

CHAPTER XIV.

SHELBY COUNTY—CENSUS OF SHELBY COUNTY—CLARENCE—SHELBYVILLE—SHELBYNA —HUNNEWELL—THE TEMPLE OF JUSTICE—COURT HOUSE BURNED—THREE CLARENCE FIRES—SHELBY COUNTY CONGRESSMAN.—THE BETHEL COLONY.

SHELBY COUNTY.

Shelby county, Missouri, is beyond controversy one of the most desirable counties in the state in which to live and prosper. We have finely improved farms and farm houses; fine, richly yielding orchards, bearing a great variety of fruits. Fruits of all kinds grow to perfection, of large size and superior flavor. There are vegetable gardens in which grow the greatest variety, quantity and quality. We have a good climate, excellent, pure water, thus adding to the healthfulness of its people. Rivers, creeks and running springs are numerous. Our county carries no bonds or interest bearing indebtedness to swell our taxes. Our population is over fourteen thousand. We have good schools. We own 323,000 beautiful broad acres of the most richly yielding soil on earth. Our prairies are gently' rolling and adapted to all kinds of grain, the soil rich and productive, yielding in rich returns of wheat, corn, oats, rye, blue grass, clover and timothy. Our timber abounds in maple, oak, walnut, hickory, elm and ash. We surpass all other counties in points of excellences. In summary, our location, our fertile soil, our climate and healthfulness, our schools and social advantages, all the prerequi-

sites to be considered in choosing a home land, are to be found in good old Shelby. We grow the tallest corn, the biggest pumpkins, the reddest apples, the most verdant blue grass, the finest cattle, hogs, sheep; while here flourish the prettiest girls, the handsomest men, and a par excellent and most intelligent, most law-abiding people to be found in existence. We support no saloon and thus boycott all that class of humanity. We are wide-awake, peace-loving, progressive people, and welcome to our midst all congenial, law-abiding people.

CENSUS OF SHELBY COUNTY.

	1870.	1880.	1890.	1900.	1910.
Population	10,000	14,024	15,642	16,167
Shelbina	1,146	1,287	1,691	1,733
Clarence	444	570	1,087	1,184
Shelbyville	530	619	486	777
Hunnewell	425	427	473

At the "World's Corn Show," held at Columbus, Ohio, in January, 1911, Mr. James Douglass, of Shelbina, was awarded the medal for the ten best ears of yellow dent corn over all competitors, thus bringing to Shelby county the fame of having produced the best yellow corn in the world, and incidentally to Mr. Douglass a great demand for seed corn from all parts of the country.

CLARENCE.

Clarence, the second city in Shelby county. Its location is at the extreme western border, about two miles east of the Macon boundary line. It has a present population of 1,500. Its main business streets run parallel with the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railway. The busi-

ness houses of the little city vie with any in the county and draw trade from long distances in every direction, being in control of public-spirited men, whose enterprise have gained a reputation which promises well for its future. The business houses are well built and convenient and modern within. The healthful location, that of a rolling prairie, with its abundance of good living water, the rich farm lands lying all about, the unsurpassed market facilities, enjoying the distinction of being the heaviest shipping point between Hannibal and Kansas City, render it one of the most prosperous, enterprising and promising little cities in the state. It is populated by a people thoroughly intelligent, moral, progressive and well-to-do, and few cities can offer to the capitalist or home seeker superior advantages for safe investments. The schools are forging to the front with all the push and vim of the modern educator. The fine church buildings attest the healthfulness of the moral and religious tone of the town. Its people are cordial and hospitable, all uniting in making the town the peer of any in the state. The surrounding farm lands perhaps surpass any for fertility of soil, and the perfect growth of all grains and fruits common in this latitude. Stock raising is every man's vocation, from the fact that our abundance of grain, together with the great blue grass prairies which stretch over the territory make it a chief pleasure of life. So well located, Clarence can but prosper from year to year more abundantly and her growth cannot be otherwise than steady. She possesses one of the best flouring mills and elevators in the county. She boasts of having a superior

electric light plant, owned and operated by the city. The city is practically out of debt. Her streets are clean and well kept, and her beauty is enhanced by her long stretches of granitoid walks. On either side of her railroad are stretches of verdant green, dotted with beautiful shade trees, the same known as her city parks.

Clarence has three splendid growing banks, which bespeak her welfare. The service within is business, yet accommodating.

She has one of the most modern and best equipped telephone buildings to be found anywhere in a town of her size, with a system containing 11,000 feet of cable. The proprietors, Naylor & Eagle, require a service of its force which is in keeping with such modern conveniences. It boasts of two good newspapers, representing both the great political parties. Mayor Dimmitt, one of the best to be found anywhere, is progressive and public spirited and pilots well her public enterprises. Her beautiful homes and well kept lawns are her pride. She is destined to a steady growth and a sure future.

