

Historical Society News

By R. T. Neff

This article is a continuation of Eugene Maupin's written history of some of the early settlers on Lower Otter and Crooked Creek. The first store in West Shelby, etc.

In preceding articles, I have mentioned some of the first very early settlers on Otter and Crooked Creek, east of the present Clarence road. Others came to the township about the same time, and soon there was a string of cabins along the two creeks, extending from the Macon line to Monroe County.

Many of these early settlers were from Kentucky and Virginia, but Levi Bishop, who settled on Otter Creek, southeast of the Donaldson-Kyle settlement, was from Pennsylvania. He came to the county in 1838. He had a son, Jesse, and a daughter, Frances. Bishop was a very successful farmer and took a leading part in the affairs of the county. He died in 1868.

On the headwaters of little Otter Creek lived Sam Smock, who came from Kentucky to Missouri about 1840. His hewed log house stood for many years on his 160 acre farm which he had by patent from the government. Smock lived to be an old man and was greatly respected by his neighbors.

North of Woodlawn, some two and a half miles, was the home of Joel Million. Like many other Kentuckians, he was greatly interested in fine stock, especially horses. He was very successful along this line, and much of the brood stock of the farmers of that day traced its ancestry back to animals brought to Shelby by Joel Million. (Note here that the old Million Cemetery has 10 people buried in it. It is located an eighth mile east to corner and one-sixteenth mile north of the Earnest Shoemeyer corner. Joel could be buried here as we have one named listed as follows: MILLION, First name gone, 78 years. Another name that could be his wife reads MILLION, MARY, born 1798, died 1863.)

Not far from the Million farm and near the present site of Maud was the home of William Dry of Madison County, Ky. He came to Jefferson township in 1835.

Another settler of the township was Col. Wm. Martin. He was a veteran of the Mexican War and came to this county at its close. He took up a farm on the south border of the county, northwest of Woodlawn. He had three sons, William, James and John, and a daughter, Molly. All of the family are dead, and the farm, has long ago passed into other hands.

On the north side of Otter Creek and

southwest of the first Stalcup school-house was the home of John Maupin, who came from Marion County in 1840. He was a blacksmith by trade and had a shop at his home. During the war, his home was burned by Federal troops because of his southern sympathies. His son, John Upton Maupin, was in Price's Confederate Army. He was shot at Hunnewell as he was returning home from the war.

Just before the Civil War, a New Yorker by the name of John Miller bought a farm on Otter Creek about a mile east of Union. He was a shoemaker and a very industrious man. He built a large basement under his house and during the war, he would often hide his horses in this basement to prevent their seizure by Southern soldiers or by the guerillas who were constantly passing along the Shelbyville-Centerville road which ran not far from Miller's home. Four years was a long time to hide horses in a basement and at last the saddle horses were discovered and taken by a group of guerillas on their way to fight the bloody battle at Centralia. (Note here that I have already told about the battle of Centralia and how our Shelby County boys were killed-52 of them. All but three that could not be identified were buried in a trench, taken up seven years later by the Federal Government and buried in the National Cemetery at Jefferson City.

Squire Barton came to Shelby County from Monroe in the early 50's and settled on the edge of the prairie, southeast of the present Enterprise. He had a rather large family and some of his sons served in the Confederate Army. Barton came to Missouri before it was a state. There were but a handful of settlers in Marion County. When that county became too crowded for him, he moved on to Monroe closing his eventful life in Shelby in 1868. (Note: There were two Bartons, one was called Squire and the other one was called Esquire.)

Crooked Creek was more sparsely settled in the early days on account of the fact that this creek was farther from the source of supply and was farther from the old Centerville-Hannibal road over which most of the necessities of pioneer life came. Besides the Stalcups, named in an earlier article, some of the early settlers were Henry Shoemaker, Henry Kidwell, John Dungan, Edward Tansil, Daniel Thrasher, William Bush, William Sherman, Enoch K. Miller and John Maupin.

More next week.

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The first store in west Shelby and how a long drought was broken as written by Eugene Maupin in 1927 when editor of the Clarence Independent newspaper. Continued from last week's article.

