

To Venney  
From Arnold

**A Window Into  
Prairie City's Past**

as seen thru the files of the  
**Prairie City News**

"A newspaper is a window through which men look out upon the world. Without a newspaper a man is shut into a small room and knows little or nothing of what has happened outside of the range of his vision."

PRAIRIE CITY NEWS-KODAK  
June 18, 1880

The book you are now about to read has been prepared in the sincere hope that with the knowledge you receive from it of the early days of this community, you will develop a personal dedication and pride in the town of Prairie City and an appreciation of the efforts of your ancestors, who founded and settled here and in the surrounding area.

Most of the information and stories in the following pages has come from old "Prairie City News" files which have been kept back thru 1880. Although many have yellowed with age beyond read-ability, we have tried to put the scattered bits of information into chronological form as well as possible. No doubt there will be mistakes; if they should be ours, and not of the editor of the newspaper in that day, please forgive us!

This book is a supplement to our weekly newspaper column, "Facts & Clippings" from 1880 to the present time. We will continue this column weekly for the next 10 years. Additional booklets to complete the history of the 1900's and which can be added to this first booklet will be on sale at a minimal cost each Old Settlers Day and at that time of the year for the next five years or until the history can be brought up to the present time.

Much credit goes to Mrs. H. F. (Eva) Cowman for her work in the preservation and/or restoration of the badly deteriorated early copies of the paper and preparation of copy for this book. Without her initiative and countless hours of diligent work this book would not have been possible.

The Editors,

The Groes

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EARLY HISTORY OF PRAIRIE CITY \* BY LIEUTENANT ORA MARTIN  
(Taken from the Prairie City News August 10, 1922)

In the autumn of 1851 (October) James Hickland Elliott, wife Julia, son Wickliff and daughters Martha and Mary, were picking their way along the old Indian Trail which the stage coach had recently begun to travel from Oskaloosa to the new settlement at the mouth of the Raccoon River, known as Des Moines. The old Indian trail, perhaps centuries old to the Indians, was little known to civilization. Quite true, some early pioneers had started a settlement about Tool's Point and Vandalia, but the rolling prairie on the divide between the Des Moines and Skunk rivers was almost unknown to white man.

Here lay the virgin soil; no plow had ever broken the sod which was fringed with native timber several miles to the north and south.

As these sturdy pioneers drove along through the tall, waving prairie grass, as high as the horses' backs in places, large flocks of prairie chickens arose before their wagon. When the sun rose in the morning, it came up as out from the sea; no trees broke the sky line to the eastward and as it shone down upon the rolling prairie through the day, wind waved the tall golden grass (recently frosted) like the colors of waves upon the sea. When Old Sol got far off in the west and shadows began to fall over the grassy valleys, nature sent the wolf out to serenade them all night with his weird howl, and migrating water fowls kept up their quacking and honking through the night.

Mr. Elliott left his home, leaving his crop in the field and selling it with his cows for almost nothing. The locality he had left was stricken with a swamp fever and his neighbors were dying of cholera, so he took his little family in a wagon, drawn by two horses and went to seek a home and future for his little ones. His misfortune in low swamp lands prompted him to seek a home on high ground, and upon seeing the beautiful country about where Prairie City now stands, he decided to stake his future on the little town he intended to found here and name Elliott.

He had heard of Vandalia in the timber to the south-west. Government surveyors had a year or so before passed over the divide and left stakes driven in mounds built of sod, but a prairie fire had burned off most of the stakes and high prairie grass hid many of the mounds so nothing but a trail marked any traces of civilization on the land where Prairie City now stands.

Mr. Elliott picked his way south-west to the nearest timber near Walnut Creek and there built a temporary cabin, in the timber in order to have wood to burn that winter. This was 1851, on what is now the Jim Vroom farm.

John Q. Deakin was the founder of Vandalia and saw the place as early as 1849. Mr. Elliott visited him and he tried to influence him to settle near Vandalia. Mr. Deakin believed that the prairie would not be settled up soon enough for Mr. Elliott's children to attend school, and the winter winds were severe and no fuel was to be had on the bald prairie.

This did not present a very encouraging prospect to many, but Mr. Elliott was tired of cleaning timber lands, as he was born in Kentucky, and returned to his cabin on Walnut Creek on what is now the Jim Vroom farm and started cutting trees to build his home on the spot where Prairie City now stands. Hence started the town, Elliott, its first name.

As the land was not very well marked, he made the mistake of building his first cabin on land that he had not entered. This cabin, the first mark of civilization in Prairie City was built on the present site of the D. R. Schakel home. It was a good little cabin for those days and served as a home for his family. Wood had to be hauled from Walnut Creek and there was no road. Mud was deep in the sloughs and the creeks had to be forded, and it was slow picking his way over the pathless prairie.

When he was ready to raise his log cabin, there was no one about to help him and he was obliged to go to Vandalia to get men for his house-raising. Among these men were Stephen Riffle and Jacob Brunner.

The prairie must have been beautiful in the spring of 1852 when these pioneers saw it. At this time of the year the grass was a tender green and wild prairie flowers were peeping through. In the summer wild roses grew in abundance. The early flowers were low like violets and strawberries, but Dame Nature saw to it as the grass grew taller, flowers with long stem peeped out from the waving sea of green.

To the north and south of this lone cabin the native timber fringed the prairie. There the wild crab, plum and cherry trees scented the air with their fragrance.

A mile west of his cabin Prairie Creek started from a large slough in which frogs sang all summer.

In the fall these pioneers would load up the wagon with the family and pick their way to the native timber, there to gather wild crab apples, plums and grapes. The women and children usually picked the fruit while the men hunted wild game and bee trees.

Prairie fires would sometimes sweep the prairie when the grass was dry and in winter the snow and tumble weeds piled high about the little home of the pioneer.

As a protection against prairie fires, in the fall, the grass had to be plowed up for fifty feet about the rail fence which held his stock from running wild on the prairie. Sometimes when the wind blew during a prairie fire, a large tumble weed would come rolling across the plowed strip and lodge against the rail fence or cabin and spread the fire.

Wolves were numerous and would come right up to the cabin, and carry off the poultry and young stock.

When he broke the virgin sod, centuries old, and planted his crop, it had to be gathered in the fall or prairie chickens would come and eat it. Wild pigeons would come in clouds.

Large prairie owls sat about on the ground, seeming to twist their heads entirely around watching you as you walked about them. These birds turn white in winter.

But Mr. Elliott had a staunch heart and believed in living up to his conviction that he would some day found a town here.

In the meantime two miles west of Mr. Elliott's cabin, Wm. Means had built a tavern on the stage coach road which ran from Oskaloosa to Des Moines, passing along the divide where Prairie City now stands. This was in the spring of 1852. A passenger hack line, owned by Frink and Walker, left mail at Tool's Point near Monroe, Iowa.

In February, 1852, Mr Elliott and his family drove a long sled made from native timber across the pathless prairie and through the woods to Vandalia to do some trading at Deakins' store.

He arrived in Vandalia safe and sound, but on the way back to their little cabin way out on the prairie they were caught by a howling blizzard which swept across the country. He hurried the horses as fast as they could go to reach their little home before the blinding snow cut off their vision and covered the tracks which he had made in the morning. To be lost out in such a storm meant that he and his family might freeze to death. On making Walnut Creek he had lost his way and missed the ford, but in crossing the creek on the ice, the ice gave way, and the sled settled down in the water, which ran into the sled, wetting his family and their provisions. As the water was not deep, the horses pulled the sled out of the creek and he hurried his horses home, but their clothing froze on them. Luckily the storm abated and Mr. Elliott found his cabin, and starting a fire in the fireplace, soon had his family thawed out.

Some few years after this a settler named Drake lost his way out north of town in a blizzard and froze to death. It was some time before his body was found.

James Elliott built a store west of the public square, about where Jenks' store now stands, and carried a general stock. One night the store was robbed. No one knew whom to suspect, until one day some one was out hunting on the prairie north of town and found a brand new boot. When the town folks heard of this they suspected the thieves left town by a north trail. Daniel Shepherd had some men hired to work for him and they were under suspicion. A posse of men went out and along with Dan Shepherd they searched these men, living on Squaw Creek. They found a bolt of cloth in the corn shock near their home. Shortly after the man under suspicion, together with his wife and family, left. Dan Shepherd informed Mr. Elliott, and they followed him. He stopped for the night near a log cabin over on the Newton road. Mr. Elliott was determined he had his merchandise hid somewhere and a watch was kept on him. - In the night the fugitive was seen to enter the log cabin and take from the loft Mr. Elliott's goods. They arrested the man and started to bring him back to Prairie City, in the night he escaped them, so they brought the family back to Prairie City. They recovered Mr. Elliott's goods but had the woman and children to feed that winter.

Anderson Boyd settled on what is now the Hanel farm in 1853, and Mr. Elliott soon had other settlers stopping off at his little cabin looking for land. Mr. Elliott now found his cabin on land that did not belong to him. His line ran through what is now the alley in the south part of town between Hartzel Dowden's and Clarence Jenks' property, so he built another cabin which stood just west of the Farmers-Co-operative elevator, near the large cottonwood tree still standing.

The prairie breaking plow was a massive affair and required four or five yoke of oxen to pull it. Two oxen made a yoke. The virgin sod on the prairie was centuries old, and it made tough plowing. After the sod was broken and stood awhile it gave off a peculiar odor.

William Robinson, one of the first settlers in town, built the first frame house from native lumber hauled up from a sawmill very near Red Rock. The boards for this house were dressed with hand plane. The cellar for this house was originally a cave, used by some earlier settlers. This frame house still stands one block south of the square in Prairie City, and the original cave is now the cellar under that house. This is perhaps the oldest structure now standing in this town.

One fall he snapped his corn and piled it up as high as his house. A heavy sleet and rain came and froze the ears of corn together into a solid mass. He picked a hole in the side of the pile and took out enough corn to use the pile for a stable for his horses. The corn barn stood up all winter.

Minson was an old prairie breaker who came to Prairie City about 1852, and broke about ten acres in the west end of town and in town. Sod broken two or four inches deep was better than ten inches deep, as it took several years for the sod to rot and break up. The first crop had to be small grain. Still sod corn was sometimes planted. An ax cut a rent in the sod and corn was dropped in. Some years it yielded as high as twenty-five to thirty bushels to the acre. Potatoes planted in the sod gave fairly good yield.

About 1853 August Hershman settled in Prairie City. The fractional piece of ground north of the alley north of the public square was not taken up yet and this adjoined Mr. Elliott's land on the north. Mr. Hershman had decided to get it and spoke to his family about starting for the land office in Des Moines Sunday night.

His little boy heard this and when he came over to Elliott's cabin to play with Elliott's little boy, Wickliff, he told the folks his father was going to Des Moines to get that land entered. Mr. Elliott heard this and being desirous of getting possession of the land upon which the north part of Prairie City now stands, though he had no money, got on his horse and rode to Des Moines, sold the horse for fifty dollars and entered the fraction, and as he walked out of the land office he met Mr. Hershman coming in to enter the land, but Mr. Elliott had it in his name, so Mr. Hershman took other land.

Mr. Elliott walked back from Des Moines carrying his saddle home. He had left but one blind horse.

Jord Meanes came and settled here about 1852 or 1853. In 1853 a minister chanced along and preached the first sermon in the Elliott cabin.

Tool's Point and Vandalia had started settlements and Elliott (now Prairie City) began to blossom and new faces came from all parts of the country.

Now the settlers coming along the stage coach road would see the little cabins setting out on the prairie and soon it began to take on the aspect of a settlement.

In applying for a postoffice the little settlement known as Elliott was informed there was another postoffice in Iowa named Elliott, so they changed the name to Prairie City. This was in 1856.

Next year settlers were spreading out from Tool's Point and Vandalia, and Newton was being settled.

1857 saw the first Christian church, founded by Capt. J. P. Roach; 1858 the first Methodist Episcopal church (now the Star Theatre).

Here and there a patch of prairie would be broken and when fall came the corn in shock would be the only thing in sight on the prairie except a lone cabin and a straw barn.

When a new comer arrived he or she was usually taken about the prairie by the other settlers and suitable location picked out. One thing very important was to pick out a location for the cabin near to drinking water. As prairie fire had burned off the survey stakes, mounds had to be hunted and counted from a known marker.

Some times mistakes were made and settlers located on land other than that which they had entered at the land office.

Early pioneers usually shared their cabins with homeseekers but many times the new comers slept in their wagon or under it.

As nails were expensive and hard to get, little or no metal was used in constructing these early cabins. Over the door was usually hung the squirrel rifle and powder horn.

While Indians were never numerous or bad about these parts, the wary settler best be prepared for any emergency, as well as wolves and hawks, which preyed upon the poultry and young stock frequently.

Sometimes the cabin floor was laid of "puncheon" slabs hewn from logs and sometimes it was the ground.

The good house wife saved all the meat rinds and hickory ashes and made soft soap in a huge iron kettle. It was truthfully said they were often obliged to cook the meal, wash the baby and feed the dog all out of the same kettle. If they did not happen to have glass for the windows, oiled paper let in the light. Sometimes a sheep skin with the wool taken off served for a window glass.

Before flour mills were built the settler hauled his grain many miles to the mill, and if flour or meal ran out, the women folks "pestled" corn or scraped it on a grater. Often it was soaked to soften it. The nearest mills were Des Moines and Pella. Sometimes there would be many wagons at the mill ahead of the settler, so he must wait his turn.

When the long winter nights came there were few books to read and poor lights to read by. When the members of the family became sick, doctors were few and far between, so the good mother usually did the nursing and doctoring. When their loved ones should die it was customary in those days for the whole neighborhood to go to the burying. The little graveyard on the hillside west of Prairie City contains the graves of many of the little village founders.