SHELBYVILLE.

By Hon. John D. Dale.

Shelbyville, the capitol of Shelby county, is situate just north of the geographical center of the county. She has about 1,000 people. Her citizenship is of the rare quality which makes Shelby county known all over the state for her morality, sobriety and intellectuality. Her financial institutions are among the safest in the state. The Shelbyville bank is an old institution, established in A. D. 1874, with Dr. Phillip Dimmitt cashier and John T. Cooper president. Both of

these old pioneers have long since passed over the great divide, leaving the bank in the hands of Prince Dimmitt as president and A. M. Dunn as cashier. This bank has a capital stock of \$20,000 and a surplus fund of \$17,000. The Citizens' bank was organized in the year A. D. 1894, with John J. Hewett as president and W. W. Mitchell as cashier. This bank has a capital of \$20,000 and under its present management, with John J. Hewett as its present president and J. M. Pickett as cashier, it has grown to be one of the safe banks of the country. We have five churches, to wit: The Methodist Episcopal South, the Baptist, the Christian, the Presbyterian and the Holiness. All of these churches are active in spreading the Gospel and have left their imprint upon the people of the county.

Our graded public school is second to none in the county, and the citizens of this city are proud to boast of our good school. The colored public school is good and the colored folk patronize it well. The mercantile interests are not only well represented, but Shelbyville has some of the best stores in northeast Missouri. The department store of William Winetroub Sons' is a first-class establishment which would do credit to a city three times the size of Shelbyville. The dry goods house of James Edelen & Co. contains a well selected, large stock of dry goods and ladies' furnishings and clothing and is a nice store.

The two hardware stores carry large stocks in their line, and the old-established hardware store of N. C. Miller is patronized for many miles around.

Our two drug stores are up to date and handle drugs as medicines only. The

drug house of A. M. Priest is one of the oldest houses of the kind in the county, and while the drug store of J. W. Penn is not so 'old, it is a well-equipped store and up to date in every respect.

There are five grocery stores, all up to date, and two restaurants, two grist mills and feed stores, four blacksmith shops, where wagons are manufactured and repaired, one poultry and egg house, one newspaper and one opera house and two livery stables.

The newspaper, the Shelby County Herald, is an old-established paper, and is widely known for its advocacy of morality and such other principals as are for the best interest of the community. The opera house is a little beauty, with a seating capacity of 600. All but two of our business houses are of brick, fronting on the court house square. Our streets are wide and admirably shaded with elm and maple trees, which in the summer time are so inviting that the weary wanderer cannot forego the pleasure of seeking the shaded lawn and sipping the cool water from the spring well that is located near the court house.

Shelbyville has four lawyers, to wit: John D. Dale, V. L. Drain, E. M. Obryen and J. T. Perry.

Three physicians, to wit: Dr. W. M. Carson, Dr. John Maddox and Dr. P. C. Archer.

The court house is a large commodious brick and stone structure, equipped with steam heat and water and each office containing a fireproof vault for the records.

The school house is a large stone and brick building with basement and modern steam heating plant. The residence district will compare favorably with any city of its size in the state and, above

all, it is peopled with a class of citizens who are widely known for their morality and refinement.

There are two lumber yards, the Cotton Lumber Company and the North Missouri. Both of these yards carry large stocks and do a large business.

The Shelby County Abstract & Loan Company is an institution that every county must have and this one is managed on correct principles.

There is yet room for enterprising business men in Shelbyville and such will never regret having located here.

The electric light plant is not so large as some in the county, but it is sufficient for all purposes here and is now in fine shape and giving good satisfaction.

Of course, Shelbyville has a postoffice and every morning go out from this office six rural carriers.

Singleton Brothers, who own one of the grist mills and feed stores, also own and operate the elevator.

Our furniture stores are among the best in the county. The old-established house of Pickett Bros. carry a large stock, well selected, and also do an undertaking business.

J. W. Thompson & Son, the proprietors of the other furniture store, are equipped nicely in their line and also do an undertaking business.

There are two jewelry stores and they are both a credit to the city. Both carry pianos in connection with their jewelry business.

One harness shop, which is the oldest establishment of the sort in the county, having been established over fifty years ago, and the present proprietor, Julius Ritter, Jr., was reared at the bench in

this store. He carries a large stock and is an expert workman.

One telephone system, owned and managed by R. B. Parker.

There are two drays, delivery wagons and a bus line—in fact, all the minor enterprises that go with an up-to-date city.

We have as good or better railroad service than any city on the Burlington. The Shelby County railway trains enter our city three times daily, and with it comes the mail, express and freight.

Our hotel is a commodious brick structure and admirably located, with a beautiful lawn and large shade trees. The proprietor, J. L. Gaines, has built this hostelry up to a first-class hotel.

SHELBYVILLE.

By W. O. L. Jewett.