Wm. Sherman was, perhaps, the earliest settler on lower Crooked Creek. He came from Virginia and the location of his home was near Oak Ridge Church. The date of his settlement on Crooked Creek was 1836. He had been here but a short time when he conceived the idea of establishing a store where the scattered settlers could buy what they might need without making the long trip to Hannibal. With two yoke of oxen, he drove to that river point and loaded his wagon with flour, sugar, coffee, salt, soda, cotton goods in bolts and yarn for knitting. These supplies were stored in a little log hut built near Sherman's house—the first store in western Shelby County, established over 20 years before Clarence was established.

Some years later a man by the name of John Bush built a house not far from Crooked Creek on the farm now owned by Enoch Maupin. He also undertook to supply the settlers with a much sought commodity of that day—whiskey. The liquor was brought from Hannibal in barrels and soon the Bush homestead was a great gathering place for the sons of old Kentucky and Virginia who had grown tired of creek water as a beverage. Bush was a rolling stone and soon moved on to another location. E. K. Miller took over his first location. Miller was from Marion County. As he farmed his frontier farm, he studied such books as he could get hold of, educating himself for a greater work in the new land. Later he taught in the old Stalcup school and in the school located at Bacon Chapel. Entering the ministry, he became one of the most noted preachers of the M.E. church south, holding some of the best pulpits in the North Missouri and California conferences. He died at the beginning of the twentieth century at Palmyra. He is buried at that place.

When the first settlers came to the county, their work was to erect a crude shelter for the family. Often the head of the family came to Shelby a year ahead of the rest of his folks and with the help

of some of the other settlers, had a cabin built before the wife and children came. Most of the settlements were made in the timber, and it was necessary to clear all of the ground cultivated. This was the next work at hand. The fences were built of rails and it took many weary hours to make enough to fence several lots and a small cornfield. (Note: This item was mentioned briefly in last week's article).

The need of pure water soon made wells a necessity. Hence, great cisterns were dug near the house and walled with sandrock. Sometimes a well would be dug deep enough for living water. These were usually 30 feet deep and many of these old wells are in existence to this day. (Note: We filled in one of these wells several years ago, walled with stone. It caved it). As mentioned before, doctors were few and far between. The first pioneers of west Shelby were 35 miles from the nearest one. Home remedies were kept on hands and calomel, quinine, camphor, laudanum and paregoric were the mainstays of pioneer mother's medicine cabinet. In spite of the large families of those days, infant mortality ran high and hundreds of little forgotten graves dot the old cemeteries, the last resting place of little victims of croup, pneumonia, diphtheria, fever and flux. Because we all remember a few of these early pioneers who had lived to a ripe old age, we have gotten the impression that they were long lived folks. Such is not the case. Their lives were hard and the constant exposure sapped their naturally strong physiques. Men and women were old at 50 or 60, an age now considered the prime of life. They did their work well, so well in fact, that much of the best we have today traces back to the work that was done or planned by this race of pioneers. (Note: Little does the average citizen of today give a thought to his early ancestors. Ever stop to think why or how you happen to be here today? Very few do, and care less. Can we blame it on the people, or is it the economy, or the struggle for existence that causes the change? Wish someone would answer this question, or at least make a stab at it.)

More next week on Maupin's articles.

Historical Society

By R. T. Neff

This article is a continuation of Eugene Maupin's history of western Shelby County when he was editor of the Clarence Independent Newspaper in 1927. Early settlers in eastern Clay and the Bacon Chapel settlement.

The early settlers of the western states always located their homes along the streams, and Shelby County was no exception to the rule. Even as the Donaldson-Kyle party was locating on Otter Creek and the Stalcups were establishing their first cabin on Crooked Creek, the first settlers of Clay came into the township along the banks of Salt River. Due north of Lentner and along the dividing line between Clay and Salt River townships, these first settlements were made. It must have been about 1834-1835 when the Taylors, Lewis, John Wailes and Stanford Drain, and probably other families first located in the Bacon Chapel neighborhood. A few years later they were joined by the Moores, Carrolls, Duncans and the Barr families. Of these early settlers, Major Taylor and John Lewis were the only two that were over the line in Clay township. The families continued to come in and four years later found Isaac Tobin and James Parker settled near Major Taylor. Further up the river was a Kentuckian by the name of Nelson. Note here that the old map of Shelby County shows that these early settlers had farms of 10 to 20 acres and that there were over 20 farms on a section of land (64.0 acres in a section). Nearly all of these places are gone now. How they managed to raise the large families on this small acreage is still a mystery.