John Butters came to Prairie City in 1856 and built his cabin on the north side of the present White Pole road in the southwest corner of the Highland Park division. Mrs. Emma Head, the oldest person about, died in this cabin in 1857.

Samuel Butters and wife Margaret Conway, married in Ohio and came to Prairie City with the father and built a log cabin near the north-east part of Prairie City, where Garrie Wiggin's residence now stands. Mrs. Butters, still living (1922), is perhaps the oldest old settler living hereabouts, being past ninety-one years of age. To this venerable old lady is due the greatest respect for the hardships she and her companion endured in the early days on the frontier. Like most people of those days she made the best of hardships. They toiled and planned the future of this little town. The stage coach passed her cabin door. She cooked for the stage driver and when the snow drifted high and the trail was lost, she and her husband boarded the stage coach passengers and drivers. Many times she worked all night in the little cabin preparing food for the tired and weary travelers.

Many times in the winter mornings the folks awoke to find the snow covering their beds as the winter winds drove it through the cracks in the roof.

One evening she was out milking when a wolf walked into the house.

Prairie chickens would come up in the yard and she would take the gun and shoot them and cook them.

Indians camped on Squaw Creek north of town and they would come to her cabin and beg for flour. One day she gave a squaw some flour and they kept coming after that.

She had her spinning wheel as did most all the housewives in those days, and did all the weaving for the family on an old weaving loom.

There was a pond where what is now the north-east part of Prairie City and the men folks hunted ducks on this marsh in season.

The good housewife used to gather pumpkins in the fall and mash them up and lay the pumpkin on the cabin roof to dry in the sun. This they called pumpkin leather. It kept all winter and could be cooked when needed.

The men folks would go to the timber and hunt bee trees and the honey served as sugar.

There was no tree to get a switch to make the children mind, but one day in spring later on, a man came along with a wagon load of maples and evergreen sprouts, and most of the large old trees in Prairie City and vicinity came from that wagon. Later a nursery near Newton furnished most of the fruit trees.

Once they heard a noise outside in the night, and going out in the snow found a stage coach in the snow with the horses on one side of the rail fence and the stage on the other. The deep snow had packed hard as high as the fence, and the drivers had lost their way. The drivers wore full beards and when they came into the little cabin to get warm by the fireplace, the ice melted from their beards and fell to the floor. She baked them corn bread late that night.

The old stage coach came into town on the divide about the same as the railroad now runs. After reaching Walnut Creek it turned north to the head of the creek and went on to East Des Moines.

There were some deer about and occasionally large game was found in the thick timber.

But like most all early settlers their toil was not in vain. They saw the great opportunity for the future.

Jacob Replogle came to Prairie City from Rock Ridge, Virginia, in 1854, and settled south of Prairie City on Prairie Creek. He built many of the houses of the early settlers, dressing the lumber by handplane. His daughter, Mrs. Nellie Van Slyck, still lives in Prairie City (1922) and is eighty one years old. She remembers the wild prairies and the timberland near Pleasant Hill in the fifties. She remembers the early house-raisings of the pioneers.

While their lives were exposed to many perils, as a rule men and women were a light-hearted set. Their frolics began with the building of the cabins and were continued whenever an occasion was presented.

When a newcomer was ready to put up his cabin, after he had hewn the logs to measurements, he invited all his neighbors to assist. Neighbors in those days meant anybody he or his friends might know. "House raising" was regarded as great fun.

The early cabins were built from round logs with the bark on. Soon it was considered a mark of elegance to chip a place along two sides of each log. The next step was to hew what would be the inside and outside of the cabin walls, so that it presented a flat surface.

The "House Raisers" were entertained with plenty of food and "drink" and songs and joking and general merry-making prevailed. If a fiddler could be had, an old-fashioned Virginian reel was the order of the day.



Weddings were a signal for a charivari (shiveree), and the folks came on horse back and in wagons for miles around. They usually called at the father of the groom's house, and escorted the young man to the home of the bride. There were not enough seats so the girls sat on girls' laps and the men sat on the floor.

Young men went many miles to call upon girls and when a girl became engaged it was said she was "bespoke" or promised. If a young swain went a long ways to see a girl it was a good idea to take along something to eat in case he did not meet the old folks' approval.

Quilting, wood chopping, turkey shooting, horse racing and foot racing were popular in those days. Physical strength was apt to be the cause of much boasting among the younger men and sometimes led to vicious fist fights. The "best man around" seemed to be an envied title.

Wolf hunting was great sport. When the snow was deep a man on horseback could outrun a wolf and club him to death with a long club.

When you approached a settler's cabin you were pretty certain to be greeted by a pack of hounds and coon dogs barking at you.

Neighbors swapped a great deal in those days and "store clothes" were scarce. Still the settler's latch string was nearly always left out for a traveler and while they had little to share they were very hospitable.

An eastern traveler once asked an Iowan if there was a place to wash. "Have you a handkerchief?" "Yes." "Well, my friend, down there is the creek."

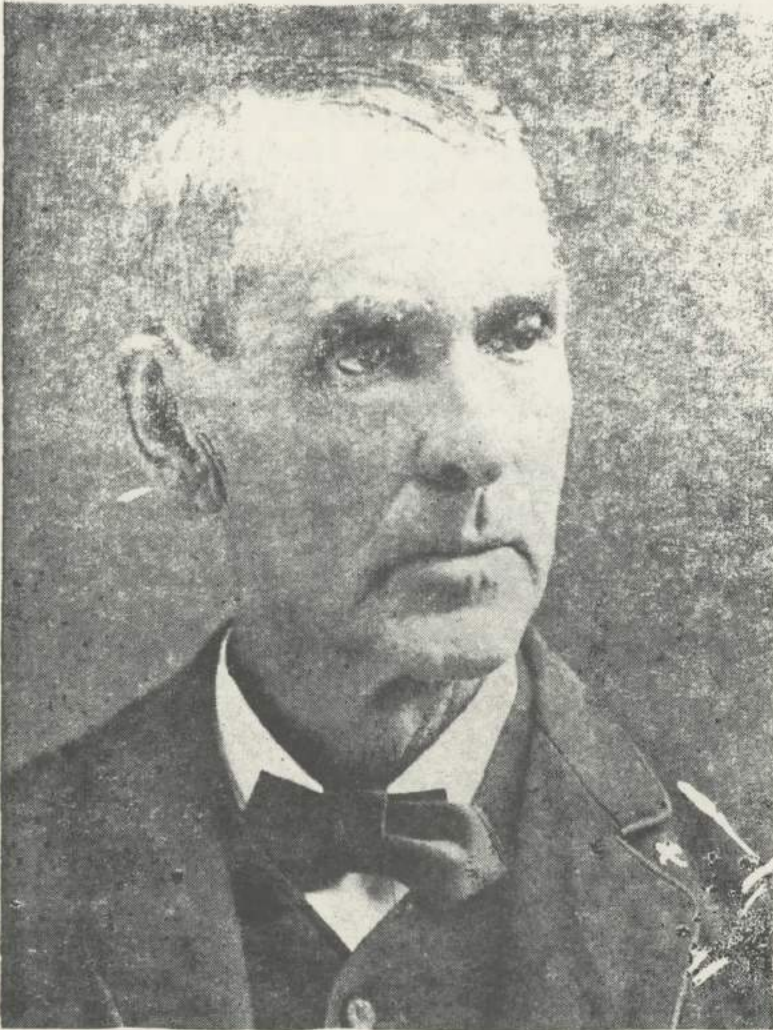
A list of names of the early settlers of Prairie City is in possession of the writer showing where they subscribed to fence the Westview graveyard, and J. W. Elliott, son of the pioneer, has supplied as near as he can recall from memory the order of the early settlers coming to Prairie City and hereabouts. Some names are missing, but with the cooperation of others who may know the missing names, a complete list may be made. Old records are hard to find and the courthouse records do not show all the early settlers' names.

'Twas said that Caleb Bundy, minister and blacksmith, married and buried more people than anybody for miles around. In 1856 he built his cabin one-half mile east of Prairie City near the Chas. Wilson farm. He represented Jasper county in the State Assembly in the sixties.

Levi Remsburg, his partner in the blacksmith business, came to Prairie City in 1857 and built a blacksmith shop on the corner southwest of the public square. He made the first breaking plows, using old saw mill blades.

About 1856 the three Hanes brothers, Anson, Jackson and Charlie, who had arrived and entered about 350 acres south-west of town, were over on Skunk river bottom and camped for the night. The light of their camp fire attracted the attention of a young white girl, and she came into their camp. She said she was being carried away to Utah by a party of Mormons and asked them to take her to their home. She said she was stolen from her home in Terre Haute, Indiana. The Hanes boys told her they would protect her and a lively time followed when her Mormon captors found the Hanes boys had her. But the Hanes brothers won out. She lived in Elliott (Prairie City) with some family for a while and later, when one of the settlers went back to Indiana, they took her home.

# Prairie City First Named Elliot



James Elliott, founder of Prairie City



John Quincy Deakin  
Founded Vandalia 1845

## SOME PRAIRIE CITY POINTERS

(From Prairie City News, Nov. 7, 1884)

For the benefit of the citizens in Prairie City, who are not acquainted with its early history, we give the following pointers

1. The town was laid out in 1856.
2. It was called Elliott, after its founder James H. Elliott.
3. Mr. Elliott first settled here in 1852.
4. The name was afterward changed to Prairie City on account of the beautiful prairies, in the midst of which the town was located.
5. The first settler in this vicinity was Wm. Means, who located here in 1851.
6. The first school was taught by Isaac Hershman.
7. The building in which the first store was established was moved here from Monroe on a wagon, by Ben Adams.
8. A school house was built in 1856.
9. The present school house, capable of holding 300 pupils was built in the fall of 1868, Jesse Wilson being the contractor and builder.
10. Caleb Bundy was the first president of the Independent School district.
11. The town was incorporated in 1868.
12. Sidney Williams was the first mayor, and C. Head, the first Recorder.
13. The Christian society was organized about 1857 by Elder J. P. Roach.
14. The Christian Church was built in 1869.
15. The Methodist Church was built in 1867.
16. The Congregational Society was organized in 1868.
17. The Congregational Church was built in 1869.
18. Among the early newspapers may be mentioned the Gleaner and Herald, the Union and the Echo—all of which are now dead.
19. The railroad was built here in 1856.

Harvey J. Griffis came with his father from Lewis county, Kentucky, to his place five mile west of Monroe. He came in 1850.

William H. Draper came from Cumberland county, Kentucky, to Vandalia October 17, 1850.

Lewis Clark came from North Carolina to Vandalia in 1851.

Edward W. Hayes is perhaps one of the first white children born in Jasper county (1846). His father William Hayes, came shortly after the Deakins and Shearers.

James Jeffries came in 1855.

Daniel Main came to Prairie City in 1856.

James D. Norris came to Vandalia in 1847 from Brown county, Ohio.

Isaac Porter came from Decatur county, Indiana, to Vandalia 1855.

Edward Schulenburg came to this country in 1853, and married Sarah, daughter of Jacob C. Brown, Keeper of the Elk Horn Tavern at Tool's Point.

Dr. Phillip Martin came in 1849 or 1850 and married Mary, also daughter of the Elk Horn Tavern keeper.

Robert C. Brown came in 1845 or 1846, and was the son of the tavern keeper.

The Hunnel family came among the first.

Mathew Warner came among the first from New York state to Vandalia in 1853; he was accompanied by his father in law, Mr. McMellen, and settled just east of Vandalia.

L. P. Wilson, Oneida county, New York, came to Prairie City in 1854. Mr Wilson once housed four families in his cabin, which was 18 x 22. He was one of the first constables in these parts. He used to buy buffalo right in Prairie City for one cent a pound. there were plenty of buffalo within fifty mile of Prairie City. When he came here in a prairie scooner there were two houses. they were J. H. Elliott and William Means.

A.J. Wiggins came to Prairie City in 1857 along with Doctor Bidwell.

Isiah Coomes came among the earliest settlers in 1854, when Des Moines and Mound Prairie townships were one. The first election ever held was at Sand Ridge school-house. He was justice of the peace for eight years.

John C. French came from Knox county, Illinois, in 1856. He had one of the first corn planters in the country, manufactured by G. W. Brown, of Galesburg, Illinois.