Fifty-five years ago a strip of prairie extended nearly across the southern edge of Shelby county, from Salt river on the east to the Macon line. This prairie was covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, often six to nine feet in height. A few farms jutted out of the timber into the edge of this prairie, but it was mainly unbroken—just as Nature had made it.

Railroads often, probably usually, follow the line of least resistance. So when the Hannibal & St. Joe was laid out, being compelled by its charter to touch Palmyra, it took from there a southwesterly course for sixteen to eighteen miles, and then bore slightly north of west, so as to follow the prairie and avoid the breaks near the streams both north and south. Its course across the county west of Salt river is nearly straight, but where it reaches the Macon line it is about four

miles north of where it crosses the east line of Shelby.

During 1857 the railroad was built as far west as where Shelbina stands; a station was made on the level prairie and named Shelbina, being nearly in the center of the county east and west, and two and one-half miles from the Monroe line. Then Walkersville, three and one-half miles to the northwest, on Salt river, was an important trading point, and Old Clinton, nine miles to the southeast, also on Salt river, was a still more important commercial center. But these, like most towns missed by a few miles, were killed by the railroad.

Soon as this station was located cheap business houses were erected; first on the north side, and business began. Shelbyville, the county seat of Shelby, and Paris, the county seat of Monroe, were without railroad communications, and Shelbina became the shipping point for these towns, and for all the county north and south for more than twenty miles. With these advantages business thrived and the town grew rapidly. This was checked by the war, which broke out in 1861. Among the early business men were Kemper Bros., R. A. Moffett, Samuel Hardy, John J. Foster, John I. and William Taylor, William A. Reid, George Hill, John Myer, S. G. Parsons, C. A. Whitehead, and then Charles Miller, Charles and Morris Goodman, Daniel G. and Columbus Minter, Huron Miller, "Clabe" True, and Newton and John Bates. Among these Henson Thomas should not be forgotten, for he was an extensive real estate owner and dealer. Several saloons to dispense intoxicants to the railroad builders and others were among the first to occupy business lots.

In the fall and winter of 1857 the Thomas hotel, a good frame structure, was erected where the Waverly hotel now stands. This hotel, we are told, did a large business in the early days.

The early days of this town were like those of most other western villages, not as orderly as they should be. There were many rough characters about and much drinking. Saturdays often witnessed a number of fights. This condition continued until near the close of the war.

The first religious services were held in William A. Reid's store by Elder Powell, of the Baptist church, in the fall of 1858. Mr. Reid had recently come from Old Virginia, and he was a man of character and force and soon became a leader, not only in business matters, but also in building up the M. E. church South and in Sabbath school work. He became the wealthiest man of the place and died in 1890 at the age of sixty-four. Religious services were held in the Thomas hotel and afterwards in Miller's hall on Center street. It was 1867 before any church edifice was erected, and that was built by the Southern Methodists and Baptists on the site now occupied by the Pictorium.

The war checked the material as well as *the intellectual and moral* growth of the place. During the troubles school opportunities were few. Charles M. King and some others had given instruction to the youths before the war and part of the time during the continuance of the strife.

Speaking of Mr. Ring, who afterwards became a lawyer and leading citizen of Shelbina, recalls an incident during Bill

Anderson's raid on the town in 1864. This outlaw had the citizens lined up the better to rob them of valuables. Mr. King was always a nicely dressed gentleman, and when the bandits demanded his valuables and he could produce only \$1, they cursed him and handed the dollar back. Judge Daniel Taylor had tobacco in the depot to be shipped and he approached Bill Anderson and asked the privilege of getting his tobacco out before the building was fired. The bandit leveled his revolver at Taylor's face and said he believed he should shoot the d—d Yankee, but finally allowed him to get his tobacco out and then burned the depot. The Federal authorities assessed \$20,000 against the people of Shelbina and vicinity to pay the damage to the railroads. The military authority acted upon the false theory that the people of the vicinity were in sympathy with the raiders and could have prevented the damage; whereas they were as much opposed to the raiders as the military authorities themselves. Father D. S. Phelan interceded with Gen. Rosecrans and he revoked the order. This was the last raid of the war.

With peace in 1865 came a new period of growth, and since then improvement has been continuous, though there have been periods when the town seemed to be at a standstill. This was especially so from '73 to '78, during the hardest times this country has ever seen. Then real estate values depreciated to less than half their former price and things were stagnant. Again during the eighties there was a period of depression, when business did not flourish. Whenever farm products are so depressed that agriculture makes small re-

turns, towns like Shelbina, dependent on rural trade, do not grow rapidly.

In 1866 a fire consumed the Thomas hotel and all the business houses fronting towards the railroad, west of Center street, and these were the main ones. The fire broke out when all were asleep and hence nearly everything the buildings contained were destroyed. Families living in the second story of the building barely escaped with their lives. It was determined to rebuild in a more substantial form and the three-story Masonic block and the two business houses, both two-story, east of this, were erected in 1867. The hotel was not built until 1871 and was named the "Waverly."

