

Shelbina's Neighboring Towns And Villages

Situated as it is, in the central southern part of Shelby county, Shelbina's trade territory extends not only throughout its own county but also into northern Monroe county. Throughout this large area are quite a number of towns and villages which are still flourishing while others exist only in the memory of those older people who knew them when they too had their stores and postoffices, blacksmiths and doctors. Each of these communities has its own distinct history, which, if space and time would permit the writing, would comprise a book of its own. However, briefly shall be mentioned these communities because development of a once rugged pioneer country into one of high productivity affording its people all of the advantages incident to modern living.

OAK DALE

In this early community supplies were obtained from Palmyra. Breadstuff was ground at Gatewood's and Massie's Mills on North River. In the winter of 1833-34, however, William B. Broughton brought on a small stock of general merchandise and opened a store in his own house. The same winter he procured a numerously signed petition asking for the establishment of a postoffice. The petition being forwarded to Washington was graciously received by the Postoffice Department and its prayer granted. The office was established at the Broughton residence and called Oak Dale, the name it has borne ever since. Mr. Broughton was the first postmaster and this was the first postoffice in the county. Mails came in from Palmyra once a week.

WALKERSVILLE

The existence of this little hamlet is now only a memory. In 1838 David O. Walker built a mill on the bank of Salt River some four miles northwest of Shelbina. At that time there was no Shelbina and people of this area took their grain to the Walker mill for grinding. Just a few miles west of Walkersville Bacon Chapel was built by the Methodists in 1845. The first services were conducted by Father Eads. The building was of log and clapboard construction and stood for twenty years, being succeeded by a more imposing and commodious building. George Bacon deeded the site to the church. Regular services have continued through the years to the present time. Many of Shelbina's first citizens came from Walkersville neighborhood. The big stone burrs used in grinding the grain in the old mill at Walkersville were dug up out of the sand near the river some twenty years ago and brought to the library lawn in Shelbina. There they can be seen today, gradually sinking into the earth, their once busy usefulness forgotten.

LENTNER

It is said this village derived its name from Mr. Lentner Lathrope who purchased a large acreage of land adjacent to the right-of-way at the time the railroad was built. Lentner is about six miles west of Shelbina. When the exact location of the railroad right-of-way was established, Dr. A. G. Wood, who was then living at Walkersville and practicing his profession there, moved to Lentner. In addition to his practice of medicine he had served as the first postmaster at Walkersville. At an early date Ed Hixon operated a general store and postoffice in Lentner. Other early storekeepers at Lentner were a Mr. Freshwater, J. H. Melson, a Mr. Bilbro and J. T. Dines. Dr. A. E. Wood, father of Dr. A. G. Wood, lived and practiced his profession at Oak Dale. Dr. A. G. Wood became the first president of the Bank of Lentner along with John T. Perry as cashier. Then, in later years Dr. A. M. Wood, a son

of Dr. A. G. Wood, lived and practiced medicine at Lentner. At the time of this writing Dr. A. J. Wood, the son of Dr. A. M. Wood, is connected with the U. S. military forces as a physician.

BETHEL

The first building on the present site of the town of Bethel was the dwelling house of Peter Stice, who came to the locality in the fall of 1835, having previously entered the land on both sides of North River. In November of that year Stice threw a dam across the river and erected a small water mill, a "corn cracker," which was afterward resorted to by the settlers for miles around. In the spring of 1844, Adam Shuele, David Wagner and Christian Presser came out from Pennsylvania or Ohio, and bought the land on and about the site from Chinn, Rookwood and Vandiver. In the fall of 1844 Dr. William Keil, George Miller and three or four others came and laid the foundations of a colony, of which Dr. Keil was the acknowledged leader and head. Dr. Keil was a native of Prussia, but came directly from Pittsburg, Pa. He was a physician and possessed many accomplishments and intellectual attainments. He belonged to no church organization or denomination whatever, and never sought to find any. He claimed the Bible to be the word of God and his doctrines and sentiments were akin to those of certain of the primitive Christians. All property was owned in common. Everybody worked. The affairs of the colony were managed by Dr. Keil, but under him were trustees and division superintendents. No man, not even Dr. Keil, owned more than another. Dr. Keil's residence was located a mile east of the town site and was called Elam. As years passed church buildings were erected and schools were established. Moses Miller was the first teacher. He was followed by Esq. Harrison Baer and Charles Knight. Many stores, factories and shops came into existence. On April 10, 1872 a serious fire caused the loss of most of the business property of the colony. Soon after that Dr. Keil and a group of the colonists migrated to Oregon, where Dr. Keil died in 1879. When Dr. Keil left the colony Dr. Wolf became the leader. He was succeeded by Andrew Geisy who also went to Oregon in 1876. Geisy was followed by Jacob G. Miller, the last one the colony had. In 1879 or about that time, a general dissolution of the colony was effected. It took some time to cut up the land and town property and give everyone his due, but at last everything was done and settled, and everyone was satisfied. There was no lawsuit, no controversy, no bitterness, no murmuring. The affairs were all wound up in a manner satisfactory to everyone. Each member received legal title to his property and began life on his own account. The town was incorporated as a town November 6, 1883. Fred Steecher, Henry Will, W. D. Bower, Philip Steinbach and George Bauer constituted the first board of trustees.

EMDEN

This village, although unincorporated, has been the center of activity in North River Township for many, many years. It has a rich and interesting history of its own. Family names of early residents of this community include the Goodwins, the Davis family, the Sharps, the Martins, the Calverts, the Simons family, the Parsons family and many others. Dr. Delaney lived and practiced medicine at Emden for many years until his death about 1920. "Uncle Dick" Goodwin became the first president of the Farmers Bank of Emden which was organized in 1904. Richard Davis was its first cashier. Interesting to note is the fact that this bank is still operating on its original capital funds, its charter having been extended from