J. L. Laughlin came to Prairie City in 1859 with J. W. Macy. He worked with one horse for a dollar a day, his wife also working in the field. Their first shanty was built of native lumber and the next spring the lumber shrank and cracked so he told of being able to run the stovepipe out in almost any part of the house. His first shanty was 16 x 20

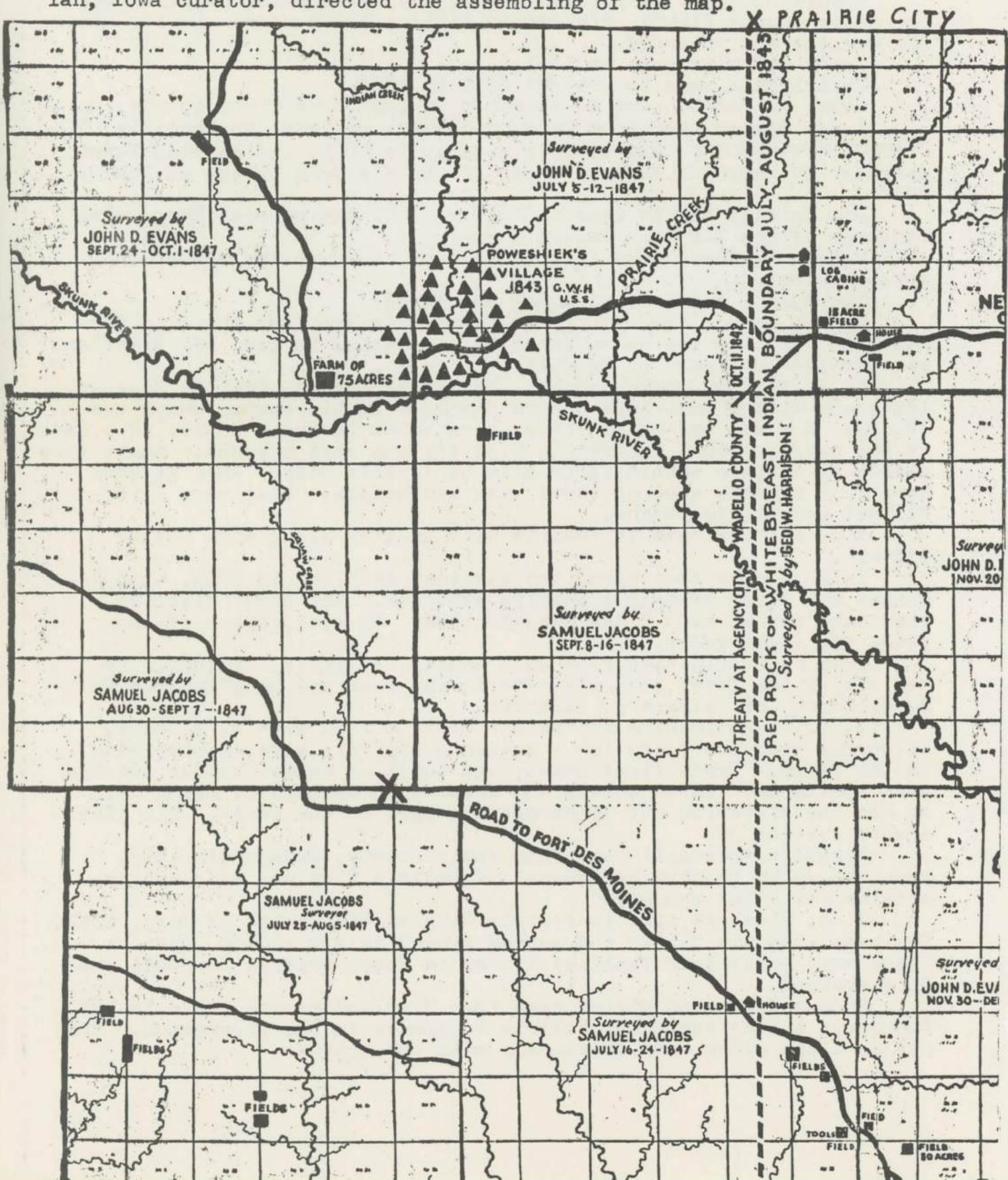
Franklin McConnell came from Posey county, Indiana in 1855, when the whole country north-east of Prairie City was wild and unsettled for miles around.

J. S. Rinehart came to Prairie City on the fourth of July, 1854. He came with his father and mother from Richland county, Ohio. There were about four families living in Mound Prairie township when they arrived.

Thomas Jefferson Miller came from Highland county, Ohio in 1854. There was a long string of Prairie Schooners in the procession. the new settlers often came in company with one another.

PART OF JASPER COUNTY 1847

Map shown below is part of a reproduction of the original maps made by the government surveyors in 1847. Photostatic pictures were taken of the original maps, and the whole assembled into one county map and presented here with the original markings and notations as put in by the federal surveyors. It is the first official and authentic map of the county. E. R. Harlan, Iowa curator, directed the assembling of the map.



Historic dates which the oldest settler may have forgotten appear in a 1912 Prairie City Old Settlers Reunion program.

The program, Compiled by Frank L. Woodard, at that time an insurance agent in Prairie City.

- 1851---Town of Vandalia laid out.
- 1852---"Uncle Jimmie Elliott" arrived here.
- 1853---First preaching by a Methodist minister.
- 1854---First deaths, two children of Anderson Boyd.
- 1855---August Hershman taught first school.
- 1856---Town of Elliott (now Prairie City) laid out.
- 1857---Christian Church organized by Capt. J. P. Roach.
- 1858---Methodist Church organized.
- 1860---Fourth of July celebration. 600 ate at one table.
- 1866---Flour mill erected. Destroyed by fire in 1901.
- 1867---Odd Fellows Lodge organized.
- 1868---Town of Prairie City founded.
- 1868---Masonic Lodge charter granted.
- 1868---Congregational Church organized.
- 1869---Total eclipse of the sun.
- 1869---Explosion of anvil July 4, killing Mr. Rockbold of Vandalia and Mr. Anderson of Prairie City.
- 1870---Jacob Saunders published first newspaper in Prairie City.
- 1870---First agricultural Fair held in Prairie City.
- 1873---First brass band organized in Prairie City.
- 1880---West side of square destroyed by fire.
- 1884---North side of square burned out.
- 1900---Census of Prairie City 808.
- 1903---First Old Settlers meeting Aug.24.
- 1910---Census of Prairie City 764.



From left to right: John Selby's Restaurant; Schulenberg Millinery Shop; John Dinsmore's Meat Shop; Pool Hall; Barbershop, Joe Little's Hardware Store.

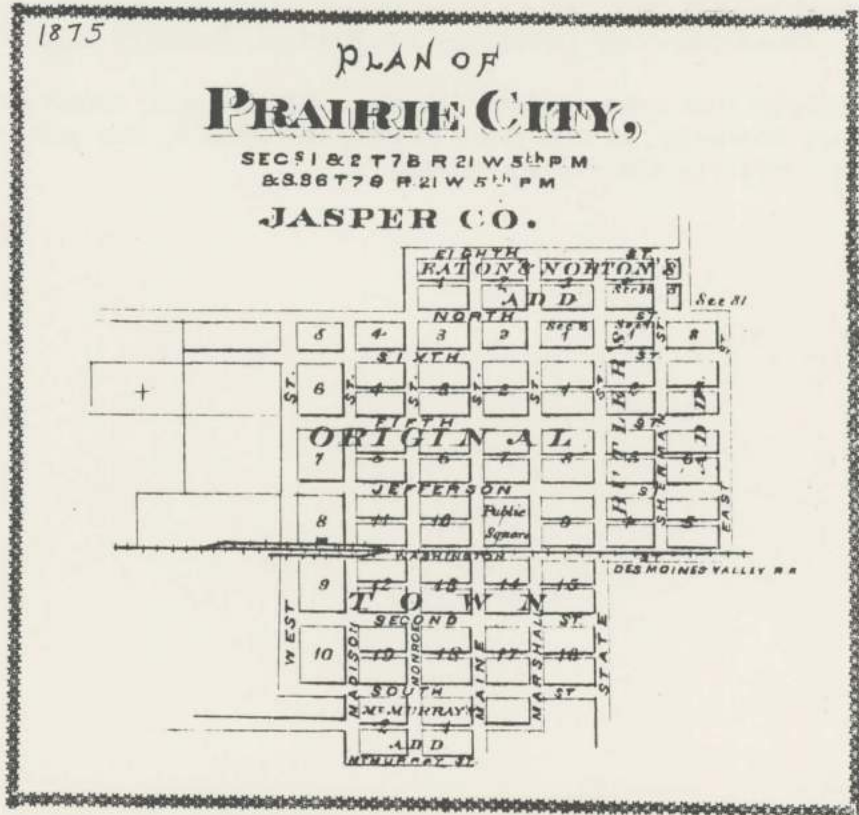
EARLY PRAIRIE CITY

This is a flourishing town on the Keokuk and Des Moines Railroad, eight or nine miles above Monroe. It was platted June 7, 1856, by the name of Elliott, by James Elliott, Esq., but was subsequently incorporated by the name it now bears. This was in 1868, and in October of that year were elected as first town council: Sidney Williams, Mayor; C. Head, Recorder; J. W. Hammond, C. Dustin, E. Adkins, A. H. Kirtland, and A. B. Duncan, Trustees. The present town council consists of: Carey Smith, Mayor; J. F. Williams, Recorder; H. C. DeWolf, George Brockhagen, R. McKnight, E. C. Warner, and S. F. Miller, Trustees.

The independent district of Prairie City erected, in 1868, a school house which does honor to the town, at a cost of \$7,000. The schools are graded in four departments, with a teacher each, and a principal, who has general supervision. The citizens believe in liberal education, and several branches have been added to the course of study in addition to those usually required in common schools.

The Methodist, Congregational, Christian, Catholic, and United Brethren church denominations have active organizations here. The three former have good church buildings. Other church edifices are in contemplation.

The business of the town comprises five general stores, one dry goods, four groceries, one clothing, two hardware, and three drug stores, three hotels, four grain dealers, two agricultural implement stores, and various other branches of trade, shops, etc. The professions are represented by five lawyers and a like number of physicians.



SCHOOL WAS ONE OF THE FIRSTS  
IN PRAIRIE CITY

(From the 75th Anniversary Edition,  
November 17, 1949)

The first school house was built in Prairie City in 1856, the year in which the name of the town was switched from Elliott to Prairie City. But even before that, school was held in a small building owned by James Elliott. The first teacher was Isaac Hershman.

The election which resulted in the formation of the Prairie City Independent School District was held March 14, 1867. Caleb Bundy was first president. The new school house building was completed in 1868 at the cost of \$6,000. Ten years later there were 387 pupils in attendance.

In 1909, the Prairie City High School was placed on the full accredited list of High Schools in Iowa and its graduates were permitted to enter the colleges of Iowa without taking entrance exams. Each graduate was required to prepare a thesis of suitable length on an approved topic and present the same in English class at least 12 weeks before graduation. Each graduate was also required to deliver an oration during Commencement week.

NOTE: This article states the building cost of the school at \$6,000 while another states it as being \$7,000.---

FIRST NEWSPAPER HERE IN 1870  
FIRST TO SUCCEED PUBLISHED IN 1875

Digging thru the files, we have discovered that actually the first newspaper in Prairie City was started 100 years ago in 1870 by Jacob Saunders. However, this newspaper, like the next which was begun in 1871, did not succeed, and the newspaper which has been carried on throughout the years is the one which was first published in 1875.

The name of the newspaper published in 1870 was "The Gleaner and Herald". T. C. Masteller helped publish this paper but in 1871 went to the newspaper in Winterset, "The Winterset Madsonian".

The paper published in 1871 was called the "Index" and was published by McGinitie and Bartlett. The first copy published on Friday, January 6, 1871--Vol. 1, Number 1.

The present newspaper has been called "Prairie City News" during most of its existence thus far; however, at one time during the 1890's, the editor chose to call the paper the "Prairie City News-Kodak".

## A POLITICAL RALLY IN 1868 (Taken from Aug. 4, 1920 Paper)

It was in the year 1868, a delegation from Prairie City, among them Newton Moore, who cast his first vote that year, attended the big political rally at Ottumwa, boosting for General Ulysses S. Grant of Illinois for President and Schuyler Colfax of Indiana for Vice-President of the United States. The opposing candidates were Governor Horatio Seymour of New York and Francis P. Blair of Indiana. The Prairie City martial band, in which Billy Woods played the fife, accompanied the delegation from Prairie City.

When they arrived in Ottumwa it rained, and then it rained some more. Ottumwa welcomed them to her midst.

Henry O'Connor was the speaker of the day.

It was in the days of board sidewalks and unpaved streets, and the name of the streets was "mud!"

In the big parade which took place there was a large float on which there were pretty girls in costume to represent each of the states in the Union.

This float stopped the parade when it mired down in the muddy road, and the girls were unloaded and assisted to the grounds by emulators of Sir Walter Raleigh.

In the evening there was a parade of "tauners," or torch-bearers, with oilskin coats and caps marching through the mud. Newton Moore was one of the torchbearers.

### Windmill . . .



### HITCHIN' POSTS IN THE PARK

Prairie City, always proud of its beautiful park, is making some changes that will add much to the appearance of the park. The fence has been removed; in its place there is being set a row of heavy oak posts eight feet apart. Through the top of the posts runs a string of good-sized gas pipe.

This will make a good hitching rack.

From Prairie City News, 1881

THE OLD STAGE WINDMILL was built about 1840 on what is now the Pete Van Peurseem farm. The top part, resembling a water tank, was the part that went around with the action of the wind. It kept a wooden trough filled with water for horses of the Stagecoach era. It was dismantled during World War II.

(From 75th Anniversary Edition, Nov. 1949)



## OLD SETTLERS REUNION---1898

The Sixth Annual Reunion of the Old Settlers was held in Prairie City, Thursday, September 1st., and the pioneers with their families, together with many strangers came from far and near until by noon several thousand people had gathered to celebrate the day enjoying themselves socially, meeting and greeting old friends, and having a good time in generally.

At 10:30 the business meeting was called to order by President Geo. Ryan and the reports of Secretary and Treasurer were read and officers for the ensuing year were elected as follows:

President, George Ryan.

Vice Presidents, F.N. Kellogg and W. H. Bryan.

Secretary and Treasurer, Dr. H.C. Gill.

Executive Committee, S. O. Scott, A. B. Jenks, J. P. Johnston, James Farley and John Graham.

After the morning program a recess was taken till 1:30 for dinner. During the noon time intermission numbers of tablecloths were spread on the grass, and family groups sat down to partake of Iowa's bounty. The hotels and restaurants also had a liberal patronage.

At 1:30 p.m. headed by the band, an old time parade was an enjoyable feature of the day. This consisted of a family arrayed in costumes of ye olden time going to church, an old settler going to the mill on horse back in the old time garb, an open wagon on which were ladies busily engaged at spinning and other interesting features. Afterward the people assembled at the grand stand.

Rev. Gray offered prayer, following which was the presentation of a beautiful cup and saucer to Mrs. Emily Fosselman, mother of Mrs. Coleman, who was the oldest lady on the grounds, being 83 years of age.

