

MOUNT MORRIS:
PAST AND PRESENT

Revised Edition

*An Illustrated History
of the Village of Mount Morris
Ogle County, Illinois*



CELEBRATING

THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
SETTLEMENT OF MOUNT MORRIS

*First Edition Published in 1900 by Kable Brothers
Second Edition Published in 1938 by Harry G. Kable*



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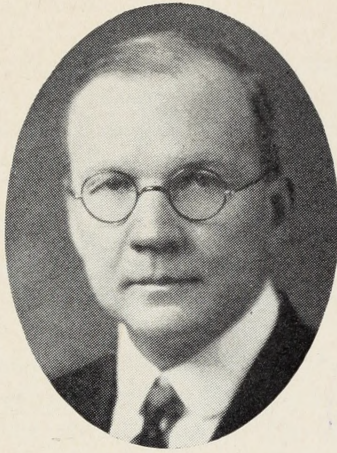
EXPLANATION

The most of the illustrations used in this volume were not made especially for this purpose but were gathered from various sources, largely from the files of the *Mount Morris Index*. This accounts for the fact that there is such a variety of sizes and screens, which naturally detracts from the typographical appearance of the book.

KABLE BROTHERS COMPANY, MOUNT MORRIS, ILL.

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This revised edition of
"MOUNT MORRIS: PAST AND PRESENT"
is dedicated to the memory of
my twin brother
HARVEY J. KABLE
who passed away April 13, 1931

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Preface To Revised Edition

An old Latin author wrote: "*Many great men lived before Agamemnon, but that all memorial of them had perished for want of a chronicler.*"

THIRTY-EIGHT years have elapsed since my brother and I, then at the rather youthful age of twenty years, attempted the somewhat pretentious task of compiling and printing a history of Mount Morris. Fortunately at that time, many of the original pioneers of the township who came here as early as 1837 were still living and first-hand information was available by personally interviewing these men and women who were actually the first white people to inhabit the village and who endured the hardships of those early days in building their log cabins and breaking the virgin prairie.

Aside from the tremendous task of compiling the matter contained in the book, the mechanical work of typesetting and printing the book was no small undertaking with the meagre equipment in the office of the Mount Morris Index which about that time had just moved into the old frame building vacated by the Brethren Publishing House located on the northeastern corner of the college campus. The type was set by hand and the printing done two pages at a time on a job press. A great deal of the actual mechanical work was done by A. H. Rittenhouse and the excellent job of printing of the book can be attributed to his ability as a printer.

In bringing out this second edition of "Mount Morris: Past and Present" some of the original matter has been omitted and the balance brought up to date. Many more pictures have been added and the value of the old pictures increased by more complete descriptive matter.

One difficult problem in connection with compiling accurate data in regard to the early history of Mount Morris is the unfortunate fact that no files have been preserved of the newspapers published in the village up to the year 1896. Half a dozen newspapers were published intermittently during the period from 1842 to 1896 but only a few scattered copies have been found. Doubtless many important happenings could have been gleaned from these old newspapers had they been available.

The one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the village seems to be an appropriate time to bring this history up to date. It is therefore hoped by the author that the effort and expense of this edition will be justified. At any rate, the task of rewriting and revising the book has been a pleasant one and well worth the effort in personal satisfaction. Many persons have generously given valuable assistance in this work, for which the author is more than grateful.

This volume also marks the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Kable Brothers Company, which started as an ordinary country newspaper plant in September, 1898, and grew from almost nothing to a gigantic printing establishment, employing over eight hundred people.

HARRY G. KABLE.

September, 1938.

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MOUNT MORRIS: PAST AND PRESENT

Revised Edition

Chapter I

EARLY HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

THE year 1937 marked an important milestone in the history of Mount Morris. Over one hundred years have passed since the first immigrants from the eastern states pushed their way across mountains and rivers to what was then the wild frontier of civilization,—the State of Illinois. A company of these pioneers from the State of Maryland made the first permanent settlement in the wilderness which now under a far different appearance bears the name of Mount Morris. Here, where the primeval forest had never been traversed, save by the foot of the red man or by herds of deer and other game, they hewed the rough timber for their dwellings, and established themselves in a colony for the purpose of promoting their general welfare. How well they succeeded, the far-reaching influence of the school they established and the charming little town of Mount Morris are living testimonials.

If by some magic power, one could be carried back a century and view this area from the air, there would appear an unbroken expanse of prairie grass, dotted here and there with patches of wild flowers and covered with tall grass so heavy in some places as to be almost impassable. Flanked on all sides would appear an irregular fringe of timber. How beautiful in its wild solitude, compared with what we see today!

A description of the region around Mount Morris as it appeared in 1837, as told by the first settlers, is most fascinating. The present site of the village was an open prairie. What is now the center of the business section was then the crest of a hill of considerable size, the land sloping from it in all directions. Before the view was obstructed by buildings and trees, the altitude of this hill was very perceptible. Most

of the ravines and hollows were in a wet, boggy state; and the streams and ponds retained the water from rains much longer than now. There abounded hundreds of flowing springs, which have long since ceased to flow, owing to the tiling of the low places and the development of the soil.

