

# The First One Hundred Years

One hundred years ago this spring Section 37, Township 57, Range 10 West, Shelby county, was covered with prairie grass and rabbits. A road, more like a trail, led the infrequent travelers from the populated communities of Old Clinton and Jonesburg, now North Fork, to Shelbyville, Oak Dale or Walkersville. A high point, hardly sufficient to be called a hill, raised itself above this flatland, and no trees broke the view of any who may have paused to look about them.

From the east came clouds of dust and the sounds of people. Thirty teams of horses with a hundred or more men, wearily moved westward grading the roadbed for the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, which had reached Palmyra and was planned to go through Shelbyville but had changed direction to take advantage of the fewer bridges and lower grade needed for prairie country.

Summer was almost at hand when representatives of the Railroad Company selected the above section, township and range, which was part of its subsidy from the government, and

because it was almost equidistant from surrounding towns, for the location of a town. It was laid out and among the early arrivals was a minister, his name lost in the passing years, who was given the privilege of putting name to this newest of Shelby county towns.

A dearly beloved daughter, Vina, gave this pioneer preacher a desire to perpetuate her name. Taking the county, "Shelby," which was named for General Isaac Shelby, first governor of Kentucky, and "Vina," he combined them by dropping the "y" and the "V" to make "Shelb—ina." This story has been handed down from generation to generation in the Morgan family, coming from David Morgan, third settler in the town.

The city was laid out on August 11, 1857 by Josiah Hunt, acting as attorney for William Osborne of Waterville, N. Y. Major Hunt was the land commissioner for the new railroad.

The boundaries of the original city comprised an area  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north and south and one mile east and west.

## Early Settlers Of The New Town—Shelbina

The background of Shelbina is the old South. Whether influenced by Daniel Boone or by the exodus of their neighbors from Virginia, the younger generation pushed westward—westward from Virginia and North Carolina into Kentucky. Maybe the family stayed one or two generations in Kentucky, and then the urge for more land pushed it on to Missouri.

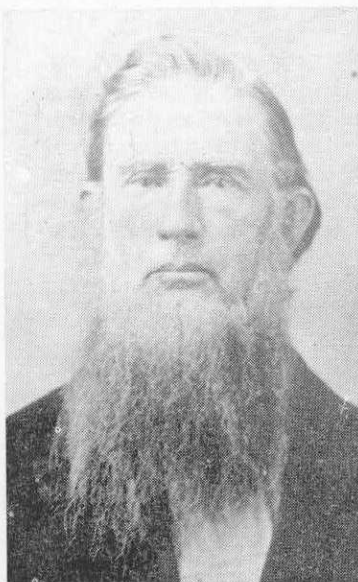
Here in Missouri the pioneer who had pride in his family and love for his country and community, endeavored to bring to his new surroundings the best that he could of the culture of the South, and as soon as possible help establish churches, schools, and law and order. Sometime he erred when he chose his farm land, for he felt he must settle where there was water. In general the pioneer settler of the rural section strove to obtain more and more land, so that when he died he could leave each child a farm so that descendant would not be forced to push further west, where the land might not be so good.

Thus it was in the year of 1857, when the railroad came through this section of Shelby county, a few settlers started the little rural town of Shelbina to serve as a trading point for the farmers close by in Monroe county, and in its own county.

**Henson J. Thomas** was the first settler in Shelbina, coming here from Monroe county, Mo., in the spring of 1857. He kept the Thomas Hotel for Martin P. Thomas, his son.

Henson Thomas was born in Washington county, Ky., in 1803. He was married to Mary Selby of Kentucky on March 11, 1832. They were parents of four children—Richard, Martin, Henry and Nancy.

In 1850 Henson Thomas and family came to Missouri, having been called to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Paris. He was instrumental in organizing the Salem Baptist Church, and served as the



first pastor of that church. He was pastor of the Baptist Church in Shelbina in 1860. He also preached at the Mt. Prairie Missionary Baptist Church and the Crooked Creek Baptist Church. He served as a Baptist minister for 40 years.

Henson Thomas died September 1882, only three months after the death of his wife. They are buried in the cemetery at Crooked Creek Church south of Shelbina.

Several descendants of the first settler still reside in and near Shelbina. Through the lineage of Henry Thomas is Floyd Thomas (son of William Richard Thomas), who is a great grandson of the first settler. Through Nancy Thomas, who married Ben Phillips (father of Nat Phillips) is Mrs. Roe Harrison (Jaunita Phillips), a great granddaughter of the first settler. Mrs. Harrison is a teacher in the Shelbina Public Schools. Then through the lineage of Martin Thomas is Mrs. Mose Fitzpatrick of Shelbyville (Mae Thomas), and her brother, Bill Thomas, northeast of Shelbina. They are great grandchildren of Henson Thomas. Richard Thomas' son, George, died in Kansas City and is buried in the Shelbina cemetery.

**William A. Reid** has been named the second settler in Shelbina, coming here in 1857. Mr. Reid was born January 24, 1829 in Rappahannock county, Va., the son of Alfred and Patsy Rector Reid. At the age of 15 years he started clerking in a general store in his home town. He remained in this store until he came to Missouri and located in Shelbina.

He secured the establishment of the first postoffice in Shelbina—Hannibal being the most convenient postoffice for Shelbina until that time. Mr. Reid acted as postmaster from the opening of the office until the inauguration of President Lincoln in 1861. The postoffice was in Mr. Reid's general store

