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A MISSOURI MANSION
by Fred J. Haskin

In the outskirts of Shelbyville, standing well back in a thick old grove of elm trees, is the ~~Shelbyville~~ and most famous residence in all North Missouri.

Around the old Benjamin mansion there clings a true tale embodying all the elements of the novel and the play.

Erected at a cost of \$35,000, the Benjamin mansion was once the pride of the entire region, but it followed in the wake of its master by falling into disrepute, and was afterwards sold for \$4250.

The passing years have meanwhile kindly woven a veil of oblivion around them both.

It was early in the "forties" that young John Benjamin, of Cicero, N.Y. decided to accept the advice of Horace Greeley to go West and grown up with the country. Before going, however, he called upon his sweetheart, plain, homely Diana Hasbrouck, and told her he believed there was a home and fortune in the new country for those who were willing to work and strive for it. He asked if she cared enough for him to go out to the prairies beyond the Mississippi and help to earn and share the honors and riches he felt confident awaited him. Diana told him she would go. They were married and their star of empire took its westward way.

In those days the rivers were the highways of the country, and the journey from New York to Missouri was made by way of the Ohio River, it taking several weeks to make the trip. John and his bride landed at Hannibal and journeyed overland to a point on the prairie near what is now known as Bacon Chapel, about six miles northwest of Shelbyville. Here the roof of their log cabin soon emerged from the waving prairie grass and John began his work of subduing the wilderness. With a pair of oxen he turned the prairie sod for the first time, and after it became too dark to work longer out of doors he would repair to the cabin, where he and the faithful Diana usually made ax handles until far into the night.

After a little while he began teaching school, and in the course of time moved to Shelbyville, with the intention of studying and entering into the practice of law. Just about this time the gold craze broke out in California and John contracted the fever. He held a long consultation with Diana, which resulted in her consenting to his going. In company with several other men from Shelbyville, he joined the army of "forty-niners" that were flocking to the land of promise. The journey over the plains, the Rockies and the desert was fraught with much hardship and adventure, but John's good star followed him, and for eleven months he cleared \$1,000 in gold each month by hauling ore from the miners to San Francisco.

Returning to Shelbyville early in the 50s he took up the practice of law and resided there until the war broke out, when he decided to leave Diana again and enter the federal service, he being an ardent unionist. His rise in the service was rapid. He was first made a Captain, then a Major, after that a Lieutenant Colonel and later a Brigadier General. Following close upon these honors came his election to Congress. This was in 1864, and he was re-elected in