Again in 1874 Shelbina was visited by a destructive fire, which also came in the night, and all the west side of Center street from the bricks fronting the railroad south were swept away; Charles Miller's furniture store, at the extreme southern end, alone remaining. As the hard times were on the country, rebuilding was slow; but finally that large block of Bedford stone fronts was developed. A few years after the '74 fire the east side of Center street was also laid in ashes. Both sides of Center street are now lined with solid brick buildings. In 1881 Walnut street, east of Center street, began to develop, and it now has more brick buildings on the south side than there are on one side of any other street.

Shelbina has been blessed with a lot of live, enterprising merchants, who have advertised and drawn trade from a long distance. They have made for themselves commodious places, in which to display and keep their goods, and

have also kept an excellent quality and variety of articles. Most of these men have been successful in making for themselves and the town solid and substantial growth. Some have accumulated considerable property.

In 1867 Shelbina was incorporated as a town, and in 1878 as a city of the fourth class. Soon after it became a city the business streets were made solid with gravel. It has long been noted for its good sidewalks, first of plank and now of granitoid. For twenty years past it has also been noted for the beauty and elegance of its homes. Forty years ago it looked bleak and bare; now nearly all its streets are lined with fine, towering shade trees.

About twenty years ago the people voted \$5,000 for an electric light plant, and this has since been doubled and the city has a good lighting system. The people also voted for water-works and sewers, but these have not yet been made.

Some years ago a Business Men's Association, with William M. Hanly as president and John H. Wood as secretary, was organized, and through its influence a brick and tile plant was located just north of the city limits, and this is building up a fine trade. And a canning factory at a cost of \$16,000 has also been established. Recently a factory for making frames for window screens, the Starrett Window Screen Company, has opened, with a fine promise of large success. For twenty years our Flouring Mill Company has done an extensive business. There are also three wagon factories in the city.

In 1877 Shelbina Collegiate Institute was established for the better education

of the youth of the community, and it did a fine work until the public high school became so efficient the institute became unnecessary. Shelbina has fine educational advantages and it also has strong church organizations and elegant houses of worship. The rough element, which was strong in the early history of the place, gradually faded away, and the people of this city and vicinity stand in the first rank for intelligence and morality. The community about the city is prosperous and fine farm houses and barns dot the prairie in every direction. No more pleasing sight is to be found in a thousand miles than right here 'in the city and the surrounding 'country.

A write-up in the Democrat eight years ago among other things said: "Situated on the main line of the Burlington railroad, between Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City, two miles from the southern border of Shelby county, is Shelbina, the largest town in the county. It is the shipping and trading point of a rich farming country and draws its wealth from the agricultural and stock raising country about it. The city is located on gently rolling prairie land and has wide, well kept, level streets. Strangers who view the town for the first time remark upon the width of the business streets. Then they comment upon the number and beauty of the shade trees that line all the residence streets of the town. Beautiful and graceful elms have been planted in the grounds belonging to the railroad near the station, making two handsome, shady parks of what would otherwise have been a vacant tract.

"In Shelbina nearly every man sits under the shade of his own vine and his

own fig tree. In other words, they own their homes. This produces a pride in the appearance of things that has caused Shelbina to be noted as the town of beautiful homes. No other town of its size in northeast Missouri has so many beautiful residences."

Then the write-up gives an account of the lights, the schools, the orders and clubs, and the beauty of scenery, and winds up with an enumeration of what the town has, thus:

- "One furniture store.
- "Two photographers.
- "A telephone system.
- "Two clothing stores.
- "Three livery stables.
- "One business college.
- "A population of 1,800.
- "One electric light plant.
- "Twelve real estate offices.
- "One cleaning and dyeing shop.
- "Three hotels and five boarding houses.
- "Four blacksmith and repair shops.
- "Six grocery and six dry goods stores.
- "Four millinery and five dressmaking shops.
- "The best high school in northeast Missouri.
- "One music and one undertaking establishment.
- "A 100-barrel-a-day flouring mill, and a bakery.
- "Splendid railroad service, ten passenger trains every twenty-four hours.
- "A splendid telephone exchange.
- "The best fair in the county.
- "Two cigar factories, three lumber yards, two book and notion stores, four barber shops, two meat markets, one marble shop, six drug stores, three dentists, six churches, one laundry, one oc-

culist, six doctors and three banks." It did not say, as it should, four lawyers.

Shelbina is one of the few small cities that has made a substantial growth during the past ten years, and the population by the census of 1910 is **2,174**.

