At their passing, so did the church as none of the later generation would carry on the work. The church ceased in 1920.

The first grain elevator in Philadelphia was built by A.C. MAINS in 1896. He continued until 1910 when he sold out to Philadelphia Farmers Elevator Co. These proprietors wrecked the MAINS elevator and erected a new more modern one which is still a thriving business.

In 1891 Philadelphia had two General stores, two blacksmith shops, one doctor, and the B and O R.R. section house here. One store was operated by J.J. HIGGINSON, the other by J.M. HINCHEE who was also Postmaster.

The HIGGINSON store changed many owners, E.T. HARRISON and Co., S.M. HARDING, A.C. MAINS, SPRINGER AND McNEELEY and Phila. Farmers Co-Operative Co. HARRISON also built a new elevator and later sold to S.M. HARDING., then C.W. SAVAGE and E.B. CONOVER, who then sold to ROSS BROS. both elevators are now opened by Phila. Farmers Co-Operative Co.

In conclusion I wish to say that all dates may not be correct but I have tried as best I could. Philadelphia would be a real live village if those living in and around it would give it the interest and patronage they should. Jessie McNEELEY.

CHANDLERVILLE 1872 - The Cass County Historian, December 1999, source - Jeffersonian, April 26, 1872

On Saturday evening last, the senior of this paper headed to this little city. Arriving, we made our way to the BEVIER HOUSE, the only hotel in the place. The BEVIER brothers, proprietors, extended due courtesy and we felt "at home". Supper being ready we could not well refuse to take a bite. It was unless to make inquiries in regards to the bill of fare elsewhere, so we concluded to rest easy and be contended until the servant girl made her appearance. In a few minutes the little waiter girl came skipping along and full supply of palatable grub, to say the fare was good enough for anybody, tells the tale without further remarks. After tea, we enjoyed a "real" old fashioned smoke and pleasant chit chat and it was near midnight before we retired. Our little bed was indeed a pleasant one and the room well furnished in every respect, clean and tidy. We slept as sound as a dollar and awakened to the rays of old Sol. We lit out of our resting place, clothed, washed our face and hands with pure cistern water and ate a good substantial breakfast.

The Sabbath was greeted with chiming of bells. Felicity was observed in the general demeanor of old and young, the kind of simplicity which is seldom in the noise and bustle of a city. Sabbath school over, the signal was given for devine services. Being anxious to hear some able minister, we visited the Congregational Church and had the pleasure of listening to Rev. BEAN, pastor. The reverend gentleman, a man of learning, manners easy, audience attentive and the choir good indeed.

In the afternoon, accompanied by the younger BEVIER, we visited the cemetery, located on the summit of a beautiful mound. When wandering through here, many neat tombstones and monuments attracted our attention. to some extent the cemetery is neglected but we were pleased to learn that the citizens intend to devote more in decorating and otherwise improving. From this point, the visitor has a fine view of the city. the scenery is picturesque and imposing. Looking to our right could be seen the traditional Sangamon, wandering through the bottom lands. Casting our eyes in a norhtwesterly direction, mound after mound lifted their ancient looking grandeur high above the valley, low that would fill the heart and mind of a poet with feelings of no ordinary character. Those who delight in gazing upon the beauties of nature should pay this "garden spot" a visit. Chandlerville is destined to be a town of considerable importance and wealth.

Monday morning we thought it proper to form the acquaintance of some of the businessmen of the place. Wending our way to Messers J.A. PADDOCK and CO's furniture establishment, to our surprise a perfect avalanche of goods was to be seen, from the commonest to the finest and sold on the most liberal terms. The firm is doing a thriving business. We formed the acquaint-

ance of L.M. DICK, of the firm of Henry DICK and CO. dry goods merchants and we found him to be a genial gentleman. Next destination was Joseph M. TOLLES, cigar manufactory. this gentleman is doing well and knows how to make a No. 1 cigar. Our thanks are tendered to him for a pocket full of his best. Leaving TOLLES, we made for the house of P. NEFF, dealer in staples and fancy groceries and found him at his post selling goods with a vim and upon the most liberal terms. We wish him great success. Other establishments attracted our attention, one being the millinery emporium of Mrs. M.W. MUSELLER and Mrs. E.M. WAY. they are supplied with everything to please the ladies.

Chandlerville is well built up and all the business houses recently constructed are substantial brick, from one to three stories high. Its churches neat in appearance, private residences, many of them beautiful and the public school an ornament to the town.

In the afternoon as the sun began towards the west, we accepted an invitation from our friend BEVIER to take a seat in the spring wagon for the purpose of taking a ride. In a few minutes, steeds landed on the substantial bridge which has recently been built across the raging SANGAMON. We are of the impression this structure will prove to be a Gibraltar against the waves of the river should it "spread itself" sometime. Returning we went on the Beardstown road, a distance of three miles. to the right of the road lay the richest and most beautiful land we have ever seen. We must close. Here's to Chandlerville and it's hospitable denizens, hoping the day is not too distant when she will be a city of note, throughout the country.

ASHLAND - Ashland is located on highways 3 and 125, in Cass County, Illinois. Founded in 1857, the town's Sesquicentennial, celebrating 150 years, was held in 2007. Ashland has A-C Central High School, a Methodist, Catholic, Christian, and Baptist Church. Community societies include Masons, Woodman, Eastern Star, Odd Fellow, and Royal Neighbors. Little is known of the history of its founding. **Note:** If any of our researchers have found information that we can include, please contact Cass County Historical and Genealogical Society at Cass County Historical and Genealogical Society's Email address below.