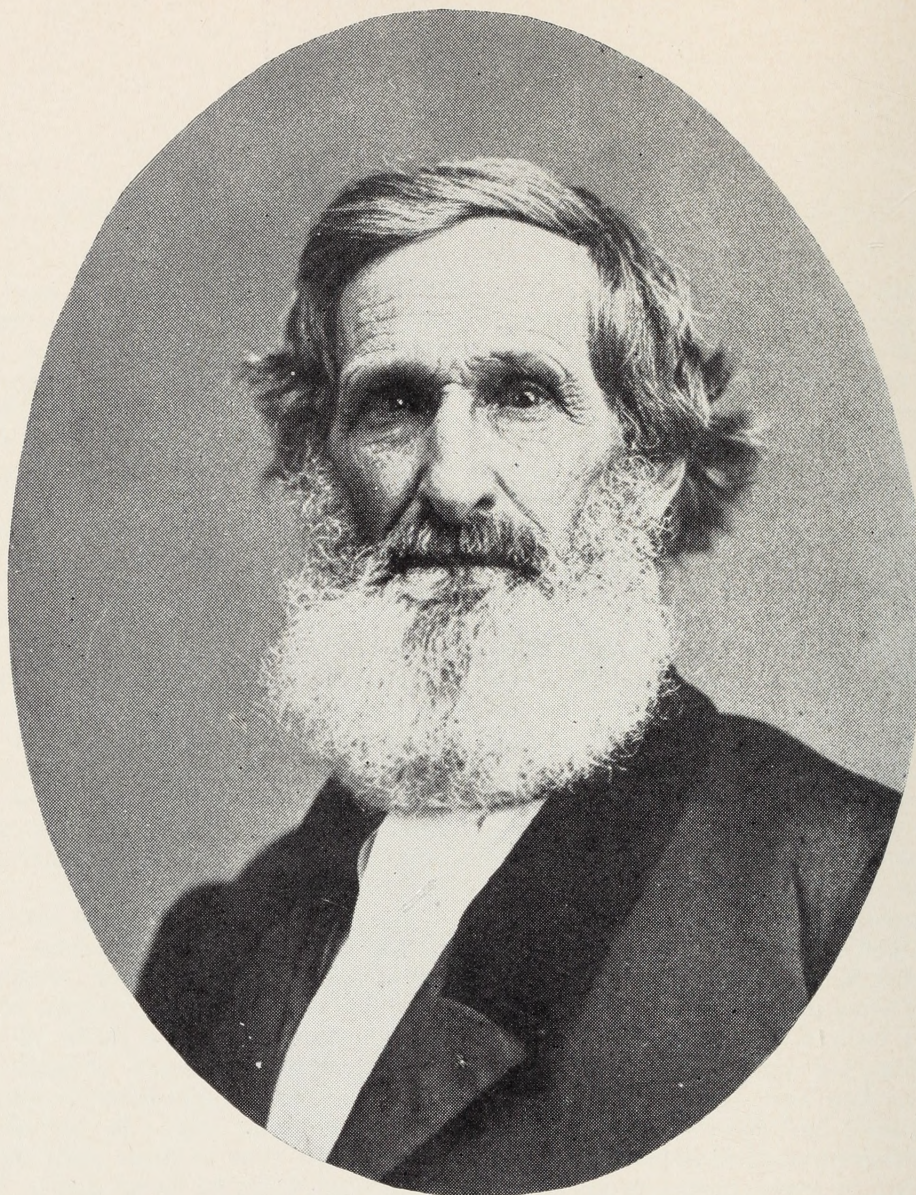
The prairie land on the crest of the hill on which Mount Morris was built contained about ten square miles. This prairie was entirely surrounded by heavy timber. The timber line came very close to the present village limits on the north, but about two or three miles to the east, south and west. The first settlers built their log cabins at the edge of the timber in order to have fuel and building material, and invariably near some of the fine springs of cool, running water.

The log cabins built at that time were of the most primitive character. They were generally one-story structures, with no modern conveniences of any kind. The roofs were made of clapboards which consisted of thin slabs called "shakes," about three or four feet long, split from logs. In the absence of nails, the tiers of these rude shingles were held down by lodge poles. These cabins generally consisted of only one or two rooms with sometimes an attic, reached through a hole in the ceiling with a pole ladder. The floors generally consisted of the bare ground and the furniture was of the most meagre home-made sort.

As mentioned before, the first settlers built their cabins along the edge of the timber. Later arrivals, however, realizing the value of the fertile prairie land, started to take up claims there. Probably the first prairie sod was plowed in 1834, but many years passed before the entire prairie was cultivated.

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JOHN PHELPS had the distinction of being the first white man to settle in the vicinity of Mount Morris. He was born in Bedford County, Va., on August 8, 1796, and in 1810 moved with his father to Wilson County, Tenn. In September, 1814, he enlisted in the army and fought through the campaign against the British at New Orleans. His biography tells of terrible hardships endured in going to and from his home and New Orleans. He came to Illinois in 1827 and located at Galena where he opened a store and engaged in lead mining. In 1833, he came down Rock River on an exploring expedition and entered a claim several miles east of the present site of Mount Morris. He built a log cabin on this claim in 1834, the ruins of which can still be seen. He moved his family to this cabin in the spring of 1835. In 1863, he built a fine brick house west of his log cabin, where he lived until his death April 1, 1874, aged 78 years. He is buried in Riverview Cemetery near Oregon. Mr. Phelps was married March 14, 1816, to Sarah Rogan Carlin, who died in 1879. They had three children as follows: James C. T. Phelps, who married Ann E. Swingley; Sarah Phelps, who married Wesley Johnson; Napoleon Phelps (died in 1857), who married Mary Thomas.

Unlike many sections of Illinois, Mount Morris was entirely free from tragedies with the Indians; in fact, the warlike tribes had been driven westward before this part of the country became settled. Ogle County was originally a part of the hunting grounds of the Winnebagoes and Potawatomes, and their trails from one grove to another were easily discernable, while hundreds of their arrowheads and other weapons have been and are still being found in all parts of the township. In 1832 occurred the terrible Black Hawk War, and as a result all of the red men, except a few dozen peaceful families, were driven westward. At that early

day, no settlers had yet stopped here and consequently the Indian trouble was all over when civilization began to dawn in this vicinity. The only sight which the early settlers ever got of these swarthy aborigines was an occasional band crossing the plains in quest of game. These were the most quiet and peaceful of the Indian tribes of the country, but they finally became dissatisfied with the restrictions of their treaty with the whites and followed their more warlike brethren to the wilderness west of the Mississippi, leaving their former lands free to the onward march of civilization.

THE FIRST SETTLERS

FROM the most reliable information, it appears that John Phelps was the original pioneer in this vicinity, having visited the county and taken up a claim several miles east of Mount Morris in November, 1833. He returned in 1834 and built the log cabin, a picture of which appears in this chapter, and the following year moved his family to the cabin, arriving on the 17th day of May, 1835. Mr. Phelps wrote an autobiography, in which he tells of the events leading up to his settlement in Ogle County. A part of it is here reproduced:

"I had conceived a plan and formed a fixed determination to explore the beautiful valley of Rock River, which I had passed through in the year 1829. My object was to make a location as near as possible on a true line leading from Chicago to Galena, believing at some future day at the crossing at Rock River, it would be a very important point. In order to get all the light I could in regard to this locality, I carefully examined the map of the territory embracing the Rock River Valley, the locality of Chicago and that of Galena, ascertaining the distance. Both places stand south of the northern boundary of the state. All things being arranged, the Frenchman and myself set out on our exploring expedition from near Mineral Point on the Pecatonica in a small canoe. We expected to reach Rock River in two days but owing to the crookedness of the stream it was

seven days before we reached it. By this time our scanty supply of provisions had given out and we were forced to supply ourselves by the aid of our guns. We found pheasants, squirrels and other game were plentiful. We lived well with the exception of bread.