A song by the Chorus class was next rendered, which was excellent and well appreciated by the audience.

Old time threshing with flails was an amusing feature for everybody.

Following another song and music by the band was the address of the day, by Rev. J.J. Mitchell, which was excellent and timely, dealing with the present condition of our country and reminiscences.

The recitation, Roderic Lee, by Mr. Ella Yowell, was rendered in a pleasing manner and with fine effect.

W. O. McElroy and W. G. Clements, of Newton, both gave thoughtful and patriotic speeches, after which ample time was left for further visiting, before departing for home.

The Colfax Colored band interspersed good music during the day and received many compliments for their excellent playing, all of which were well deserved.

All in all, to make a long story short, as space and time will not permit a more extended report, it was a great day, and everybody had a good time.

## NOTES

Everbody decorated with the national colors, some of the displays being quite beautiful.

The stand decorations were good and appropriate.

Three hundred badges were given to the old settlers.

The politicians and candidates were on hand as usual, shaking hands and getting acquainted.

On the table of relics in the park we noticed the following:

- Flax wheel, brought from Germany by Mrs. Riffle.
- Large wheel, Mrs. Main. Mrs. Slaughter, Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. S. D. Butters showed the younger generation something of the art of spinning.
- Small spinning wheel, Mrs. J. Graham, which she used to good effect to show how it was done in the olden time.
- Garin cradles, barley forks, etc.
- Old fashioned lamp wick, Mrs. John Graham.
- Chair 50 years old, Miss McCollough.
- Christian Ricket represented the old citizens of Germany by knitting a round on an old stocking.
- Basket and plate over 100 years old, Mrs. Norton.
- Plate 125 years old, T. W. Clark, property of his grandmother.
- Cup and saucer, over 100 years old, J. C. Clark.
- Old Swiss watch and fork brought from England by grandfather of T. W. Nixon.
- Shirt captured from Sergt. Major of the 12th. Alabama in South Carolina, in the year 1865, and afterward worn by W. H. Bryan.
- Old fashioned reticule, 60 years old, Miss Anna Turner, property of her grandmother.
- Discharge of W. H. Bryan by Capt. H. C. Wills, March 13, 1865.
- Watch about 60 years old worn during the war by J. P. Turner.
- Collection of fractional paper currency: 10, 15, 25, and 50 cents, Chas. Bryan.
- Newspaper printed on wall paper in '61 or '62, Mrs. Duncan.
- Brass candle stick, lard lamp and candle snuffers, Mrs. J. Graham.
- Candle molds, Miss Jane Elliott.
- Straw bonnet worn by Mrs. S. O. Scott when a girl.
- Old painting, Mrs. Harp.
- Copper teapot brought from the old country by ( ) Schregardus.
- Flint and steel, Mr. Riffle.
- Teapot that was in the family of Geo. Graham, Sr. November 13, 1824, now used by J. M. Graham.
- Picture of Prairie City 25 years ago, Mr. A. Jenks.
- Vest worn by Mr. John Smith of Leighton, at his wedding in Indiana 50 years ago.
- Blue teapot, meat platter, tea cup over 50 years old, and white decorated pitcher brought from Germany, Mrs. Frank Porter,
- Plate 100 years old, Mrs. Price.
- Small iron kettle 120 years old and old sickle.

The list is somewhat incomplete; We regret that fact and also that we were unable to learn the age of some of the articles given and some name of owners.

## WELLS KINGDON COMES WITH FATHER IN 1871

One of the old and infirm of Prairie City, Wells E. Kingdon who is looking ahead to his ninetieth birthday next March 7, is usually the last to be driven indoors by old man winter in the fall, and the first to emerge again in the spring!

Getting around town slowly and a bit shakily on a pair of well-worn crutches ever since a stroke several years ago, Wells is the familiar figure where there are benches on which to rest and a bit of sunshine to keep him warm. His tales of yesteryear are familiar to many.

Coming to Prairie City with his father in 1871, he has spent all the remainder of his life here, opening a restaurant for a short time and then spent the rest of his active years on the farm.

His father subscribed to the Prairie City News when it was started and the paper came continuously to the Kingdon home until the spring of 1949, when his eyesight became so poor that he could not see to read, even with glasses.

"I only went to a dance twice in my life" says Wells. "The first time I went I took five girls; the second time only two". "It was really funny, when I drove up to the first girl's house to get her for the dance with the biggest livery wagon in town, she asked why that big thing-and found out that it was the only one left to take." "The second girl I told her that the first girl was the driver; and after that, I ran out of excuses so I had to tell girls 3, 4 and 5 what was up!"

Another time Wells already engaged to his wife-to-be, sought variety by dating a daughter of Mr. Zachary, but wound up with the girl plus her sister, since they had heard that he sometimes took them "five at a time". Mr. Zachary told Wells a few dates later: "If you would like to marry either one of my daughters, I will set up a farm complete with equipment and livestock for you." But flattered as he was by the offer of a daughter and a dowry, too, Wells let the bargain go by and finally married Amanda Slemmons in 1885 when he was 25 years old.

Coming fresh off his dad's farm at 22 years, he bought and operated a bakery and restaurant in Prairie City for 3 years. He claims to have bought and brought to town the first bananas that had ever appeared here. One of the first to sample them was young Harrison Gilbert, who had persuaded his mother to buy him one. After finishing the new treat, Harrison commented that the inside was pretty good, but the outside was too bitter!

Perhaps the restaurant cooking was too rough for Wells, at any rate, after 3 years he marched up the aisle with a private cook. The couple purchased a farm on the old east-west road, just west of town and right across from the cemetery. They hired a new set of farm buildings erected and made a completely new start. It was just one year after the new barn had been built that a bolt of lightning hit it, and it burned to the ground; all that was saved were a couple of horses and a halter.



"... Looking Ahead to 90"



W. E. K. at the Tender Age of 4

## HORSE DRAWN BUS TO DES MOINES

Amanda Slemmons Kingdon's father had a rugged job to do in those early days of this area. He operated a horse drawn bus between Ottumwa and Des Moines. There were no bridges; rivers were crossed on crude boats or ferrys and the driving paths (they could hardly be called roads) would round and about hills; so that the trip to Des Moines was so lengthy and strenuous that horses had to be changed at Pella both going and coming.

## NO BANKS HERE IN EARLY DAYS

Wells Kingdon recalls that there were no banks here in the early days when he came to Prairie City. People that had any surplus money left it at the Hammond & Richard Mill, to be kept in the big office safe.

## JESS LAMB, COAL MINER

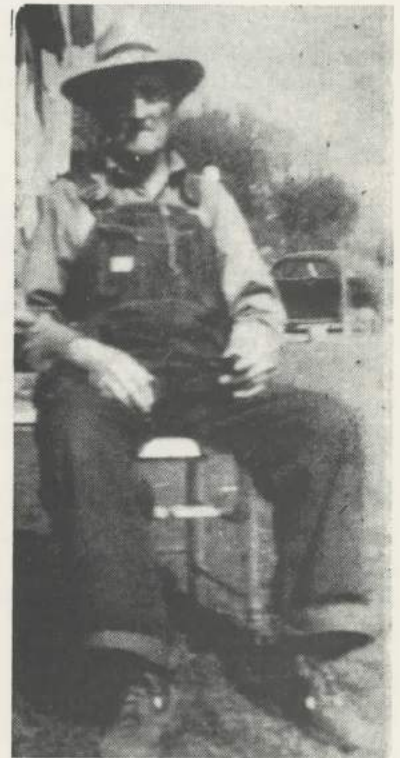
Jess Lamb, retired coal miner was born in Monroe back in 1871, which puts him about 78 years of age. He has worked long and hard--and right now he'd just about as soon be dangling a fishpole in the river as anything else he can think of.

Off and on, between spurts of farming, Jess worked as a miner in the old Coal Hollow mine southwest of Prairie City. When mining, he walked back and forth from his home in Vandalia.

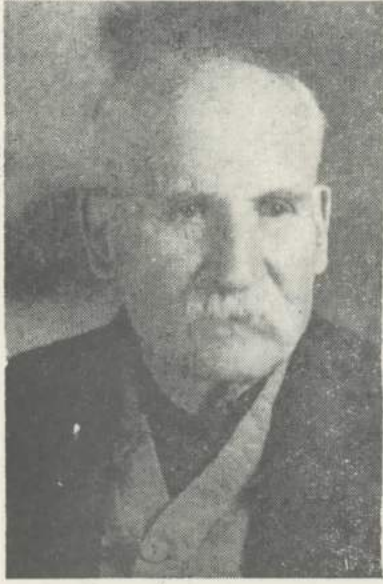
Born in Monroe, he spent a few early years in Red Rock (Marion County), then moved back to Vandalia.

Life seems to run long in the Lamb family--Jess has brothers living who are 71 (Jim), 75 (Charley), and 68 (John). His five living children are Grace Anderson, Garrison and Roscoe Lamb, all of Des Moines; Wynona Blood of Runnells and Mrs. Rollie Ogburn, Prairie City.

By Mrs. Ada Blood  
75th Anniversary Edition, 1949



The life of a coal miner and farmer is hard; Jess sits down when he gets a chance.



### WM. OGBURN TELLS OF THE WHIPPING HE RECEIVED FROM HIS FATHER

92 Year Old William Ogburn, born on a cold November day in a log cabin 5 1/2 miles south of Prairie City, is taking it easy.

After a life on the farm raising potatoes, corn and hogs, he is now living at home 2 miles southwest of Prairie City and spending his time reading and writing to his friends, of whom he has many.

When only one year old, his dad ("Uncle Ed") took him and his family to a farm in southern Kansas via a team of oxen pulling a proverbial covered wagon. Crossing of the Missouri was accomplished by use of a crude boat (or ferry) made of split logs. The Ogburns returned to Iowa when Bill was four years old.

Schooling began for Bill at the age of 6 years in the Brown Schoolhouse, five miles south of here. He remembers his first teacher as having only one arm; Jerome Harvey was his name

One day while a boy, Bill was out in the woods getting a wheelbarrow load of firewood, when it continued to get darker and darker. He became frightened and ran back to the house. By the time he got there, the chickens, thinking it was night had all gone to roost. The event turned out to be a total eclipse of the sun. (1869).

A boyish prank which netted him a whipping by his dad was accomplished by means of a dead sheep which he had found. He took the carcass and propped it up in the road near his home to await developments. The first team and buggy going by reacted just as he had expected; the horses bolted, jumped sideways and took off at a lively pace. Daddy Ed apprised of the event, didn't think it was funny. Neither did Bill when dad finished with him!

After his schooling, he started farming with his father, but soon found out that a farmer needs a wife; he was married in 1885 to Margaret Kane, and moved onto the Fairley farm. Three years later he bought a farm two miles southwest of Fairmount, Iowa, where he lived for 42 years. Now he is back at his original home near Prairie City.

Living relatives are Mrs. Gilbert Owens, Lincoln, Neb., his sister; his son, John Rollie who lives at home with his father, and two grandsons, Cecil and Dale Ogburn, both of whom live at Colfax.

By Mrs. Rollie Ogburn  
75th Anniversary Edition, 1949.

**S. B. BROUS, BORN IN MARION COUNTY IN 1859**

S. B. Brous is still going strong and reading without glasses at 90 years of age. Never married he is living at the present time with Mr. and Mrs. Orval Kain.

"The Prairie City News is a wonderful paper put out by a small town--and you don't have to murder someone or get murdered to get your name in it" is his opinion.

Born in 1859 in Marion County, 10 1/2 miles southwest of Prairie City, he has lived on the same section of land all of his life. During that span of years he has done farming with oxen, horses and the modern tractor; he has planted corn with the old hand planters, then with the horse-drawn planters, and also with the newest tractor-drawn machines.

Just north of the Bennington bridge is where he received all the education that came his way--in the first Bennington school house just on top of the hill. He is old enough to have voted in elections since 1880, when he voted for Gen. Hancock for president of the U. S. (not elected).

Township assessor for 35 years and secretary of the Perry township school board for 36 years, he is well known south of town. Mr. Brous is highly thought of in his community as being a man of clean habits and a good friend and neighbor.



OLD TIMERS:  
Mule 34;  
Brous 90

By Jimmie Herweh  
75th Anniversary Edition, 1949



Teacher Maggie (upper left) with her first class in 1884 near Pella. We can't identify the pupils; maybe some of our readers can.

**MAGGIE COWMAN GOT \$25.00 A MONTH FOR TEACHING SCHOOL**

It would be pretty hard to compute just how many people in and around Prairie City sat under the teaching of Mrs. Nate Cowman of Percy. She spent 18 years of her life teaching school near Pella--in the "pioneer" days of facilities and transportation, when she had to walk as high as 2 1/2 miles to get there, winter and summer.

Born Maggie Cooper in Pennsylvania in 1868, she came to Iowa when 10 years old; took her schooling in Knoxville.

"Sure I was cold and I wore red flannels!" She also remembered in all her 18 year period of teaching her wages remained at the persistent range of \$25 per month minimum and \$37.50 maximum.

By Mrs. Pearl Kain  
75th Anniversary Edition, 1949

## BURNS FAMILY COMES HERE IN 1869

Bailey Burns was born in Vermont in 1868 and moved with his parents to Prairie City the following year and lived first on land which is now Waveland Cemetery. With the Burns family, came a Vermont neighbor, B. C. Ward, who later served as editor of the Prairie City News for several years.

In 1880 the family settled on a farm 1 mile north and 1/2 mile east of town where he attended the Squaw Creek rural school. He married Ella May Hoffman. Children are Mrs. D. A. (Ina) Fitzgerald, Duane De Witt and Hubert. Hubert now rents the farm from his father.

"That man must be crazy" said some of his neighbors many years ago when Bailey planted his corn around a hill instead of up and down it--practicing soil conservation which no one else had heard of yet. He was raising alfalfa hay as early as 1910.