It has long been known that there was some coal north of the city, and some years since an effort was made to organize a company to sink a shaft about a mile north of the place, but it fell through. It was feared the vein was too thin to pay. But in the spring of 1910 it was found in paying quantities. Jacob Raby, who is one of the men who established the Brick & Tile Plant, bought a farm on Salt river, just east of the Shelby County railroad, and he immediately sank a shaft and found six or seven feet of good coal, about half bituminous and half cannel coal. He also found great quantities of valuable white clay. Some of this has been shipped to Illinois and worked up. It makes a fine quality of porcelain for bath tubs, etc. J. E. Holman and F. E. Merrill have leased the coal mine and are now raising some twenty odd tons a day. This supply of coal promises many advantages to Shelbina.

The Shelby County railroad, built by home capital, is a great convenience for the people of Shelbina, as well as those of Shelbyville and all this surrounding country. The Brick & Tile Plant is on the line of this road, and the coal mine also.

For twenty years past Shelbina has been blessed with an intelligent and moral class of citizens, who have done much to give the city an excellent name. Its members of the bar have not only been learned and able, but men of the

highest character. It has also been blessed with skillful physicians, who have sustained the reputation of this great profession. In the line of mechanics, as well as in that of trade and merchandise, this beautiful little city has been highly favored.

Its two weekly newspapers, "The Democrat" and "The Torchlight," have always stood in the front rank of local journals and have contributed their full share towards building up the city materially, intellectually and morally, and have contributed largely to its reputation abroad.

HUNNEWELL.

On August 15, 1857, Josiah Hunt, the land commissioner of the Hannibal & St. Joe railroad, platted the city of Hunnewell. It had been deeded in July of the same year by Richard Drane and wife to John Duff, of Dedham, Mass., for the sum of \$1,200, and comprised a tract of sixty-two and one-half acres. The town was christened Hunnewell in honor of H. Hollis Hunnewell, of Boston, who was connected with the Hannibal & St. Joe railroad, as was Mr. Duff.

Early in 1857 Stephen Doyle built the first storehouse and was afterwards known as the Doyle, Kellogg & Co.

Soon after the town opened Richard Durbin built a frame building, a story and a half, into which his family moved—the first family living in this town.

A little later, Snider & Co. built the third house for a storeroom. Snider & Co. stood for Jno. Snider, W. F. Blackburn, A. L. Yançey and Jno. Maddox. The first lot deed was made out to W. F. Blackburn.

In 1857, the railroad having been com-

pleted to the city limits, an excursion was run from Hunnewell to Monroe City on the 4th of July. In the fall of 1857 the first hotel was established by a Mr. Ball, who moved over from Old Clinton. John H. Snider was the first postmaster. The postoffice was established in 1857 in the store of Snider & Co. In 1859 a school house was erected. It was a frame building located south of the track in the western part of the city. The town now has a new brick building, erected about 1895, and is located north of the track in the west part of the city. Hunnewell's first preacher was Rev. T. DeMoss, a Methodist. Services were held in the school house.

The town of Hunnewell is located in the southeast corner of Shelby county and is one of the oldest and most substantial towns of the county.

The country surrounding is splendid agricultural land and the citizenship is the old Missouri kind that believe in honesty and good morals. The town contains two banks, one newspaper and some splendid stores and business houses.

THE TEMPLE OF JUSTICE.

The first courthouse erected in Shelby county was built in the years 1838 and 1839, and in March, 1839, the first term of Circuit court was held in the new courthouse. This building served the purposes of a temple of justice and home for county officials until it was destroyed by fire in 1891.

THE COURTHOUSE BURNED.

On Monday morning, June 29, 1891, while Sheriff W. P. Martin was cleaning up the courthouse yard, assisted by Some

prisoners, the courthouse was discovered to be on fire. A pile of broken limbs and trash had been piled on the north side of the old historical building, and set on fire, and it is likely the building was set on fire by sparks from the rubbish. Nearly all the records were saved and the loss consisted chiefly of J. C. Hale's law library, some of the probate records, and some of the papers in the collector's office. On Saturday, September 5, 1891, a proposition to issue \$25,000 bonds for a new courthouse was voted on and carried by a vote of 1,130 to 537. At the County court meeting on February 4, 1892, the contract to erect the new courthouse was awarded to Charles Force & Co., of Kansas City, Mo. The building was to be completed by November 1, 1892, but the contractor was slow and the county officials did not get into their new quarters until July, 1893. The first term of Circuit court was held the October following, with Judge Ellison on the bench.

THE 1884 FIRE.

A disastrous fire occurred in Clarence on Friday, February 15, 1884. The harness shop of H. M. Shabel, Eberhard & Co.'s grocery store, R. E. Dale's restaurant, McWilliams' grocery store, Durham's shoe shop, Dr. Hill's office, William Shutter's hardware, R. P. Richardson's clothing store, Rouse's barber shop and the postoffice were totally destroyed. Amount of loss on goods was \$40,000; loss on buildings, \$10,000. Insurance, \$6,400.