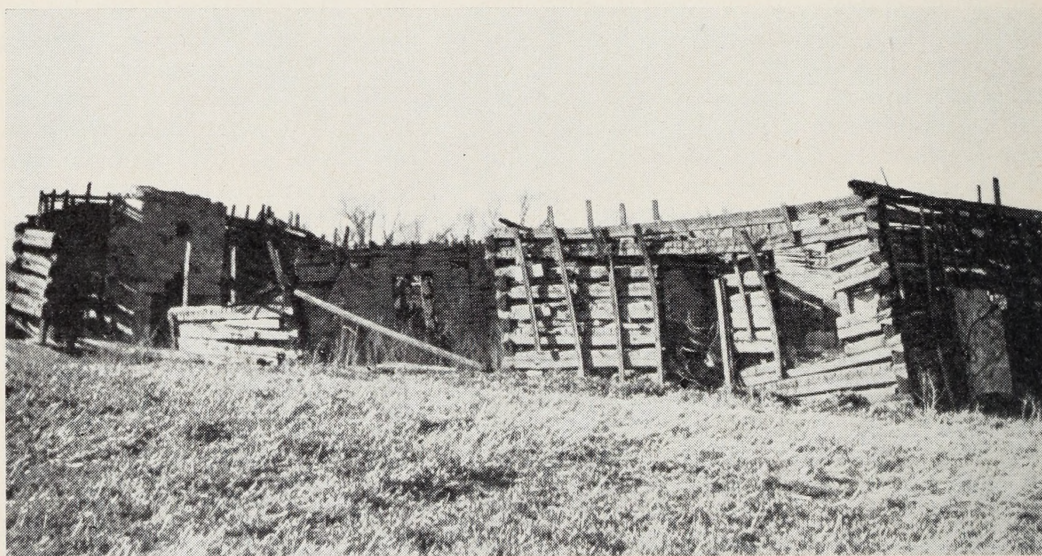
"We descended Rock River to where Rockford is now located; there we made a short stop and examined that section on both sides of the river, but we found too great a scarcity of timber for a settlement, besides I believed it too near the state line; that the true line from Chicago to Galena was far south of that place. We then descended to where Byron now stands. There we stopped and looked at the surrounding country, believing that was about far enough south, but there was the same objection on account of timber. We still pursued our journey down the river about one mile above where Oregon now stands. We saw a tent on the west bank of the river, near the northeast corner of the present fair grounds. I said to my companion, 'There is an Indian wigwam, we will stop and see if we can get something to eat.' He said it was no wigwam but a white man's tent. We landed and, going to the tent, I was agreeably surprised to meet my old friend, Col. Wm. Hamilton, a son of the celebrated Alex. Hamilton who was killed in a duel by Aaron Burr. I had made his acquaintance in my early settlement in the lead mines. I had not seen him for five or

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THIS LOG CABIN was undoubtedly the first white man's habitation built in the vicinity of Mount Morris. It was erected by John Phelps in 1834 on the edge of the timber at a spot about two miles east of Mount Morris on the farm now owned by Martin Buhs, a short distance from State Route 64. The above picture was taken probably twenty-five years ago, but since that time the roof has fallen in and very little is left of this historic building. It is to be greatly regretted that something was not done to permanently preserve this historic spot and keep the cabin in repair.



THE ABOVE is all that remains in 1938 of the old Phelps log cabin built in 1834. The old fireplaces at each end of the cabin are still standing.

six years. He seemed astonished to meet me amongst the Indians and inquired what had brought me there. I told him I was on an exploring expedition to look at the country and if I liked it, to locate and make it my home. He said I need not go any further, that I was in the right spot. He said he had a contract from the Government to survey into townships a large portion of the Rock River country. He said he could give me directions where I could find one of the best locations he had ever seen, that it embraced good timber, good water with a beautiful rolling prairie running down between two fine groves of timber about three miles west of where we were. We were hungry and he had dinner prepared for us. He was about to raise camp and prosecute his work on his line. He had been there a day or two, cooking and preparing to continue his work. After we had finished eating, he took down his tent, packed up and started on his line, but before he left he gave us a week's supply of bread and cut a middling of bacon in two and gave us half. Being thus supplied with provisions we had nothing to prevent us from making a thorough examination on both sides of the river. This being done I was satisfied it would make a fine settlement. I made the first claim where my farm is. My next object was to make a claim where I intended making the road from Galena to cross the river. On exam-

ining the bank on both sides, found there could be a good road where Oregon now stands, so I made my claim there. This was in November, 1833. The object of our journey being accomplished and fully satisfactory, we packed our blankets, left our canoe and steered our course for the lead mines on foot. We arrived there in three days, undergoing much fatigue, hardship and suffering on our route.

"In the spring of 1834, with my two brothers, B. T. and G. W. Phelps, one hired man and myself, we set out from Schuyler County with teams, provisions, and farming implements to commence opening the farm on which I now live. We planted and fenced forty acres in corn, built a house and returned home with the intention of moving my family up that fall, but on reflection, it was thought best to winter there, as we had plenty of food for our stock at home and would move up early in the spring. So my brother, B. T., and myself came up in the fall to gather the corn and build a ferry boat. After we had gathered our corn we returned home. I moved the family up in the spring of 1835, arriving on the 17th day of May, and found all our corn had been taken by the Indians and had to depend upon grass to supply my teams and haul our provisions from Galena. We laid out the road in the fall from Chicago to Galena and early in the spring laid out the town of Oregon."

THE MARYLAND COLONY

IN the summer of 1836, Samuel M. Hitt and Capt. Nathaniel Swingley came on an exploring trip from Washington County, Md., to the locality now known as Mount Morris Township and found the Phelps family living on their claim east of Mount Morris; Larkin Baker had a cabin and a claim about four miles southeast, subsequently owned by Daniel Price; David Worden lived several miles southwest; and probably several others had settled along the edge of the timber.