For years (40 to be exact) the Burns family has lived on their present farm, 1 mile east and 1/2 mile north of Prairie City. He now has 150 lambs on feed and raises chickens as a sideline. For many years, he shipped his eggs to the New York market and cleared from 3 to 5 cents a dozen more than he could get at the local market.

Helping to organize the KP Lodge in 1890 here, he is now the only living charter member. He also served as school secretary in Mound Prairie township for 34 years and as township assessor for 6 years.

By Mrs. Clarence Faidley  
74th Anniversary Edition, 1949



Bailey Burns was just 21 yrs. old (but look at that mustache, will you?) when this picture was made by J. A. Rovaart in 1889.



MR. AND MRS. L. P. MEAD  
CAME TO PRAIRIE CITY IN  
1865

Reports of the new Hawkeye State appealed to this young couple and with the thousands of others that were then emigrating to the then Far West, Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Mead came to Iowa in 1865 from Ohio.

They located on a farm near Prairie City and celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on Sept. 19, 1910.

Mr. and Mrs L. P. Mead, who celebrated their Golden Wedding on Monday September 19, 1910,

CYRUS VAN GUNDY VISITS PRAIRIE CITY IN 1915  
 Article taken from April 22, 1915 Prairie City Newspaper

Cyrus Van Gundy, of Ramah, Colorado, was here last week visiting his nephew, John Minick, and his niece, Mrs. A. J. Pentico. He also shook hands with the children and grandchildren of the old settlers of this vicinity--those who are now dead and gone.

Mr. Van Gundy saw this place years before there was a house or a tree where this town now stands. He is almost eighty years of age now and came here when only nine years old with his parents, three brothers and two sisters. His only living brother, Lafe, now lives in Des Moines. He has three sisters now living. Another sister, Mrs. Aaron Minick, was buried in Vandalia cemetery eleven years ago. His living sisters are: Mrs. Christiana Barnes, of Omaha, Mrs. Angeline Rager, of Des Moines, and Mrs. Barbery Ellen Honnell, of Runnells. He also has a niece, Mrs. John Bivans, living in Runnells, and a son living in Des Moines.

His family came to this county in 1846 and settled two miles east of Tool's Point, which at that time consisted of one house owned and occupied by Adam Tool. The city of Des Moines consisted of a row of fort houses "up the Coon" and another up the Des Moines river. There was one house occupied by John Mitchell, near where Apple Grove is now. This man afterwards founded the town of Mitchellville.

Mr. Van Gundy's father drove to Oskaloosa to Duncan's mill to get his wheat made into flour. It took a day to go and another to come back, but they had to wait about a week for their turn at the mill. They separated the bran from the flour by holding it up to the wind. When they wanted mush and milk they boiled the ears of corn and then grated them on a home-made grater. This was a piece of tin with nail holes punched through. The edges of the tin were nailed to a slab of wood so as to furnish a curved surface to grate the corn on.

They had open fire places in those days. The hearth was made of flat stones. The back and sidewalls were also of rock, using mud for mortar. The chimney was made of flat sticks, plastered inside and out with mud. The cooking was done in crude utensils. They had "spiders" to fry their meat. This was a skillet with three legs about four inches long, so it could be set in the fireplace among the hot coals. It was provided with a heavy cover and sometimes they heaped hot coals all over it. They would do their baking in a dutch oven. This was made a good deal in the shape of a blacksmith's bellows and the chimney was placed at the little end. A flat stone was provided for the door and sometimes they were fortunate enough to have an iron door. The walls were first built up to the height desired and then the inside was filled with sand to support the top until it was dry. The walls and top were made of stones or brick if they could get them. This oven was filled with wood which was allowed to burn until the walls and top were sufficiently heated, when the fire was removed and the oven swept out. The bread was then placed inside and baked by the heat retained in the walls.

They raised their own wool and made their own clothes. The garments were not up to the present day fashions, but they certainly did wear.

The next man to settle near Tool's Point was named McCollum. One of the first families to settle between Tool's Point and Des Moines was Tom Wyatt's father. Another was a family named Warren.

The first school-house was made of logs, each family furnishing its own share. The roof was covered with clap-boards. The desks were made by boring holes in the walls, wooden pins being driven into these and the slabs laid across. The seats were made by splitting logs in two and boring holes in the under side, into which legs were inserted. They didn't have manual training and domestic science departments in that school.



The first white man to settle at Prairie City was James Elliott, as everybody knows. He built his log house near what is now the southwest corner of the town. His walnut trees are still there, and Hessel D. Van Ryswyk lives on the property.

The first settler north of town was John Hushman, where Grant Sandy now lives. About the same time his brother, Ike Hushman, settled on the Alfred Potter place, where D. R. Schakel now lives. The first family south of town was Fred Kellogg's father. The first family east of town was Bigger Head, where Harl Main lives, and Billy Means settled about two miles west on the place owned by W. E. Graham. Other early settlers were John Butters and Levi Wilson.

The stage route was established about 1850, and the railroad was extended up from Pella in 1866.

Among the first, if not the very first house made of lumber was the one now occupied by George Bidwell west of town. The material was hauled from Keokuk and was built by a man named Van Winkle, who with his wife, was buried on the northeast corner of the farm.

Mr. Van Gundy is as hale and hearty as a man of fifty-five or sixty years. His greatest affliction is his hearing, which is not as good as he would like. His flowing hair and white beard give him a venerable appearance. He is a very gentle old man and says that in some things his memory may be at fault, and if he has misstated any facts he hopes that no one will take offense. He is an "old man looking toward the west" and hopes that when he goes he will carry only the good will of those he has left behind.



GROUP OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN FRONT OF OLD SCHOOL BUILDING SOMETIME IN 1800's

FRONT ROW: Right to Left; Art Baird, Ashford Leamian, Roll Springer, Wyatt Wills, Leonard Price, Lee Lacy, Jinnie Clifford, Jamie Van Vark, Willie Duismore, Lula Allen, Zoe Butters, Jenny Waters, Donna Clark, Bessie Vandermost, Anna Davis. BACK ROW: Bessie Baird, Veva Little, Lena Williams, Hazel Chandler, Mable Cline, Haddie Hanes, Amy Brown, Jennie Selby, Leta DeWolf, Perl Vanslyck, Bessie Hixon, Will Cline, Kramer Gilbert, Lella Butters, Lottie Price, Neva Ceurley, Garfield Graham, Fay Hazen, Neva Butters, Charley Hanes, Leona Dowden, Nita Daniels, Martha Botsford, Anna Wills, Mary Bar.

REMINISCENCES\*\*\*BY W. H. BRYAN. (President of the Old Settlers Association) Taken from Aug. 14, 1924 Prairie city Newspaper.

In March, 1867, I, in company with Capt. Wells, left my native state Kentucky, for the west. After a stop or two in Illinois we came to Iowa via the main line of Rock Island, as far as Kellogg (the end of the road at that time). From there to Monroe by stage, stopping at Newton for supper, took the K. D. from there to Des Moines, stopped at the Court Avenue Hotel, an old frame building with many additions. Second street and Court Avenue was the center of the trade at that time.

I have in my possession a bird's eye view of the city at that time taken from the old State House. I wish I could reproduce it here, showing scattering buildings on the east side, but many more on the west side, and quite a goodly number of them two stories.

After a short stay in the capital city we came to Prairie City about March 25th. At the depot we inquired the best way up town and were told to walk up the track on the end of the ties, arriving at the southwest corner of the square and turning north. The ties gave out but we found a side walk in front of a store about where W.J. Illias is now located and again found walks about where the harness shop is now located, also in front of one store on the north side of the square. We were both wearing boots and it was well we were, as by the time we got up town we would have lost our shoes in the mud. If there were any other walks we did not see them.

It was our wish to find conveyance to our friends, the Carter family, near the site of the town of Percy, and on inquiring for conveyance were told there were only two spring vehicles in the town, one owned by Ben Worden, the butcher, the other by Davy Tibles, the hotel man who was located where the bakery now is. Tible's team had gone to the country for a load of corn. The only thing for us to do was to sit down and wait the return of the team.

The K. D. road had been completed to Des Moines the previous summer and on the fourth of July ran an excursion train to that city, of which, no doubt, my old friend and comrade, J. W. Elliott, could give you pointers. Like most things in this world, our wait came to an end. We got off about eleven o'clock, Tible's son saying he knew where Carter's lived. We started out southwest from town and were soon on open prairie, the road following the high ridges. When down about the Fleming schoolhouse we found the boy did not know where Carter's lived, so we changed our course going to the Wes Brown schoolhouse near the Brethren church and on south. This took us past Capt. Zachary's old place with his extended feed lots with hogs and cattle by the hundred. This was an eye opener to the boys from the mountains of Kentucky. Everything was new. Most of the barns were built of hay or straw. There were some good houses but mud, mud everywhere.

A month later I bargained for the farm where Wm. M. Cowman now lives near Pleasant Hill church for my father. Capt. Wells returned to Kentucky. My brother came out and we went to farming. Later I moved on to the prairie and continued to farm.

For about seventeen years we sold hogs as low as \$2.25 per hundred, wheat as low as 45 cents, corn at 15 cents, butter 10 cents, and eggs 8 cents and still we lived, but did not own an auto or have a radio or electric lights. WE did have a telephone from our house to B. W. Brown's. We sent to the Youth's Companion and got 300 feet of copper wire and two mouthpieces for three dollars. When we wanted to talk we would tap on the mouthpiece with a pencil to attract the attention of the other party.

## MRS. MARY OFFILL COMES FROM KENTUCKY

IN 1863

(Taken from Prairie City News, Aug. 4, 1920)

Mrs. Mary Offill, who is in her ninety-fifth year, came to Prairie City on the night of March 20, 1863. There had been a raid of Morgan's band of rebels through Kentucky. They burned and pillaged the small town of Olive Hill, five miles from her home.

When word was received of the coming of the rebel band, the horses were hid in the hills by the home guards, her oldest son being one of them. Kentucky homes were being burned to the ground by the rebels, so Mrs. Offill hid bedding and other articles of value in the fodder shocks and in other places where they would not be found in a hurried search.

The raiders passed her homestead before daylight, about a quarter of a mile away. Forty men of the home guards were armed with guns and they shot thirty of the raiders, without losing a man.

The women spent the night in the hills, Mrs. Offill held her baby daughter in her lap throughout the night. This daughter is now Mrs. C. D. Churchill and she resides in Prairie City.

Fifteen homes were burned within a radius of thirty miles, but the Offill home escaped. Mrs. Offill could hear them fighting and she says she was so mad that if she had been a man she would have taken a rifle and gone after them.

In the morning, Mrs. Offill returned to her home and had breakfast for 25 women whose men were fighting with the home guards. At noon she prepared dinner for a yard full of men of the home guards.

The raiders having passed on, the horses were brought back from the hills by the men, and they disbanded and started for their homes. Mrs. Offill had warned them to watch for more of the raiders, but they laughed at her warning. Her husband's uncle, returning home, rode up to some of Morgan's raiders before he realized who they were. They took his horse and made him a prisoner. When one of the rebels mounted the horse it promptly threw him over its head, although it had always been a gentle saddle horse, being ridden to church on Sundays by Mrs. Offill's daughter, who used a side saddle.

The next year, in the spring, Mrs. Offill and her family left the home place in Kentucky, bound for Iowa to save her children from the perils of the border state. Fifty friends gathered to bid them goodbye.

They rode horseback to the Ohio River, accompanied by two soldiers to protect them from the rebels. They went by boat down the Ohio to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to Keokuk, by railroad to Eddyville, and by stage from Eddyville to Prairie City.

There were then only thirteen houses in Prairie City. There were no trees except a few planted at Dan Mains and who brought them in by "horse power" and left them at Mr. Bundy's to be called for. There was one store, and only a few things could be purchased there, and these only in small quantities. There were no flour sacks such as we have today. Wheat flour was obtained by driving to the mill and exchanging wheat for flour. Sacks for flour and other uses were made of "tow" or coarse linen, while finer flax linen was used for summer clothing.

Mrs. Offill says the corn and potatoes raised on the prairie here were not as good then as they were in Kentucky, and the soil was not suitable for growing flax. In Kentucky Mrs. Offill raised flax and spun and wove hundreds of yards of linen and woolen cloth, some of which she sold to be made into jeans and blankets and other things.

Washing was done with a "battle stick", battling the clothes in a tub of suds, after which they were wrenched in the clear water of the creek and hung on the bushes or laid on the grass to dry.

In Kentucky her flock of geese were automatic lawn mowers, and kept the grass trimmed along the bank of the creek. The geese also furnished the filling for feather beds which she brought with her to Prairie City, which were then, so far as she knows, the only ones in town.

Sugar was made by boiling down the sap of maple trees.

When they left Kentucky they left a five hundred acre place, sold years after at far below its real value, and Mrs. Offill gave most of her household furniture and dishes to an old man and woman, who had had all their property burned by the raiders. These old people were nearly a hundred years old. The neighbors had fixed up a home for them after theirs had burned. This was three miles from the Offill place and Mrs. Offill told them to go and get the furniture and dishes as she passed their house on her way to Iowa.

Mrs. Offill says she does not regret leaving Kentucky, for if she had remained she might have lost all her children; Kentucky being on the borderline and subject to raids by the rebels.

Shortly after their arrival at Prairie City, Mrs. Offill's son John, then twenty years old, enlisted in the Army and went to fight the rebels. He was home on sick furlough at the time the Civil War was ended.

One great-grandson of Mrs. Offill, Glen Tollenaar, of Seattle, fought for Uncle Sam in the World War. Two grandsons, Earl Offill and Sumner Churchill of Prairie City, also served in the World War.