CREAMERY BURNS.

The creamery owned by Jacob Pencil burned on Thursday night, January 14,

1886. The building and fixtures cost about \$4,000, on which there was \$3,400 insurance.

MAN AND HORSES BURNED.

Monday, November 9, 1884, the livery stable owned by a Mr. Clark, in Clarence, burned to the ground. Eight head of horses were burned, as were the contents of the barn. Joseph Blythe, a one-legged man, who was sleeping in the hay loft, perished in the conflagration.

A SHELBY COUNTY CONGRESSMAN.

May 9, 1902, the congressional committee met in Kirksville and ordered a primary to select a candidate for congress. Primary set for August 20. Richard P. Giles carried Shelby by 1,051 over his opponent, Col. W. H. Hatch. Giles also carried Macon and Adair counties. Hatch's majority in the district was 414. The second race was still closer, in which Hatch defeated Giles for the nomination by the narrow margin of 195 votes. This time Giles carried four counties: Shelby, Adair, Knox and Schuyler. A great deal of bitterness was engendered in this contest between the friends of the two candidates, and that, together with the fact that 1894 was a landslide for the Republicans, was instrumental in defeating Hatch at the general election in November. At this election Col. Hatch, who had been in congress for sixteen years, was defeated by Maj. C. N. Clark, of Hannibal, by the close plurality of 329 votes. In 1896 Mr. Giles was made the Democratic nominee for congress by acclamation at the congressional convention held in Canton on August 11. He defeated Clark by over 5,000 plurality, the largest plurality ever

given to a candidate in the district up to that time. Mr. Giles, however, did not live to reap the reward of his efforts, but died only two weeks after the election. The date of his death was November 17, 1896. Mr. James T. Lloyd was chosen as his successor.

THE BETHEL COLONY—A STORY OF COMMUNISM IN MISSOURI.

(By Vernon L. Drain.)

Few of those who read the books of Bellamy and who dream of an ideal commonwealth, where each citizen is equal to every other citizen and all are alike rich with a common fund, are aware that those ideas embodied in the maxim—"equal rights to **all** and special privileges to none"—were once actually applied in the establishment and subsequent operation of the Bethel colony, a settlement founded by honest and sturdy German emigrants on the winding shores of North river, in Shelby county, Missouri.

Several years ago Dr. David R. McAnally, now deceased, then the able editor of the St. Louis Christian Advocate, in an editorial on the subject of communism, asserted that the Oneida community in New York, the Bethel colony and its offshoot, the Aurora (Oregon) settlement, were the notable instances of the application of the theory of communism upon American soil. Since then several sketches have been contributed to metropolitan newspapers wherein various features of this enterprise have been reviewed, and recently Mr. William G. Bek, of the University of Missouri, has written a small volume in which the details of this enterprise

are given with much care. Aside from these writings the fame of this singular experiment has been confined to fireside narratives as the historian of its achievements seems to have been omitted from its caravan, or left behind in the long journey of its progenitors toward the valley of the Mississippi.

Like many modern eo-operative schemes of similar character, this was conceived and planned in the brain of a religious enthusiast, who doubtless dreamed that he was the chosen power to usher in a brighter day for human kind. This is not to be wondered at, nor is it to the discredit of spiritual things. Religion is the most powerful force known to man, and it stirs the best that there is in us. It makes us to grapple with life's unsolved and unsettled problems and the dreams of the devotee are an inspiration to better things for his race and kindred. The longings of the dreamer may never be realized; his efforts may be like the crying of a child in the night, and we may say that his plan came to naught. But after all, it may be a contribution toward the betterment of humanity, and may bring us nearer to that far-off event toward which we are told the whole creation is moving. The world is much indebted to its so-called impracticable men.

Dr. William Keil, the founder, prophet, priest and king of this Western Utopia, was a Methodist preacher of German lineage, who labored among his countrymen in portions of Pennsylvania and Ohio; how long he continued in the ministry or how successful were his labors cannot be ascertained, but for some reason, presumably that of preaching strange doctrine, he was called to account by his ecclesiastical superiors, by

whom he was deprived of his ministerial authority. He then formulated this communistic scheme, organized this society, and with his followers emigrated westward and founded this colony, which survives its wreck so far as appearances are concerned in the present town of Bethel, where some of the quaint buildings of the early colonists are still pointed out to the inquisitive traveler.

These colonists secured by entry or purchase a large tract of valuable land, eleven hundred acres of which was enclosed as the common field where the individuals labored under the direction of overseers appointed by Dr. Keil. A common boarding-house was erected where the unmarried male members of the community resided, and a common storehouse was kept where the families were supplied with their allotted portions of provisions, the storekeeper managing the accounts and supplying the necessities according to the communal regulations. The attention of these frugal people was directed toward manufacturing, and in the palmy and prosperous days of the enterprise Bethel was a miniature Lowell; cloth was spun from the wool of the colony sheep, which roamed in vast herds over the virgin prairies, attended by the designated shepherds, and the skins of the wild deer, which had not then disappeared from our horizon, were made into hats and gloves.