Hitt and Swingley went out upon the prairie and made several claims, including the present site of Mount Mor-

ris. They remained here during the summer but in the autumn returned to Maryland and hired a number of men to settle with them in the new country, promising to pay them one dollar per day for service in building houses, splitting rails, building fence, breaking the prairie and harvesting the crops. Among those thus engaged were Michael Bovey, Adam, Daniel and John Stover, Balka Niehoff, Samuel Grove, Eli Householder, William McDannel, Abram and Jonathan Myers, and Fred Finkbohnar.

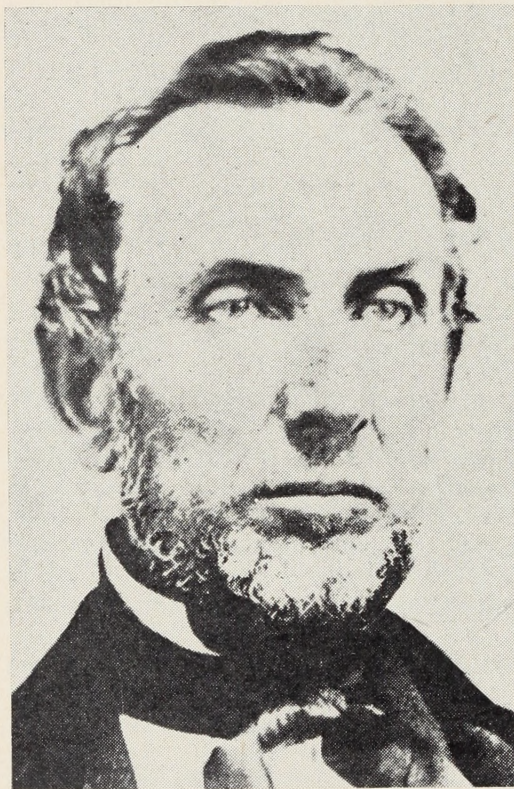
This party started for their new homes in the west in the spring of 1837. Householder, McDannel, and Daniel

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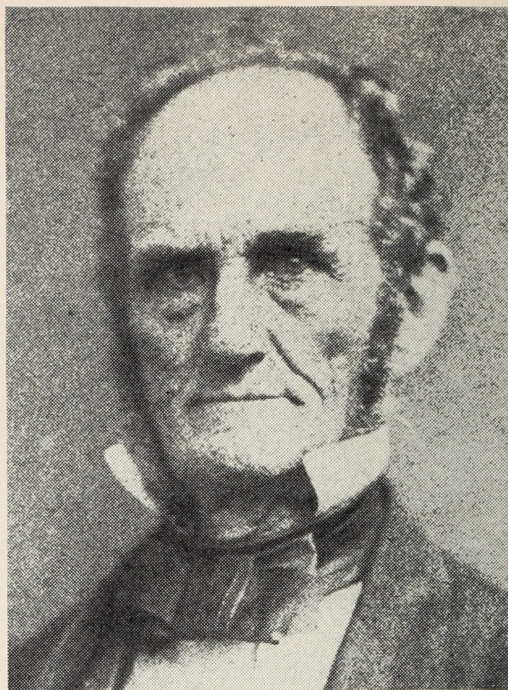
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Stover were accompanied by their wives. Mrs. Elizabeth Ankney (sister of Nathaniel Swingley), with her little son, Albertus, and her daughter, Anna, was also a member of the party. (Anna later married Wm. Watts.) They traveled by wagons to Wheeling, W. Va., by boat on the Ohio, Mississippi and Illinois Rivers to Peru, and the remaining distance by wagon. Early in the

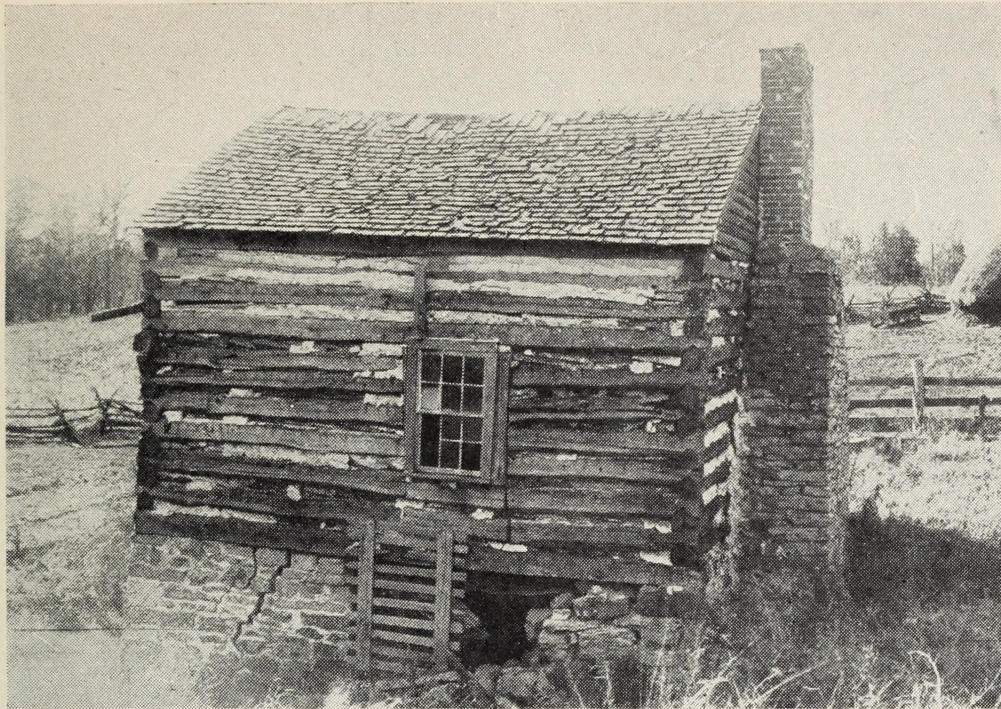


CAPT. NATHANIEL SWINGLEY was one of the founders of the original "Maryland Colony." He was born at Hagerstown, Md., in November, 1807, and came to Ogle County in the summer of 1836 with Samuel M. Hitt and they took up claims which included the present site of Mount Morris. They returned to Maryland in the fall and then came back with their families in the spring of 1837. Capt. Swingley continued to live in this vicinity for a number of years and later located at Creston where he died March 17, 1883. He married Eliza Sharer, who died in 1879. They had seven children and their descendants are as follows: John H. Swingley, married Sophia Banks; Ann Swingley, married James C. T. Phelps; Nicholas Swingley, married Jane Woodard; Urilla Swingley, married Francis Clark; James A. Swingley, married Helen Harrison; Jacob Swingley, married Jane Harrison; Upton Swingley, married Frances Potter (died in 1870).