The Bacon Chapel settlement has a unique history. This little community established a solidarity of association that exists to the present day. Nowhere in the county can one find so many names representing the families of those first inhabitants of that part of the county. In every direction, from the hill upon which Bacon Chapel stands, one finds the descendants of those pioneers who built this community out of this wilderness. The reason for this could be the fact that the Bacon Chapel settlers had barely gotten their cabin homes erected until they established a school and a church.

In 1837 a congregation was formed at the home of John B. Lewis. It was composed of John Lewis and his wife, Charlotte, Chas. Christine and wife, Mary, Wailes and Stanford Drain, Mrs. Peggy Moore and David and William Wood. This was the genesis of Bacon Chapel church. Seven years later the congregation had grown in numbers until a church building was necessary. Near the present site of Bacon Chapel stood a little log cabin that had been built by George Bacon (some say a son of George Bacon). This building was used as a church building by the small Methodist congregation until 1845 when a new building was erected. The land for the new church and for the adjoining cemetery was given by Bacon, then a resident of Hannibal. In this cemetery rests the ashes of those who first settled in Clay township, organized the first church in western Shelby County and in all probability the first school. School was taught in this first little cabin and the date of the first school must have been about 1840.

The first school house in Jefferson township was built five or six years later and was located on the dividing line between the timber and the prairies, about a mile southeast of the present Stalcup school. This first Stalcup school was built of sod with the exception of the rear wall which was of logs. The chimney had a base of sand rock upon which was erected a structure of mud and wood. The seats were merely split logs and were to the child who attempted to slip

sideways along the bench to whisper to his neighbor. Children came for miles to attend this school. They way lay through wild and unsettled places. The road was marked for them by a furrow plowed with a prairie plow and yoke or two of oxen. Each child was armed with a stout stick for snakes of all kinds infested the high grass. They was constant danger from them.

More next week.

by R. T. Neff

This article is a continuation of Eugene Maupin's articles published in the Clarence Independent in 1927, listed as Early Settlers in Eastern Clay-The Bacon Chapel Settlement and the First School in Western Shelby.

The years rolled on and the Civil War came. The old school yard became a battle ground between the children whose sympathies were for the different sides. About a mile from the school house two forks of Crooked Creek unite and back in the sixties, this was an important water hole. In those days of few wells, stock in dry weather was driven for miles to drink of this unfailing supply. And this body of water was the swimming hole for the boys of the old school. Here was the sight of the hardest battle ever fought in Jefferson Township during the whole war. It was a few weeks after Grant, Buell, Johnston and Beuregard had fought the terrific two-day battle at Shiloh or Pittsburg Landing and the boys of the school were wildly excited over the scraps of news from this battle, the results of which were just sifting back to Northeast Missouri. Both Confederates and Federals claimed the victory and the youthful sympathizers of both sides were able to claim the victory also. Result--bloody noses and black eyes at the swimming hole at the forks of Crooked Creek. And ever afterwards this body of water has gone by the name of "The Shiloh."

Before the war ended, the school was closed, never to open again. A new school house was built after the war, its site being a few rods east of the present building. This second building was the voting precinct of the township for many years, and here were held the exciting elections of post-war days. The site of the old pioneer school building is on the farm now owned by J. C. Noel (1927) and can be located only by a few scattered sandrock and some fragments of slate.