Perhaps the crowning work of these industrious people, from an architectural standpoint, was the erection of the colony church, which until recently stood in simple grandeur as a memory of better days. This edifice was constructed of brick and stone after the type of churches in the fatherland. It was paved with

tiling, provided with an organ loft and would accommodate a multitude. It was crowded on the Sabbath day with the colonists, who, in the zenith of their power numbered perhaps a thousand souls. The type of religion cannot well be defined or classified, as Dr. Keil was leader in all things spiritual as well as temporal. From the scant information obtainable it seems that Dr. Keil grew to manhood in Prussia where he dabbled in the mysteries of the "black art," which was evolved and practiced by the tribes which long ago peopled the dark forests of Germany. After coming to America and while living in Pennsylvania he came under the influence of Dr. William Nast, the founder of the German Methodist church, whose life was a great contribution to the human race. Under the ministry of this great preacher Keil professed conversion, and in the presence of Dr. Nast he burned the secret formulas of his art and renounced its practice. Later on he seems to have differed with his brethren and at the time when he was deposed from the ministry he had gathered a number of adherents who followed him implicitly. One of these was Carl G. Koch, a scholarly German, who soon renounced the claims of Keil and opposed his plans by writing a book wherein he asserted that he was a mystic and a dreamer. From all account he preached a polyglot, utilitarian doctrine, and there were many pious souls among these colonists even though their leader held and preached tenets of belief that must have been a cross between the Apostle's creed and the mysteries of the ancients. He claimed to be inspired with superhuman power and the older colonists acquiesced in this assumption and

rendered him the homage due a superior creature. The observance of religious ceremonies was rigidly enforced. Each Sabbath morning during services the primitive policeman or burgomaster kept the streets and public places clear of loiterers and this may in part account for the immense attendance at the famous old church.

East of Bethel and down the picturesque North river, was erected the mansion house of Dr. Keil where he lived and dispensed the hospitality of a feudal monarch. This house with its numerous appurtenances was called "Elim." It was built by the common labor and was a part of the possessions of the colony, but was designed and used as the residence of the leader or governor. A commodious banquet hall served its purpose, and there is a tradition that Dr. Keil lived and reigned here in this Western wilderness after the fashion of the great King Solomon, the splendor of whose reign has been the dream of the ages.

The general character and appearance of these colonists would fit Irving's description of the founders of New Amsterdam during the glorious reign of Sir Peter Stuyvesant. The typical, old fashioned Dutchman was the dominant type. They were artisans skilled in the highest degree. Such finished craftsmen were they that their work abides to this day in monuments of wood and stone. They were practical in all things save in sharing the ideas of their leaders and their descendants are usually splendid citizens wherever found.

The plan of perfect equality was uppermost in the minds of the greater portion of these sincere adventurers, and this was their dominant idea. To the

end that equal rights should be accorded to each member and that the scheme of co-operation should be rigidly adhered to, many curious expedients were practised. At the Christmas festivities, always held at the church, it was observed that each child was remembered by Santa Clause in exactly the same way and with exactly the same portion of any given article.

Two colossal Christmas trees were erected and on these were placed the gifts for the children, and the elders and the strangers within the gates were also remembered. The trees as well as the interior of the building were lavishly decorated, and the decorations and the greater portion of the presents remained during the festivities, which usually lasted for a week. The splendor of the Yule-tide lingers yet in the memory of the survivors.

When the close of "life's fitful fever" came to one of the inhabitants, care was taken that he should be buried in the same degree of state accorded to his comrades who had preceded him to the peaceful colony of the dead. A plain, wooden coffin, a prayer for the repose of his soul and a grave amid the shadows of Hebron, the common burial place, was the farewell to the busy worker as he ceased his toil and passed out into the quiet.

The earnings of the colony were placed in the keeping of a purseholder or treasurer, and the fund grew as the years passed by, the members having none of it and presumptively needing none, as they were supplied from the community storehouse and forbidden to trade elsewhere; so that the colony existed principally upon confidence, many of them

living for years without possessing a cent of actual cash; the redemption money was in existence however, so they exercised confidence and labored and toiled.

There was doubtless much in the wild luxuriance of the middle West to inspire lofty thoughts and noble purposes; there seems to be an ascending pathway that leads us "from nature up to nature's God." But amid it all the tempter struggled for mastery as he did in the original Eden, and it is not strange that at the conclusion of the dreams of the simple colonists there came a rude awakening. Out of this splendid sowing there came a reaping for a talented lawyer who assisted in restoring order out of chaos and who counseled them as to the division of the property at the final dismemberment of the colony which occurred during the year 1879.