SAMUEL M. HITT was one of the founders of Mount Morris. He was the son of Martin and Margaret Hitt and was born in Bourbon County, Ky., Jan. 22, 1799. The family moved to near Urbana, Ohio, where he grew to manhood, later moving to Washington County, Md. In 1823, he married Barbara Ann Hershey, and they became the parents of 12 children, only six of whom lived beyond childhood. They were Andrew M., Robert S., George, John W., Joseph E., and Margaret C., who married Prof. D. J. Pinckney. Mr. Hitt came to Mount Morris in 1836 with Capt. Nathaniel Swingley, and they were the first to take up claims on the present site of Mount Morris. They were instrumental in bringing the "Maryland Colony" to Mount Morris. He brought his family in the spring of 1837 and settled on a tract of land northwest of Mount Morris, later known as the Christian Zumdahl farm, where he died, Nov. 16, 1859. Mr. Hitt was engaged in many business enterprises in Mount Morris. He and F. G. Petrie conducted a general store in the early forties and he was actively interested in Rock River Seminary.

spring they arrived at a vacant cabin in Fridley's grove, east of the present site of Mount Morris. This cabin had been built and occupied by Judge Ford, afterward governor of the state. Here the first "Maryland Colony," as these settlers were afterward termed, remained for two weeks, while the men-folks proceeded to erect their cabins. The first one built by them was a



THIS LOG CABIN was probably built about the year 1836 by Thomas Ford, who later served a term as Governor of Illinois. It was located in what was later known as the Fridley Grove, about three miles east of Mount Morris, later owned by Wilson Glasgow, and it was in this cabin that the first group of settlers from Maryland lived while the men were building other cabins to live in. This cabin was purchased by John Fridley in September, 1837, and Mr. Fridley's sons, John, Benjamin, Andrew, David and Jacob, spent their boyhood days in it. Unfortunately this old landmark burned down a number of years ago.

double log-cabin, on the claim by Mrs. Ankney, about three-quarters of a mile southwest of the present village of Mount Morris. Half of this house was moved, at a later day, down into the grove near a spring, and was finally torn down. The other half stood in the field a few rods east of the former residence of N. A. Watts, and was used as an implement house for a number of years, when it, too, shared the fate of its partner and was torn down for fuel. Unfortunately, no photograph was ever taken of this historic old building. In the two small rooms of this cabin lived four families,—those of Mrs. Ankney and Eli Householder in one part, and Messrs. Stover and McDannel in the other.

While this cabin was being completed, the entire party remained in the Ford cabin. A bake-oven, constructed by Mrs. Ankney, was used in preparing their food, and at night they slept on "wagoner" beds, which consisted of

plain mattresses, rolled up during the day and spread out on the floor at night. Several other cabins were soon completed, however, and the members of the colony became more comfortably located. Mr. Swingley kept the men that he had brought along busily engaged in cutting down trees, splitting rails and building fences, and cultivating several small fields of grain for which prairie sod had been broken in the spring.

Of these early settlers who constituted the Maryland colony, most of them remained in the vicinity. Michael Bovey took up a claim northwest of town and lived there until old age compelled him to retire, when he moved to town. Eli Householder lived here two years and then moved six miles south, where he died in 1896. Samuel M. Hitt built a log cabin on one of his claims, about three miles west of town, later known as the Zumdahl property. There with his family, in-

cluding Margaret, Andrew, Robert, George, John and Joseph, he lived until his death in 1859. In 1858, he began the erection of a fine stone residence, and although it was not quite completed, he and his family were living in it at the time of his death. This house was owned and occupied later for many years by Christian Zumdahl. Capt. Nathaniel Swingley, who with

Samuel Hitt brought the Maryland colony to Mount Morris, established his claim several miles east of Mount Morris, later known as the Keedy farm. He lived there until 1850 when he joined the rush for the goldfields of California. After three years in California, he returned to Ogle County and located at Creston, where he died.