JAMES OFFILL - Born 1819



MARY ANN (WALTERS) OFFILL - Born 1826

Mr. and Mrs. Offill were married in 1841. Mr. Elliott, after settling in Prairie City, wrote the Offills to come; they were family friends in Kentucky. Because of Civil War oppression (Morgan's Raid), they came to Prairie City in April, 1863, in a covered wagon. They are grandparents of Mabel Frazer, and Ralph and Sumner Churchill.

## INTERESTING LETTERS ABOUT THE EARLY DAYS

From Mrs. S. M. Jones, Nevada, Missouri--July 29, 1909

Editor news: I have lived in Prairie City in the past. It was my home for forty years. It is a dear place to me. It seems like home. I would like to live and die there. I have a loving husband lying in the graveyard there. I want to be laid by his side when I leave this world. I loved to go to church there and hear the preaching and singing.

I think Prairie City is a pretty town. I would like to be there Old Settlers day to see friends and clasp their hand once more.

We kept hotel and restaurant in Prairie City for a good many years. The old farmers used to come in for dinner, and said they came to get some old Kentucky cornbread. Some of them live there now.

When we came to Prairie City it was a small town. I think the park is a beautiful place. The trees were set out the year we came there. Old man Shaw set them out.

I wish I had a drink of water out of the park.

From G. W. Wilkinson, Adel, Iowa ---August 13, 1909

Editor News: I see that a correspondent signing himself "Subscriber" in last weeks news seeks to correct Mrs. S. M. Jones in regard to who planted the trees in the park, and states that the trees were planted by J. W. Elliott and John Locke. Now just correct history up a little more in regard to this matter. The writer himself helped John Anderson plant the first trees that were planted in the park. We were mere boys, but can remember helping Mr. Anderson get the trees out of Mr. Wilsons grove. That was Mr. L. P. Wilsons grove, at the southeast corner of the town. I also remember holding the trees while Mr. Anderson sighted and set them. The trees were planted in the park before John Locke arrived in Prairie City, as he did not come there until after Hammond & Bagert had purchased the flouring mill, which was several years after the trees were planted. The old residents of Prairie City will remember that Mr. Hammond advocated the selling of the park for business lots, but the people would not see it that way and moreover, Mr. J.W. Elliott had only deeded the park to the town to be used as a park.

From Mrs. E. P. Stevens, St. Edward, Nebraska --- June 15, 1909

Editor News: When I got the news last week and saw the old time news of 1888, it reminded me of a keepsake I have. In 1876, when H. L. McGinitie was editor of the News, Mary Vermulen of Pella set type for him, and sometimes some of us young folks would go up to the office the night they run the paper off, and would help fold the papers. So one night John Hayes, who was clerking in Dunlap & Mummert's store, came up after they closed the store, and when they got through with the paper, he went to the store and got some remnants of unbleached muslin and ran it through the printing press. Then they gave us each some of it. I still have mine and you can read it good.

I would not take a small fortune for it.

LENNA L. MEANES TELLS OF MEMORIES OF THE LATE 1870's  
(From files of Prairie City News, 1940)

The writer of this letter was born in Jasper County, on the Draper farm four miles southwest of Prairie City, in the early 1870's. She writes and we quote: "My parents moved to our farm seven miles west of Prairie City in 1874--hence the memories, which I shall jot down here, start from that point. Early on the morn of those Fourth of July days, we (my younger brother and I) were dressed from underthings to outer garments in all new things. Then cautioned in no uncertain terms to be careful "or else".

Then came the packing of the big baskets of food, picnic dinner not only for our family of four but for any friends who might appear--fried chicken, ham, tongue, jars of fruit, pickles, salads, beets, coffee, pie, cake, rolls, cucumber pickles and so forth. And then, the drive of seven miles to town.

My father, T. L. Meanes, familiarly called Loss, told stories and my mother admonished us as to our clothing, and above all, also our behavior to our elders. Mother was Louisa C. Creighton--Dehlia to her friends.

The day was always celebrated in the public square in the center of the town. The bandstand was the center of the main program and there it was that the main oration was delivered. The main attraction, however, was the famous Girls' Band. The Glamour Girls of today cannot hold a candle to the wonder girls in that band. Strange to say, though, I did not want to follow in their footsteps, for my idol and ideal was Dr. H. C. Potter. His office, with its pills, powders and instruments, and his roller top desk, was more attractive to me than "the throne of kings and queens". The buggy and team of horses and the freedom of coming and going day and night quite attracted my imagination even in those early days.

But back to the celebration of which I sit at my coffee table and recall here in my apartment in New York City this morning of 1940. I remember very clearly and vividly the city square surrounded by chains and hitching posts (for those were the horse and buggy days), and even the great holes in the earth which the horses impatiently "pawed out". Yes, I can yet hear the singing "Oh, Say, Can You See", etc. and the band playing. No band has ever sounded so good to my ears since. And the stands and barkers for the ice cream and lemonade! I would hate to confess just how many I consumed!

One of the hectic things of the day was when I, as "Exhibit A", was on inspection to the friends of my parents, and after the "once over" they would invariably say "Well, Lenna is certainly 'a Draper.'" That troubled my young mind at first and then I philosophized and decided that it couldn't be so very "off color" for they looked rather pleased. It was years before I really understood what "being a Draper" really meant.

My Grandmother Meanes was Elizabeth Draper. What a stately and understanding soul she was. She loved her cup of tea. Once I recall her saying "Yes, thank you, I will have another cup of tea." It then seemed to me that one of the joys of being an adult was to be able to say, "Yes, thank you, I believe I will have another cup of tea."

And just here may I inject another incident of Jasper County, Iowa. I came to New York City in 1918 to live. Many things fascinated and interested me, but one of the biggest thrills I have had was one day in the Genealogical division of the library; I saw a volumn marked "Jasper County Iowa". Immediately I opened it about the middle and the first words I saw were "William Meanes was the first white settler in Jasper County, Iowa." Was I thrilled? I was. I lived in Iowa from the time of my birth until 1918, and then to find that bit of information here in this great city, and quite by accident.

May I tell you another unexpected one? The next time you go to London, when you go to the St. Paul Cathedral, please look up at the beautiful stained glass window, one given by the Drapers. When I was there in 1930, I stood admiring it when I noticed that it was given by some of my ancestors, the Drapers.

Some children like fireworks--I never did---hence the fireworks meant nothing then or now. So I was always glad to be at my home. The highlights for the Fourth of July consisted of bands, oratory, singing, picnics, ice cream and lemonade stands but firecrackers were out.

Hoping that recalling some of these will find an interested reader of yesteryear, I am,"

Sincerely yours,

Lenna L. Meanes  
The Breaker, 182nd St. and 3rd Ave.  
New York, City, N. Y.



Daniel W. Main and Aner Kelso were married at Hillsboro, Ohio, January 21, 1843. They came to Jasper County in 1856 with three children. They settled on the farm one and one-half miles east of Prairie, building the house that is still standing and raised a family of eleven--seven sons and four daughters. This picture was taken on their fiftieth wedding anniversary, January 21, 1893.

This farm is now occupied by the Ed Vander Hart family.  
Left to Right: Charlie, Mary, Resin, Julia, John, Berge, Ellen, Harlan. Seated are Daniel W. and Aner Kelso Main and Etta. (Mrs. Earl Williams' Grandparents)

Miss Carrie Wiggin brought in a copy of the Prairie City Index for Friday, Jan. 19, 1872. The number given was No. 1, but the volume number was torn off. The following contents were published in the Jan. 10, 1935 Prairie City News:

The editor and publisher was J. W. Hammond. Advertisers included E. J. M'Gavic & Bro. (lumber yard),

Fish and Hammond (Prairie City mills)

G. L. Bates (photograph gallery)

Dunlap & Mummert (general merchandise)

Tomlinson & Stevenson (blacksmiths)

George Holdefer (boots and shoes)

H. H. Gleason (attorney of Monroe)

Dr. C. H. Potter (physician and surgeon)

Dr. J. Bidwell (physician and surgeon)

Winslow & Wilson (attorneys)

Sylvester Williams (restaurant)

Howe & Campbell (attorneys of Newton)

E. E. Tildon (restaurant)

Jesse Wilson (carpenter)

J. W. Deweese (attorney)

Williams and Clements (attorneys)

Dr. J. W. Adams (physician and surgeon)

Dr. S. F. Miller (physician and surgeon)

J. P. Osborn (merchant tailor)

Mrs. George Fugard (millinery)

H. J. Griffis (blacksmith and carriage maker)

Leanord May (book store)

Clark & Ryan (attorneys of Newton)

David Ryan (attorney)

B. B. Harkness (clocks)

P. E. Bain (architect)

Williams and Clements (real estate agents)

Prairie City House (Ezra Adkins proprietor)

George Bro--- (harness)

E. R. Ward (harness)

Joe Anderson (sign painting)

H. M. Howard (commission merchant)

H. C. De Wolf (dry goods and clothing)

Conard & Porter (hardware)

Jasper House of Newton (H. H. Jackson proprietor)

J. Weigel (groceries)

Des Moines Valley Railroad (Jas. Barker agent)

F. D. Jewett (furniture)

Wells, Felt and Spaulding (lumber)

Dr. S. F. Miller (druggist)

M. B. McKeever & Co. (drugs, paints, wallpaper)

J. B. Larkin (livery and sale stable)

V. W. Wainwright (insurance)

J. Collins (brick, plaster)

Davis & Hawkins (general merchandise)

H. L. McGinitie (hardware)

The D.V.R.R. time table in 1872 showed a mail train, freight train and express train going east and the same west daily.



## PASTORS IN PRAIRIE CITY 1872

Churches in 1872 were the Methodist Episcopal, Rev. H. M. Sexton pastor;  
 Congregational, Rev. J. Allender pastor;  
 Christian, Rev. J. J. Roach;  
 The A. F. & A. M. met Tuesday evenings in Masonic Hall.  
 The I. O. of O.F. met every Friday evening in Odd Fellows Hall.

## CITY OFFICERS ----- 1872

Mayor, Sidney Williams;  
 Recorder, W.G. Clements;  
 Attorney, J. W. DeWeese;  
 Trustees, A. B. Duncan, D. C. Gifford, H. L. McGinitie, J. L. Russell, H. C. DeWolf;  
 Marshal, J. D. Norris;  
 D. M. Bartlett, postmaster in 1872, announced closing of western mail at 11:00 a.m. and eastern mail at 2:30 p.m., and that Vandalia mail arrived and departed every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

## LOCAL NEWS ----- 1872

Under the heading "Local Affairs," appeared the following:  
 Seth Macy sold to Hank Hasness a 770 pound porker.  
 The quarterly meeting of the M. E. church was held here, Rev. T. McK. Stewart of Monroe officiating Saturday evening and Sunday.  
 Grain shipments over the Des Moines Valley Road for 1871 were 640,090 bushels of wheat; 731,000 bushels of corn; 605,000 bushels of oats, rye and barley.  
 Shipments of stock were 9,820 head of cattle; 123,000 hogs and 14,375 sheep.

## CROP REPORT ----- 1872

S. D. Butters, Esq. raised 10,000 bushels of corn. George and John Ryan 8,300, H. J. Shearer 4,000, Aaron Means 3,500.  
 On wheat, Ryan brothers 1,200 bushels, S. J. Haines 570, Milton Winingar 557, S. D. Butters 530, Jas. W. Gilbaugh 485, F. M. Kellogg 440, Cyrus Davis 375, A. B. Jenks 350,  
 On oats, Ryan brothers 1,100 bushels, J. Q. Deakin 950, Steven Johnson 625, S. J. Haines 600, S. E. Welch 572, F. M. Kellogg 550, H. C. Deakin 500.  
 On potatoes, S. J. Haines 1,275 bushels, Ryan brothers 640, W. A. Haines 660, Jno. A. McMurray 570, Steven Johnson 600, A.J. Wiggins 400.  
 On apples, Aaron Means reported 350 bushels and J. Q. Deakin 100 bushels. The hay crop was small, reported less than 400 tons to 31 farmers.

## BAND ----- 1872

Preparations were made to organize a band in 1872. The Index says: The horns have been ordered for the band and the instruments will soon be here. To meet the balance not yet provided to pay for the instruments, it is proposed to have a musical concert given by home talent as soon as arrangements can be made.

May 7, 1875 issue

The shipments from Prairie City for the month of April are;

Potatoes ---\$267,570  
Flour ---\$83,830  
Corn ---\$876,390  
Wheat ---\$106,000  
Merchandise ---\$225,670  
Butter and Eggs ---420 pound  
Hogs ---12 cars  
Cattle ---18 cars

The champion sidewalk of Prairie City is one laid by C.J. Woodard in front of his lots, made of two inch plank and is six feet wide.

Jesse Wilson, in nine days, raised and completed the wood work of a house for Eugene Sullivan. The house is a two story one, 28+32 located two mile east of town.

Mr. Wm. Crow is one of our teachers in Prairie City.

July, 16, 1875 issue

Sidewalk fever attacked the west side of the square and it now has a ten foot wide sidewalk for almost a full block.

Yesterday it was 97 degrees in the shade.

Business Directory 1875

E. C. Warner--- Boot and shoemaker.  
W. H. Billingsly--- Blacksmith.  
J. M. Adamson---Blacksmith and wagon maker.  
Smith Bros.---Carriage and wagon mfg.  
H. Gilbaugh--- Carpenter.  
N. Moore---Carpenter  
D. Bailey--- Carpenter and joiner.  
Henry C. DeWolfe--- Dry goods and groceries.  
George Holdefer--- Gents furnishings.  
B. F. Arnold--- Groceries, boots, shoes and notions.  
George W. Miller--- Publisher of the 'Union'  
J. C. Enders--- Restuarant and Prof. of penmanship.