Of the teachers of this early school we have but a few records. One of them was Margaret Maupin, whose home was in North Monroe County, and who afterwards, married her cousin John Maupin, one of the early settlers of the township. E. K. Miller, afterwards one of the leading ministers of the Missouri Methodist Conference, taught here as well as in the old Bacon Chapel school. As the school was in existence some ten years, there must have been several teachers, but their names we have never been able to learn. Few of the pupils who attended the short terms, taught in this old school, 75 years ago, are now alive, and in a few more years, the very existence of this first school in Western Shelby County will have been forgotten. (Note here--that it has been 50 years since this article was written by Maupin) And to think we waited 50 years after

Maupin had a hard time collecting material for his article. That is why we have had a hard time trying to get the history of the cemeteries, schools and churches as well as a list of Civil War Soldiers. Most of the earliest settlers had died and were buried in family cemeteries mostly on the farm they lived on. Our records show mostly their children as early settlers, as they were buried in established cemeteries, since churches were established, first thing, and nearly every church had a cemetery, we find these children buried here, like Bacon and Union, etc.

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The building of the railroad was the making of western Shelby. Before that time this part of the county was a frontier outpost and the inhabitants seldom voted in the elections or were consulted in regard to the business of the county. In politics, west Shelby leaned toward the Whig party. Perhaps the reason for this was the fact that many of the early settlers were from Kentucky where Henry Clay, the great Whig leader, was considered a superman. However, as the war days approached and the issues of those days began to be hotly discussed, the Democrats polled a larger majority with each biennial election.

Strangely enough the first Democratic leader from Clay township was William Richard Strachan, who was elected to the legislature by an overwhelming majority in 1858. Later he became a bitter opponent of secession and served as provost marshal of northwest Missouri in the Union army. By the time the war ended, his name was anathema to the party whom he led to victory a few short years before. Note here that Strachan lost his reputation in the Palmyra Massacre, which has been given in previous articles.

McAfee became one of the leaders in the Missouri house and was elected speaker. Later he became a noted secessionist and was expelled from his position on that account. At the time of the 1860 election, the Democrats were in complete control in west Shelby. The Whig party had disappeared and the Republican party had not risen to take its place. Only 90 votes were cast for Lincoln in the entire county and not more than a dozen of these were cast in Clay, Taylor and Jefferson. The division in these townships was between the Beckenridge and Douglas Democrats, the pro-slavery and the anti-slavery wings of the party.

The coming of the railroad brought a great increase in the population. It also gave a great amount of work to the settlers here. The railroad camps were fine markets for the produce of the pioneer farms and the residents of this territory were not slow to take advantage of this opportunity. Many of the railroad builders were from Ireland and the farmers of this section were astounded at the amount of potatoes consumed by the brawny sons of Erin. The ties for the road were purchased from those settlers living along the right-of-way. We have before us the day book of one of the founders of west Shelby, giving the tally of ties furnished by him for the new railroad and a list of supplies furnished by him to several

different foremen of the working crews.

It might be worth while to stop here and give a short sketch of this old pioneer who helped make west Shelby. Mason Wheeler was born in Mason County, Kentucky, and came to Missouri as a young man. He first settled in Marion County but soon came to Shelby and located on a farm west of Walkersville, not far from the Bacon Chapel settlement. This was about 1836. We fix this early date because Wheeler was one of the charter members of the Bacon Chapel class, (his name being unintentionally omitted in our earlier

article). Later Mr. Wheeler moved back to the Hagers Grove community where he lived for some time. However, in his later days, he once again returned to the Bacon Chapel neighborhood, locating on a farm one-half mile north of the church. He died at this home at a ripe old age, honored and loved by all who knew him. He was a great leader in the church and took an active part in the laying out of the new county roads and in all of the activities which came about in the building of a new county. He left a family of two girls and several boys. Maria married Bennet Hayden who lost his life after the battle of Kirksville, when 18 of Col. Porter's men were shot at the order of the victorious Federal commander. (Note here that the 18 were classed as oath breakers as has already been stated in The Civil War articles). Another son, Henry, joined the Confederate army and served throughout the war.

The Wheeler family was but one of the many families of west Shelby broken up by the terrible days of the Civil War. Our part of the county had barely tasted of the prosperity incident to the building of the Hannibal and St. Joe, when they were brought to the war period and the days of anxiety and grief. They had this advantage, the county was still sparsely settled, their towns were small, and their property of little value, that they did not attract the raiders of both armies as did their older and sister counties to the east and to the south.