THE RICE AND WAGNER FAMILIES

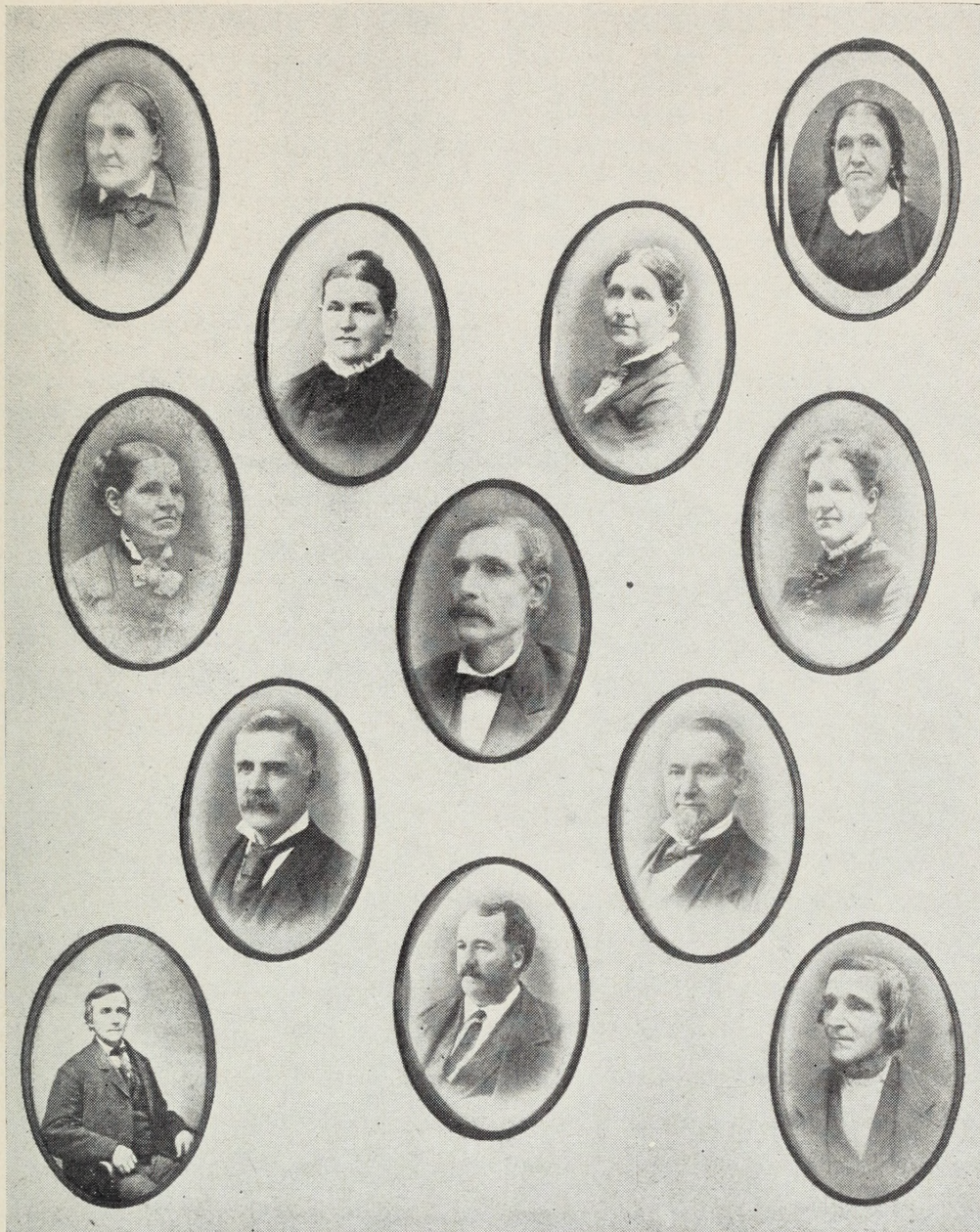
AMONG the settlers from Washington County, Md., early in the spring of 1837, were the large families of Jacob Rice and John Wagner. Each of these families consisted of ten children and the trip was made overland in "prairie schooners." Imagine if you can the tremendous task of these two pioneers of transporting these large families to an unknown new country and providing for their wants far from civilization. One of the children of the Wagner family, David C. Wagner, told of these experiences in a paper which he read at the Ogle County Old Settlers' Reunion held in Mount Morris during the summer of 1904. Part of his address was as follows:

"I can assure it affords me untold pleasure to meet with this little band of pioneers. The announcement of this meeting brings back to me reminis-

JACOB RICE was one of the pioneers who came to Mount Morris in 1837. He was a farmer of Washington County, Md., and was of German descent. He took up a claim several miles north of Mount Morris and built a log cabin for his large family. The mother was Mary Roland; she died three years after arriving here, leaving twelve motherless children. The names of the children are as follows, in the order of their age: Barbara (Mrs. Maysilles); David, who lived at Byron; Joshua, who started for California and was never heard from; John, who resided in Leaf River Township; Susan, who married Elias Thomas; Lydia, who married Benjamin Hiestand; Elizabeth, who married Ezra Thomas; Jacob and Simon, who lived in Mount Morris; Mary, who married Daniel Etnyre; Isaac, of Mount Morris; William, who died at age of 21. Mr. Rice married again to Catherine Funk (better known as Aunt Kitty Rice) who mothered his large family of children. She died in 1900 at the age of 103 years. Mr. Rice died on his farm, April 25, 1870.

cences of early days, in fact, youthful days. My father with ten children, left Washington County, Md., in the fall of 1836. He stopped over winter near Springfield, Ohio—then known as the 'back-woods'—and in the early spring of 1837, he and Uncle Jacob Rice (who left Maryland with us, having the same number in his family as our own), started west on horseback, the objective point being Rock River. At this time there were no settlements, except what were known as 'squatters' who had located all the timber lands with a view to accommodate the incoming immigrants. My father paid about \$3,000 for two timber lots. He and Uncle Rice then returned to Ohio for their families. My recollection is that we crossed Rock River at Oregon on the 9th of June, 1837. I remember quite well that the ferry boat's capacity was limited to four horses a trip. Father and Uncle Rice each had a six-horse wagon such as were known in the country at that time as 'prairie schooners.' Each one of these wagons had to be divested of its contents because of the incapacity of the ferry boats. This was the most tedious obstacle we encountered in our thousand mile westward movement. Having landed on the western bank of Rock River upon which the 'great city' of Oregon was located, we went within three miles of what was to be our future home.

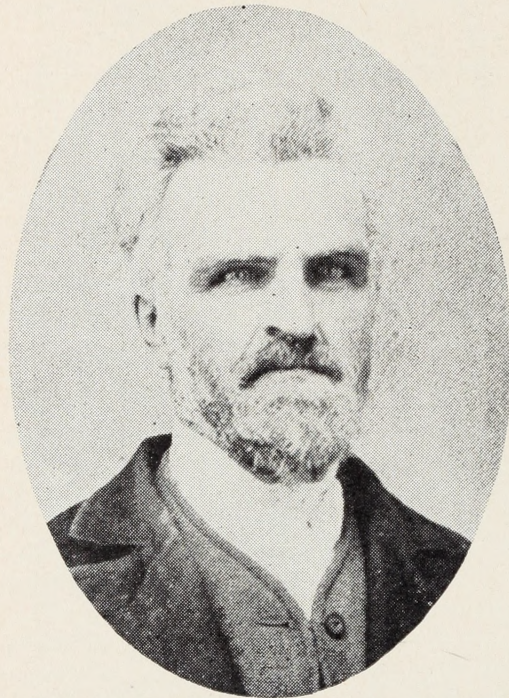
"Now came a comforting contribution from Judge Ford, who proffered the use of a log cabin which he had purchased from a squatter. It was located one mile from where we expected and did build the first double-hewn log house in Ogle County, without invidious distinction was denominated a palace in



THE JOHN WAGNER FAMILY consisted of the above twelve children, ten of whom came to Mount Morris with their parents in 1837. The other two were born after the family arrived. The parents were John and Catherine (Rice) Wagner who were natives of Washington County, Md. They made the trip by horses and wagons along with the Jacob Rice family, which also consisted of ten children. The Wagner children shown above are, from left to right, top row, Mrs. Elizabeth Timmerman, Mrs. Susan Wertz; second row, Mrs. Sarah Good, Mrs. Barbara McNeill; third row, Mrs. Hannah Knodle, Nehemiah Wagner, Mrs. Kate Griffin; fourth row, David Wagner, Reuben Wagner; fifth row, Joseph Wagner, Benj. Wagner, John Wagner. All of these children lived beyond their sixtieth year before the family circle was broken, but all of them have now passed away. Three of the sons, Benjamin, David and Nehemiah served in the Civil War.

the wilderness. This cabin, used with our caravans of wagons, afforded unusual facilities for prosecuting our work for a home. In addition to our big wagon, we had two smaller ones and one 'carryall.' These were used for all purposes except cooking and dining.