February 25, 1876 issue

On Wednesday of this week H. C. Smith, J. B. Osborn, M. B. McKeever, William Hall, Presley Cowman, John Perdue and John Locke, citizens of this place, started for the Black Hills , hoping to make a fortune out of the gold mines there. The two former spent last season in that region and returned satisfied they can realize a bonanza. They take a sawmill with them.

Draper and Zachary opened their new banking house, near the Depot, the middle of January.

March 24, 1876 issue

John Selby is again at his old stand with Offill.

William Kane and wife have returned from a trip to Washington county, New York.

Marshal Feathers has purchased F. M. Brunners interest in the meat market of Bruner and Main.

Jesse Wilson is putting up a house for Walter Davis, on his farm west of town.

## PRAIRIE CITY 1876

From Prairie City Newspapers in the Iowa Historical building

March 31, 1876 issue

From the books in the assessors office for the town of Prairie City we find the following;

One hundred and nine horses, valued at \$4,893  
 Two mules, valued at \$160  
 Forty five neat cattle, valued at \$807  
 Fifty five hogs, valued at \$174  
 Forty vehicles, valued at \$1,863  
 Merchandise, valued at \$22,910  
 Manufactureries, valued, valued at \$3,596  
 Furniture, valued at \$17,416

J. H. Elliott sold his property on the southwest corner of the square to Mr. Hilton.

April 14, 1876 issue

With this issue we publish the news in an enlarged form.

Julias Bisbie has purchased an interest in the hardware and grocery house of C. P. Norton.

April 24, 1876 issue

It has been reported at the mill that the roads were so bad southwest of town that the families, after borrowing from each other, have been compelled to grind corn in their coffee mills in order to have any bread, as it was impossible to get to the mill.

On last Tuesday, Benjamin Slemmons, accompanied by his son William, started overland to Cowley county, Kansas with teams and machinery to harvest his crop of wheat on his farm there.

D.K. Laughlin says he will sell coal at his bank three mile southeast of Vandalia at 7¢ a bushel.

April 28, 1876 issue

Mr. William Lotts is building a fine new residence southwest of town. The firm of Main and Replogle are doing the work.

Hawk and McHenry have received their new covered Coach which they propose to use in carrying passengers from Prairie City to Colfax.

May 5, 1876 issue

Be it remembered that on May Day 1876 in Prairie City snow fell and whitened the face of nature and hid all the flowers.

June 2, J. D. Norris is going to move his elevator from the north side of railroad to Fairmount.

June 9, Dan Buckingham, south of town, picked up a hailstone measuring six inches in circumference

June 16, John Kelso fell 28 feet from the barn he was building for Mr. Herweh near the Des Moines river. He was killed.

Aug. 18, Hon. W. P. Cowman, manager of the Echo newspaper is off to the Centennial.

John J. Carter has gone to Des Moines, in the mercantile business.

Asbury Webb had his team run away and threw him out of the wagon and practically scalped him the first part of October 1876.

October 27, Hon. W. P. Cowman and Dr. S. F. Miller have opened a stock of Drugs in Dr. Millers old stand.

## PLACES OF BUSINESS IN PRAIRIE CITY 1879

The Prairie City News, Byron C. Ward editor, located over the brick bank.

Slemmons and Son Hard Ware Store, complete stock of farming implements including (Peru City plows, John Deere plows, Peru City cultivators, Orchard City cultivators, Gilpin sully plows, Charter Oak cook stoves, Active cook stoves, pumps. Located north side of Park.

North side Meat Market, proprietors Wallwork and Schneider.

City Meat Market, proprietors Strain and Bidwell.

Blacksmith, Geo. Tomlinson.

J. L. Russell, dealer in grain, produce and farm machinery, also agent for Massillon Harvester with wire and cord binder, Wm. Anson Woods mower, Minnesota Chief thresher, Nichols Shepherd & Co. thresher, Tiger self dump rake, Moline plows, Hapgood plows, Garden City farm and spring wagons. Office east of K & D. M. R. R. Depot.

Citizens Bank---- directors; H. C. DeWolfe, M. H. Davis, L. P. Wilson, J. W. Deweese. Officers ---- S. D. Butters, president and J. B. Roach, cashier.

Clements and Ward, Attorneys at law. Office over Ward's harness shop.

E. C. Roach, Attorney at law. Office over brick store.

J. W. DeWeese, Attorney at law.

Prairie City House, Ezra Adkins proprietor. North side of square.

Steele House, M. I. Worden proprietor. One block west of square.

H. C. Potter M. D., Physician and surgeon.

J. W. Adams M. D.,       '    '    '    '    '    '

J. N. Porter M. D.,       '    '    '    '    '    '

J. McWilliams, dentist. Office in Dr. Miller's old drug store, west side of the square.

P. Webb, auctioneer.

Jesse Wilson, Carpenter.

J. W. Hammond, commission merchant.

D. C. Rigg, house, sign and ornamental painter.

Daniel Bailey, Carpenter .

O. P. Webb, veterinary surgeon.

## CHURCHES ----1879

Christian, Elder J. C. White, pastor

Methodist Episcopal, Rev. A. H. Shafer, pastor.

Congregational, pulpit vacant.

## LODGES -----1879

A. F. & A. M. Preston Lodge no. 218 --- J. M. Zane,       tary.  
W. G. Clements, W. M.

I. O. O. F. Prairie City Lodge no. 144 --- D. G. Winchell, secretary.  
S. D. Butters, N. G.

A. O. U. W. Prairie City Lodge no. 79 --- H. L. McGinitie, Rec.  
H. H. Longmore, M. W.

## CITY DIRECTORY

MAYOR, E. R. Ward. RECORDER, G. M. Wood. TREASURER, J. B. Roach. SOLICITOR, E. C. Roach. MARSHAL, John B. Smith. TRUSTEES ----- A. Springer, J. L. Russell, H. H. Longmore, J. R. Gill, Jos. Turner.

## OLD PAPER LISTS TOWN'S ASSETS, NEEDS

Digging into old Prairie City News files not only provided a few facts but was very amusing and time consuming....So interesting that more chuckling and time consumption resulted than we thought at times! One item in the Oct. 24, 1884 issue of the News, edited by Bryon C. Ward, listed what Prairie City boasted and what it needed at that time. We reprint it that you might compare the past with the present!

It reads as follows:

### WHAT IT HAS-----

1. It has as good and sociable citizens as can be found in the state; law abiding, God fearing, honest and industrious.
2. It has the advantage of a beautiful and healthful location in the midst of the garden of the state.
3. It has plenty of wood and coal, although situated on the bosom of one of Iowa's most beautiful prairies.
4. It has a park that is the envy of all cities or towns on the K. D. road.
5. It has the best city hall to be found in any town of its size in the state.
6. It has a business that cannot be excelled by any town of its size in the state.
7. It has a class of merchants whose honesty and fair dealing have won them a large circle of trade.
8. It has tradesmen whose ability has never been questioned.
9. It has telegraphic, telephone and railroad communication with the cities, throughout the state.
10. It has the Mother Hubbard to perfection.
11. In fact, it is the boss town of Jasper County, outside of the county seat, but there is no place that has reached perfection therefore.

### IT NEEDS-----

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. A photograph gallery.         | 6. A city library    |
| 2. More dwelling houses.         | 7. More street lamps |
| 3. A first class hotel.          | 8. Less dogs!        |
| 4. Manufacturing establishments. |                      |
| 5. BETTER SIDEWALKS              |                      |

## BUSINESS PLACES OF 1890

Two solvent banks, one roller mill, one elevator, one implement factory, one creamery, one opera house, one newspaper, two lawyers, five doctors, one dentist, one photographer, two livery stables, five stock barns, two hotels, three restaurants, two hardware and implement houses, two book stores, two harness shops, two milliners, one grocer, one furniture store, one boot and shoe store, two drug stores, one gents furnishing, three general merchandise, two meat markets, two barbershops, one shoe shop, four blacksmith shops, four carpenter shops, one lumber yard, three grain and produce dealers, one jeweler and some other dealers.

Some of the leading businessmen---H. C. DeWolf & Co.-drygoods and groceries; L. E. Zachary-banker; Bosquit and Rhynsbury-creamery; Steven Riffle-furniture; Penn Sanders-harness; W. H. Bryan & Son-general merchandise; Cozad and Freeman-drugs; N. D. Riddle-pharmacist; John Selby-restuarant; W. J. Brown-president of the State Bank.

## PRAIRIE CITY MARKETS 1890

Butter	12	1-2¢	Oats	16¢
Eggs	12	1-2¢	Potatoes	20¢
Chickens		5¢	Apples	50¢
Turkeys		1-2¢	Onions	60¢
			Corn	16¢

## POTATOES

(From Prairie City News, May 16, 1890)

As we thought it might be of interest to many of our readers we clip the following from the News published in 1881. The price paid that year for potatoes was extraordinary and has not been paid since. Here is the item:

A GOOD SHOWING--We promised we'd look up the matter of potato shipments from this station and give our readers some idea of the subject in this issue of the News. As near as we can get it from the books of our railroad agent, Mr. Geo. Wood, there have been shipped from this place since the potato season has commenced by the firm of Russell & Offill, 110 car loads and 113 car loads have been shipped by the firm of Davis & Murray making a grand total of 223 car loads for the two firms. At an average of 400 bushels to the car, we have 89,200 bushels shipped. There are enough still left in this section to make the grand total of 100,000 bushels. To say that 40 cents per bushel is an average price paid, or will have paid in a few weeks more, to the farmers in this vicinity on the one item of potatoes.

BANKING HOUSE OF  
DRAPER & ZACHARY

Prairie City, Iowa

1879

Capital	\$40,000.00	Real Estate	\$100,000.00
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In the autumn of 1845 the first white man to explore the unknown country around where the present town of Vandalia now stands, was John Quincey Deakin, who rode up from Henry county, Iowa, on horse back. It is not known whether he came alone or was accompanied by his father-in-law, Henry Shearer. The United States government had signed a treaty with the Indians who inhabited the country west between the Des Moines and Skunk Rivers on a line running north from Red Rock, Iowa, and the first white men were allowed to come west of that line October 11, 1845.

Mr. Deakin was a surveyor and it is thought his motives for coming to that part of the then little known country was to look for heavy timber and new lands upon which to settle. Being of a somewhat adventuresome spirit, he sought the region about where the Indians camped. About the spot where Vandalia now stands, there were many large trees in the native timber. Indians were wont to wrap their dead in bark from trees and hang their bodies in the elms about there. There was plenty of big game roaming about in the woods and as many as fourteen deer were seen in one drove.

In the month of October, or November, 1845, some adventuresome pioneers picked their way west from about Tool's Point, following an old Indian trail that went almost due west along the northern edge of the timber for about five or six miles and then turned northwest for about a mile, and continued on in a northwesterly direction, as near as anyone can remember today. This trail the Indians had traveled for generations, no doubt, and some of the older people still living to day, say they remember it had been washed down by the rains of centuries until it was two feet deep in places on the hillsides. This trail crossed Walnut Creek about where Coal Hollow now is and continued on to Camp Creek, branched off, one trail leading to a ford on the Des Moines river near where Runnells now stands, and continued on up the river to Raccoon Forks. Another trail went off in a northwesterly direction. The first settlers evidently came by way of this trail to the present site of Vandalia. There was another Indian trail which kept on the divide between the Skunk and the Des Moines rivers on about the same strip of land the Des Moines and Keokuk Railroad now runs across the open prairie. The settlers of Prairie City came in via this trail about five years later.

The trail crossing the territory from Iowa City west, passing between the Des Moines and Skunk rivers, which took the divide about Prairie City, was afterwards known as the Dragoon Trail.

We copy a letter from the late B. F. Prunty, addressed to the author of this article shortly before his death:

"I will, however, give you a little history that may be of interest to you. My father, Elias Prunty, had his first cabin two mile north of old Red Rock, in Marion county, on the old trail road. My grand father was buried there in 1844. All the territory west of there was Indian reservation. October 11, 1845, the treaty which permitted the white man to push farther west, was signed. My father was among the first to arrive in the timber about where Vandalia now stands. He blazed out his claim and built his cabin with a dirt floor on timber land about where the Ike Porter farm was later surveyed, about two miles north of the site selected later by John Q. Deakin and Henry Shearer for the town of Shearertown (later Vandalia).

I was five years old then, October 1845. At no time since then has my home been more than twenty five miles from that old claim in Jasper county." (end of letter)

Robert C. Brown once made a speech in Prairie City on Old Settlers Day, and while most of it has been forgotten, some people remember his having said that he came to his claim just four and a half mile south of Prairie City in 1845 or '46. He was said to be about the oldest settler south of Prairie City. William Cottrell came about the same year as Robert Brown, but he left and went to California in 1849, and came back later. James D. Norris was settled east of Browns in 1847, according to a record found in the court house.

Jacob Brunner used to relate how he used to work in Monroe (Tool's Point then) and walked home to Vandalia. On the road the wolves would smell the meat they carried on their backs: so one man would walk along behind with a club to keep the wolves from snatching the meat from them. Some times the wolves would snap at them.

Tucker Anderson relates how, when he was a boy, an old Indian would come riding along on his pony and scare the children in Vandalia. He would shake his toma hawk at them to see them run and then he would laugh. He was friendly however.

James M. Brouse came from Hillsborough, Ohio, (1845), wintered in a cabin about about one mile east of the present Dunkard Church and settled near the Pleasant Hill in 1846.

Wildcats were common in the trees, and occasionally a panther would be heard from.

In the timber the wild plums, crabapples, cherries and grapes were abundant. In those days the children would be given a potion of roots and herbs to thin their blood. These were dug up from the woods, all native herbs.