With the exception of one little skirmish on Mad Creek in Jefferson township, not a battle was fought on their soil. On the other hand, the young men of the families went out to war, some on one side, some on the other. Many of them never returned. Older citizens were shot down by marauders from first one party and then from the other. The bitterness engendered by those days lasted for two generations. (Note again, as stated in previous articles on the Civil War, this was bushwhacking country).

SHELBY COU

Historical Society News

by R. T. Neff

This article is a continuation of Eugene Maupin's article on "When Shelby County was Young." This article is also about other early settlers of the community, another early store, and the first college in the west part of the county.

We have now come to the time when the settlers were coming nearer and nearer to Clarence. On three sides, they were encroaching on the Clarence prairie and several of their early thoroughfares passed near the spot where Clarence is now located.

We have spoken of most of the early families south and southeast of Clarence, as well as of the first settlers in the Bacon Chapel neighborhood. Before taking up the history of Clarence itself, it is necessary to speak of one or two more of the early pioneers of western Shelby, all of them being closely connected with the development of Clarence.

John Tobin, who made his home on the south side of Salt River, just north and a little south of Lentner, was one of these men. His farm was mostly in the river bottom. East of Tobin was another of these pioneers who had much to do with the development of the western part of the county.

Nicholas Watkins of Maryland, a harness maker and saddler, came to Shelby County when there were but four or five inhabitants. He settled about ten miles east of Clarence. After the county was formed and the seat of government established at Oak Dale, Watkins joined with Jas. Hagin, John Kyle and Jas. Donaldson in a petition to have the county seat moved nearer the center of the county. In this they were successful and Shelbyville was chosen.

Watkin's son, James A. Watkins, was one of the early businessmen of Clarence. Another early settler of the northeastern Clarence territory was Sam Patton, who came to the county in 1811. He was a soldier in the southern army and one of the early merchants of Hagers Grove. Another Maryland man who was one of the first to make a home in the Clarence community, was Benjamin Melson. He came to the county in 1837.

I am going to make some comments on these early settlers. Our cemetery records do not show where John Tobin is buried. We do have James N. Tobin, born in 1814, and Isaac Tobin, born in 1790, both buried in Bacon Chapel Cemetery. Again, Nicholas Watkins, born in 1809, died July 25, 1880, buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery. I might add another old settler, and that is Peter Roff, 1803-1868. He and "Nick" were neighbors and is buried in the old Roff Cemetery, south of the brick house, now owned by Simpsons. This has the largest stone marker in the county for family cemeteries, but is flat on the ground now. This place is about 4 1/2 miles northwest of Shelbina. Samuel Patton was born in Ireland, June 22, 1832, and is buried in the Patton Cemetery, several miles southeast of Hagers Grove. You can read more about Patton in the Monroe-Shelby History on page 1074. He was a captain in the Civil War on the southern side. He is listed as a retail merchant, farmer and stock raiser at Hagers Grove. He died August 3, 1888. Our notation on Ben Melson is MELSON GRAVE, N.E. Clarence 3 to 4 miles to the Howard Barr farm. Rock at head and foot, is the only marker. Information is Wess Wheeler. Ben's wife is buried in the Clarence Cemetery. Listed as Mary J. Melson, November 6, 1825 - April 17, 1899. Wife of B. N. Melson.

About a half mile southeast of the site of Clarence, Ben Fowler built a two-room box house out of oak lumber. Even the roof was of that material.

The exact date of Fowler's settlement near Clarence is unknown, but it preceded the founding of Clarence by several years. Fowler hauled the lumber from Centerville. A Dr. Hann had built a dam across Salt River at that place and had erected a saw mill there. The saw was known as an up and down sash saw and the parts were freighted from Hannibal with two yoke of oxen. A man named Spires was the sawyer. When the railroad was built, Fowler sold his homestead and moved back to Clarence. There were but four or five houses in the town when he located there.

More next week on this same subject.