"Now as to the first family settlers in Ogle County, west of Rock River, I believe that my father, John Wagner



DR. ISAAC RICE was a prominent citizen of Mount Morris for many years and also an old settler, coming here in 1837 with his parents, Jacob and Mary (Roland) Rice. He was born in Washington County, Md., Oct. 28, 1826, and was one of 12 children. He was one of the first students of Rock River Seminary, and was a roommate of Shelby M. Cullom, who later became U. S. Senator from Illinois. He was a graduate of Rush Medical College, but he never practiced medicine and engaged in teaching and farming instead. His homestead was located north of Mount Morris. He retired and moved to Mount Morris in 1876. He was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives for the 28th and 29th General Assemblies, and afterwards served in the State Senate from 1880 to 1884. In 1877, associated with Major Chas. Newcomer, he established the Bank of Mount Morris. He traveled quite extensively and made three trips abroad. In 1857, he married Sarah Hiestand, and they had three children: Roland, who died in infancy; Anna, who died at the age of 18, and Joseph L. Mr. Rice died May 3, 1897, at the age of 71 years, and Mrs. Rice died July 18, 1921.

with ten children, and Jacob Rice with a like number of children, were the pioneers and the first of the Maryland Colony in Ogle County at least. Of course there may have been others at this time locating homes, some of whose families were then on the way and would arrive later in the summer and fall of the same year. Samuel Hitt was then arranging for a strong colony from Maryland. John Phelps of Tennessee, who preceded his family, was preparing a home for them, and many others prospecting for new homes; but for absolute family settlement from Maryland, our families in my opinion took precedence."

After the Wagner family settled here, two more children were born and this remarkable family of six sons and six daughters all lived to ripe old ages. The circle was not broken until the death of Joseph in 1891, at which time the eldest was aged 75 years and the young-

CALEB MARSHALL was one of the few of the settlers who arrived in Mount Morris in the spring of 1837. He was born in Massachusetts, Nov. 5, 1777, and was of English and French nationality. He was twice married, his first wife dying in 1809, and they had but one daughter. His second wife was Louisa Sanborn and they were married in 1818 in the State of New York. They settled on a farm in Clinton County, New York, where the following children were born to them: Caleb S., Elmira E. (Mrs. Wm. Spencer), Lucian, Phila (Mrs. John V. Gale), Mary (Mrs. Solon Crowell), Reuben S. The Marshall family started for Illinois in 1834 but on arriving at Cleveland, Ohio, they heard alarming reports about the Indians so they remained in Ohio for about two years. In October, 1836, Caleb Marshall left his family in Cleveland and came to Mount Morris and made claim to a half section of land several miles north of town which became the Marshall homestead. Lake navigation having suspended when he was ready to return to Cleveland, he walked the entire distance back to that city. In February, 1837, the family left Cleveland for their new home. The trip was made overland and they arrived at Oregon March 19, 1837, after being about four weeks on the road. They were compelled to wait several weeks before crossing Rock River because of the floating ice. They took possession of the claim previously made by Mr. Marshall and built a log cabin 12x24 feet, where they continued to live for many years. The father died in the original cabin on May 17, 1860, and the mother on August 12, 1857.

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est 49 years. The Wagner homestead was located three miles northeast of Mount Morris, later owned by George W. Carr.

The Jacob Rice family which accompanied the Wagner family also consisted of ten children. They took up a homestead north of town, and here the large family was raised and scattered to different parts of the country. Those of the family best known in Ogle County were Isaac Rice, father of Joseph L. Rice; John Rice, father of John H. Rice; and Jacob Rice, father of Fred N.,

William (Timothy Bunker), and Eldridge. All three of the above generations have passed away leaving no descendants. Two of the daughters were Mrs. Daniel Etnyre of Oregon and Mrs. Susan Thomas of Leaf River.

Another prominent family which arrived in 1837 was that of Caleb Marshall. His son, Reuben S. Marshall, raised a large family on the old homestead, three miles north of town, and a number of his descendants are now living in Mount Morris and vicinity.

THE REV. THOS. S. HITT FAMILY

LATER in the year 1837, in which the body of settlers already described as the first Maryland colony came to the township, there also came the Rev. Thomas S. Hitt. Rev. Hitt and wife left Ohio in a carriage in the fall of 1837 to examine the new country of which his brother, Samuel, had written such favorable accounts. He was a Methodist minister and expected to continue his work in the new country. On ar-

rival here in September, he occupied a house which Martin Reynolds, a brother-in-law, was then completing on the site of what is familiarly known as the Lohafer farm, west of town. Later he invested in a tract of land two and one-half miles south of town. This tract embraced one thousand acres, one hundred of which was broken. Rev. Hitt, however, soon moved to a claim which his brother, Samuel, had reserved for him. This claim consisted of what is now the Railroad Addition to the village and the land immediately northwest. Here Rev. Hitt lived until his death in 1852.

In September, 1837, John Fridley purchased the old Ford cabin and claim, where he continued to live until the time of his death, when it became the property of his sons, Andrew, David, John, Jacob and Benjamin, whose descendants live in this vicinity.