Vandalia was first named Quincy, then changed to West Union, then St. Louis, and finally Vandalia. John Q. Deakin, surveyor, and Henry Shearer first laid out the town in 1845, but it was some time before it was recognized as a town. Thomas Tuttle came about the year 1846. Ash and Elias Prunty settled about two miles north of the town. John Flemming settled about a mile and a half east and William Hayes near there. Robert Brown built a cabin east of Walnut Creek and William Cottrell just north of him. James Norris came and settled, adjoining Robert Brown, and later got eighty acres of Brown. James Brouse had cleared off a patch of ground south of the tract about two miles and other settlers began to come. The exact order of their coming is not known today.

Mr. Ed Hayes has kindly loaned the copies of the Vandalia Visitor, a paper edited and published in Vandalia by Ira E. Draper. Mr. Draper often told in his paper of the early settlers and from these papers, published from 1870 to 1872 we are able to check up on many things, thanks to Mr. Hayes and Mr. John Cavett who Produced these copies.

From the Visitor March 1, 1870 we copy the following:

"In the year 1844 Mr. Ash Prunty, then twenty years old, came to Red Rock, Iowa. He had a horse and a promise of forty dollars for 160 acres of land near there. Mr. Prunty went to Fort Des Moines, (some times called Raccoon Forks and attended the last payment of the Indians. He then in company with Con Harp, started on foot for Red Rock, about thirty six miles distant. There being no settlers between the two points, they could procure nothing to eat, and traveled the entire distance without any refreshments.



Arriving at his cabin late at night, tired, weary and hungry, he set about to prepare his frugal meal. The first thing in order was to procure some water, but his bucket would not sink, and on peering down in the well he was enabled, by a flash of lightning, to discover a dead horse in his well. So he went to bed supperless.

He came to Vandalia among the first, and married Grandfather Shearer's daughter and settled north of town about two miles along with his brother Elias."

The Visitor of April 1, 1870, publishes the following under the heading, A visit from an old settler.

"Mr. Elias Prunty paid us a social visit recently. The dentist and barber have made wonderful improvement on the genial "phiz" of our old friend Elias. Mr. Prunty has resided in our neighborhood for the past twenty seven years (1870), and is perhaps the oldest settler in this country. He related many incidents connected with the early history of this part of the country that are very interesting, one of which many years ago, while it was almost impossible to keep the wolves out of the house, he built a pen in close proximity to his cabin in order to protect his sheep from the ravenous wolverines, but all to no purpose. The hungry beasts came in the midnight hour, killing many of the finest of his flock. On rising in the morning and discovering his loss, Mr. Prunty declared he would have his revenge. Ordering out his fleetest horse, he and W. H. Draper mounted and gave chase to the wolves. After an exciting chase of about five miles, they had one wolf. Mr. Prunty is one of our best farmers and is noted for his generosity and hospitality."

Mr. Prunty and James Norris were brothers-in-law.

Barlow Granger entered the land for the first settlers. At that time Fort Des Moines had the land office and among the first to enter were John Q. Deakin, Jake Booher, Robert Brown, James Cottrell, Anderson, Riffle, Flemings, Hayes, Henry Shearer.

George Anderson built one of the first cabins on the land where Vandalia now stands. Jack Brown and Con Harp had land east of Vandalia. James Norris, Wesley Brown, and the Cowmans came about the same time. Brunners and Michaels came together. John Quincey Deakin and wife, Sarah were among the first settlers. Also the following:

Henry Shearer and children--Henry, Jim, William, Betty and Hattie;  
 Joe, Billy and Press Cowman; Highland Vance and Thompsons;  
 Smith Tavern and Elk Horn Tavern; Con Harp and Prunty;  
 Adam M. Tool; Browns; Brouses and John Van Gundy;  
 Dave and Asa Asher; Biggerhead; Abner Ray;

John Van Gundy was chain carrier for the surveyors. Wesley Brown had triplet girls.

Uncle Billy Cowman came about 1849 and settled just south of James Brouse, below the place now known as Pleasant Hill.

A cabin stood about where the Griffis grave yard now is. Some of the stones bear dates as far back as 1851.

The first election was held at the John Fleming cabin in 1851.

During the first year of his settlement Wm. Deakin believed he was located in Polk county and his vote was cast at Apple Grove in the fall of 1846.

In the spring of the year when the grass was burned off of the ground around the country west of Walnut Creek, it would be white with buffalo and elk bones.

Vandalia had 600 people, a tan yard, pottery, grist mill, two saw mills, coal mines, five blacksmith shop shops, harness factory, shoe shops, several stores, Press Adams big hotel, dance hall and several saloons. A stage coach came up from Monroe (Tool's Point) and went across the Des Moines River at Lafayette, now about Ford.

Frazier, a Baptist preacher, lived in a cabin west of town.

Hunnells built the coffin factory and later raised it and put a stone foundation under it.

A schoolhouse once accomodated 178 pupils.

Ash Prunty had the first spring wagon. There were few horses, only oxen. Dr. Norris had the first buggy and rented it for \$1.50 a night for a young man to go see his girl.

The first preaching was that of a Methodist minister in the cabin of Mr. Deakin, but when the presiding elder found that his congregation was nearly all Baptist, he had himself transferred to another place. Rev. Thompson Bird, a Presbyterian, preached a few times the following year, and Gill, a Christian minister, held services occasionally until 1850.

The first wedding in the settlement was that of Jacob Booher to Marie Weston sometime in 1848. They were married in Mr. Deakin's cabin.

The first building erected in the town was used for a store by Mr. Deakins father-in-law, Mr. Henry Shearer.

Adam Michael had about seven acres cleared off in the fall of 1846. He had written to Jacob Brunner and Steven Riffel to come to the new settlement known as Shearertown. They with their families arrived in the fall of 1846. Andersons and Flemings came together, followed shortly afterwards by William Hayes. Uncle Billy Fleming's hair was as white as snow when he was first seen by the now living few who were among those first pioneers. Doctor Phillip Martin, Robert Brown's brother-in-law, came to Vandalia about 1850 from Tool's Point. He did some house building about Vandalia and built three of the first frame houses in the town. Jacob C. Brown, who kept the Elk Horn Tavern at Tool's Point was the father-in-law of Dr. Martin. Dr. Martin, a Virginian, was the father of the author of this article.

In 1849 Deakin was authorized to survey a road from Oskaloosa to Elk Creek in Jasper county.

The Baptist Society was organized in 1852 by Elder J. A. Nash. The first pastor was Elijah Evans, who moved to Vandalia in 1854 and resided there about ten years. Mr. Deakin contributed \$500. for the church. A school-house was built in the town in 1856. The town soon outgrew the expectation of its founders and in a few years the hotels were favorite resorts for the settlers for miles around. They held balls and people would come for miles around from Newton, Redrock, Greencastle, and Prairie City. It is said that two or three families lived in one house. There were four general stores, two mills, two hotels, three blacksmith shops, two wagon shops, a plow factory, pottery, coal mines right in town, and a coffin factory. The coffin factory is still standing. The first store is stone picked up by a man named Upsher, from the fields. Once he picked up a good sized stone and had it on his lot when the surveyors let it be known he had taken a corner stone, so he rushed it back. When Annie Loyde, afterwards Annie Main (Charlie Main's wife) was a very sick girl, they gave her up to die and this old coffin factory started making her coffin, but she got well and saw her own coffin sold to someone else.

The Brown and Bill Cottler saw mill was built on Walnut Creek near Indian Camp.

For years the Des Moines Navigation Company had been vainly trying to make the Des Moines River navigable but without success, so that company finally turned their attention to surveying for a railroad from Keokuk up to Fort Des Moines. The surveyors came in to Vandalia and had a route all staked out, but owing to the terrain and the number of hills and large creeks to be passed, the company decided to follow the old Indian trail on the divide, which passed through Prairie City.

A little later we read in the Vandalia paper about James D. Norris having moved to Prairie City and running for city marshal in the fall election. Later we read that he was elected and in the next summer's paper the Vandalia Visitor pokes fun at him about letting the town of Prairie City go to dog-fennel and suggests that they have the city marshal mow the weeds in the park. Prairie City refers to Vandalia as a pack of heathens, and week by week the two editors seem to poke fun at one another.

B. C. Ward, a school teacher in Prairie City brought an amateur theatrical group down to Vandalia and the boys took their spite out on Prairie City by roasting the actors in the show, but everything seemed to be in good nature with the two towns, only Vandalia, in telling how they will get the railroad some day. (1870)

The Visitor relates how the citizens must come to the aid of the Prairie City Gleaner and Herald or "the sherriff will sell it out!" It tells how the citizens of Prairie City had to promise the editor their support before he located there, and only about half the support had been forthcoming up to date. The editor said he would take stove wood or anything he could use or eat for subscriptions, and Dr. Potter, who had recently moved from Vandalia to Prairie City, offered to deduct the price of one year's subscription from people who owed him if they would come in and pay him and he would give it to the editor.

The Visitor of October 1st. states that the first copy of the Prairie City News had arrived, edited by H. L. McGinnity & Co. The first copies were free and is spoken of as a lively little sheet, and refers to the editor as Mac, and about his spreading ink like an old hand at the biz. An account of the Franco- Prussian War and the fall of Paris is given; also an article of the great Chicago fire.

( This was not the first Prairie City Paper, Just the first to be sent to Vandalia.)

From the Vandalia Visitor of 1870 are the happenings thereabout.

We hear of Captain L. E. Zachary and William Draper out hunting foxes in the timber with their hounds. The editor says he is still waiting for the fox skin coat that the Captain has promised him for the last year. Uncle Billy Draper is out in Nebraska shooting buffaloes. Dr. Potter seems to be the leading social light around here. Dr. Martin shipped some cattle from Prairie City and ye editor rode on the cow catcher of the engine to Oskaloosa. James Jeffries has the finest farm about and John Cavett was about the swellest young swain in town. Some of the heathens from Prairie City came down to Vandalia and tried to take all the girls away from the home town fellows. Sam Butters has been to Newton trying to get the state capitol for Monroe City. L. P. Wilson is running for member of the Assembly in the fall election. It seems that Prairie City is mentioned about as often as Vandalia in his editorials. The Visitor suggests they move the town of Prairie City farther away from the graveyard as it is easier to move the town than the graveyard; and so on from the first to the last edition of the little paper.

In an article in the Prairie City News, written by the author of this article, was told a story about the founder of Prairie City, James Hickland Elliott. As Mr. Deakin and Mr. Elliott were very close friends and worked hand in hand for the good of the two frontier towns they had founded, they could never agree on which was the best place to settle. Mr. Elliott predicted that as nature had made the divide between the two rivers, and the Indians had picked their way back and forth over this divide for centuries, perhaps, that if a railroad ever came across the state of Iowa it would follow this natural roadbed. Mr. Deakin held that the railroad would naturally follow the line of settlement and keep on the north side of the Des Moines River to Raccoon Forks, and follow west in the valley of the Raccoon. On this and his knowledge of the coal deposits about Vandalia he staked his all-in-all on Vandalia. He lived to see it the largest town about this part of the country, and like Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" he lived to see the dream of his youth vanish. Vandalia's sad plight is told in the last edition of her newspaper when the railroad had reached Prairie City and the people were rapidly moving away from the little settlement town. The editor of the little town newspaper makes a very pathetic farewell to the town of his youth and bids his subscribers God speed through life. "As friends and neighbors we have lived, shared our woes and joys together through the years, as friends we part; farewell Vandalia."

### Vandalia

Left to Right; Jack Cavitt, Jim Hawkins, Jim Rose, Wilbur Norris, Joe Furnoy, Jack Fleming, J. J. Daugherty, Orville Fleming, Tobe Hayes, Harlan Bailey, Doc Fleming, Charlie Routson.



Annual Photo

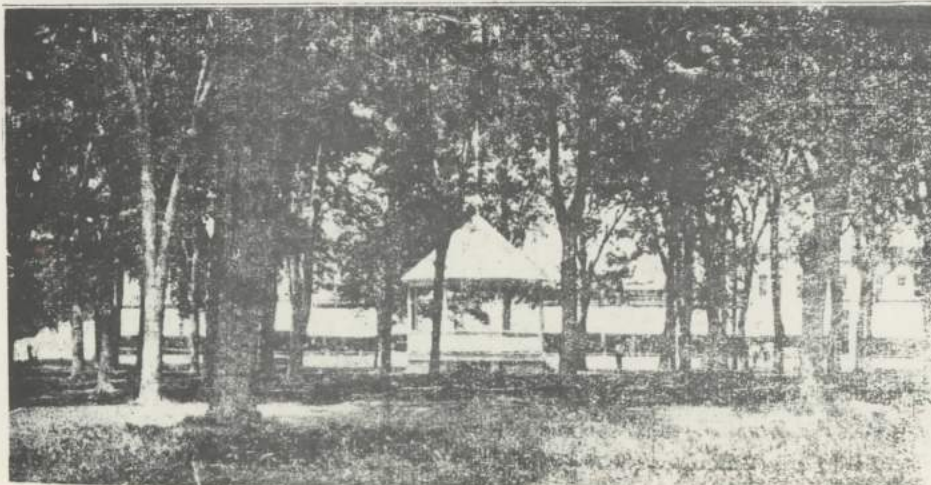
## Prairie City . . . As It Used To Be



Oldest view of the Prairie City business district taken in 1892. Most of the business places were wooden frame buildings which no longer are in existence. Camera was facing west from City Hall. White building in foreground at center of picture is the present site of the Prairie City Motor Co. Beyond that to the upper left is the north side of the square.



Old Congregational Church built in 1869 at a cost of \$2,000. In 1915 the building was sold to the Christian Reformed group. They moved to the present location of the Christian Reformed Church. (From 1949-75th anniversary edition)



Prairie City City Park



Old Drug Store      Annual Photo



Men's Furnishings Store