The title to the real estate of the Colony was vested in individuals who held it for the common use and benefit, as the personality was held by the community treasurer. It is a monument to the mastery of Dr. Keil that the colony prospered as it did. No written constitution or agreement had ever existed and the whole affair moved under the guidance of the leader. When they were bereft of his immediate presence as hereinafter related, the affairs of the community became more involved and finally one of the colonists sued for the value of the services which he had rendered to the colony. It then developed that the community had no legal existence as it had never been incorporated, and it was also impossible to hold any one member liable as an individual. And then there arose many questions as to the rights of those

members who had left the parent colony at Bethel and founded colonies elsewhere; and finally in 1877 there came the tidings of the death of Dr. Keil. Then the last page of the history of the Bethel Colony was written when the agreement for a division of the property was signed by the colonists at Bethel and also by those in Oregon who had formerly been members of the Bethel experiment.

By the terms of this agreement three trustees were appointed to represent the Oregon members, and five trustees were likewise authorized to act for the Bethel members. These trustees met and agreed as to the rights of each community in the common property, and also the rights of the individuals therein. An account was taken, first, as to the amount of property brought into the enterprise by each colonist when he became a member, and then the number of years of service of each ascertained. Then the common property was valued and a plan of division was formulated by which each colonist or his heirs received the amount originally contributed, and also the value of his or her services as ascertained by dividing the total value of the remaining property by the total number of years contributed by the entire number of individuals, and then multiplying the result by the years served by each member. The actual result was that in addition to the amount originally contributed, each male member of the Bethel Colony received in cash the sum of \$29.04 per year for his services, and the female members one-half of this sum. The plan of allotment was honorably carried out by these trustees without litigation, the vast property interests were allotted in severalty and the Bethel Colony passed into his-

tory, where in spite of the hopes of its founders, it serves like the memory of the Swedish King Charles, "to point a moral, or adorn a tale."

It is but just to the fame of Dr. Keil to say that he was spared the pain of witnessing the dissolution of his dream-like empire.

The colony was founded in the year **1845**, and prospered much until the departure of its leader in **1858**, though to the student of social problems the result would seem a leveling of human hopes and aspirations rather than that triumphant achievement which adorns so grandly the successful struggle of individual life. Around the departure of the leader there is a story that almost baffles human credence, though it is a well attested fact.

Dr. Keil, like Joshua of old, had sent out spies to view the realms of the distant west, whither he hoped to extend the influence of his communistic project. Some had returned, while others remained enchanted with the marvelous scenery and enraptured with the promise of the morning dawn of that wondrous empire—

"Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings."

Tales of the natural beauty and fertility of this region were borne to the ears of the leader of the colonists and around his fireside were discussed the plans and hopes of a future domain beyond the Rockies. Under the direction of the leader, an infant colony has been formed by the prospectors to which was given the inspiring name of "Aurora,"

and though the dreams of its originators have faded like the gleam of the borealis? the town still flourishes in the State of Oregon.

The vision of the Bethel colonists was broadened by this adventure and their gaze turned toward the sunset. In their rude plastered houses they thought much about the distant valley of the Willamette whence came the good tidings from their brethren. It was the day of the ox team, and the journey would consume months of time, yet many wished to undertake it.

Among others who caught the western fever was a favorite son of Dr. Keil, who dreamed fond dreams of the land of promise. After much solicitation his father consented that he might go, and he began preparing for his departure from the mansion house upon a journey that would span half the continent, but which seemed to him as the coming of a holiday. The flame of ambition burned with increasing fervor in his youthful blood, but there came a fateful hour in which he was seized with another fever, deadlier and more ardent than the first, which added its fire to the flame of the other, increasing rather than diminishing its glow. In his delirium the long cherished Aurora was more real than ever to his disordered fancy. He "babbled o' the green fields;" he saw the somber beauty of the cascades, and could hear the surf beat on the distant sea. There may have been a fair haired German girl whose beckoning hand allured him; at least he exacted a promise from his father that in the event of his expected death he should be buried among the scenes where his mind and heart already lingered.

He died, and amid the gloom which settled over the mansion house at Elim, his father made haste to fulfill the vow to his lamented son. An emigrant train was organized among the colonists who wished to depart, the body was encased in an iron coffin containing alcohol, placed in the front wagon of the train which was drawn by *six* mules, and amid the lamentations of the remaining members of the colony there was begun what is perhaps the strangest and most stu-

pendous funeral march in the history of our land. After months of weary travel over plain and mountain the tired but faithful mourners arrived at Aurora, and the father religiously fulfilled his vow to his dying child.

The Bethel brethren saw their patriarch no more; the colony dwindled away, and the snows of many winters have lain upon the grave of the leader, who sleeps beside his son under the Oregon pines.

Vernon L. Drain.