These settlers who arrived in 1837 were well pleased with the new country, and consequently in the following spring, 1838, at the solicitation of Samuel Hitt and Nathaniel Swingley, who had induced many of the settlers to come the previous year, a large number of fam-

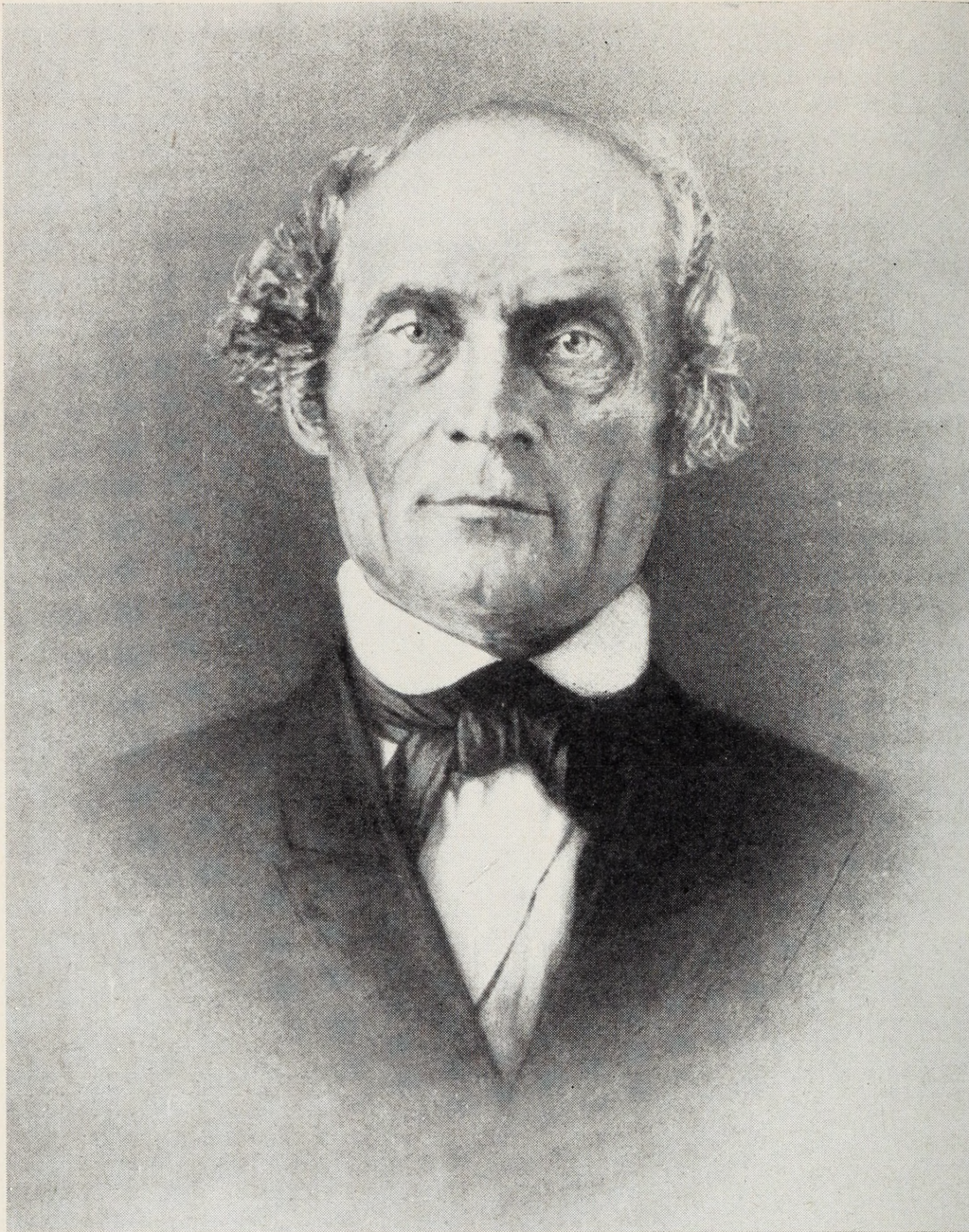


MRS. MARGARET (HITT) PINCKNEY was the daughter of Rev. Thomas S. Hitt, sister of Hon. Robert R. Hitt and wife of Prof. Daniel J. Pinckney. She was born in Maryland on June 25, 1824, and came with her parents to Mount Morris in 1837. She was a student of Rock River Seminary until her marriage in 1844 to Prof. Daniel J. Pinckney, principal of the seminary. Following her husband's death, which occurred June 7, 1883, she moved to Chicago where she lived with her daughter, Mrs. Thyetta Gilson, until her death on June 4, 1905.

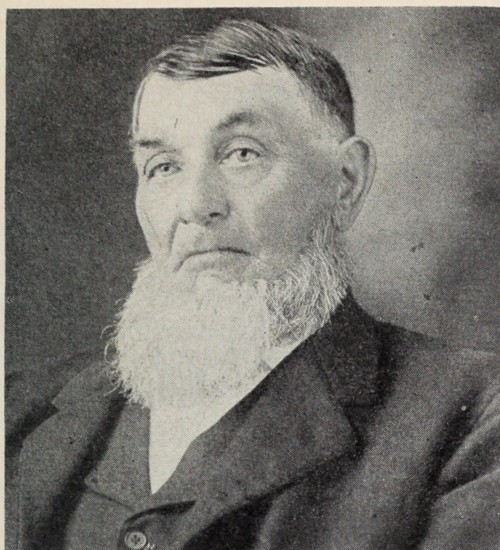
JOHN W. HITT, early settler of Mount Morris, died Sept. 3, 1903, at the age of 71 years. He was the son of Samuel M. Hitt, and came to Mount Morris with his father with the first Maryland colony in 1837. He and Thomas Mumma built the first creamery in Mount Morris, and he served the township as supervisor for a number of years. He enlisted in the Civil War as a private in the 4th Illinois Cavalry and was promoted to quartermaster. He moved to Missouri in 1885.

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REV. THOMAS S. HITT, besides being an early settler of Mount Morris, was a pioneer Methodist minister, and was largely instrumental in securing Rock River Seminary for Mount Morris. He was the son of Martin and Margaret (Smith) Hitt and was born in Bourbon County, Ky., Feb. 14, 1797. He was educated for the Methodist ministry and preached at various points in Ohio and Indiana. In 1830, he married Miss Emily John. In 1837, he decided to come to Mount Morris, where his brothers Samuel M. and Daniel F., had just located. He established his homestead on a 400-acre claim just north and west of the present village limits of Mount Morris. He took a great interest in the religious and educational interests of the community. Mr. and Mrs. Hitt raised five sons and three daughters: John Hitt, for many years deputy collector of customs in Chicago; Robert R. Hitt, for 20 years representative in Congress from this district; Martin E., Thomas M. and Henry P., who located in South Dakota; Elizabeth, wife of Capt. R. B. Wagner; Margaret (Mrs. Albert Newcomer) and Maria, wife of Major Chas. Newcomer. Rev. Hitt died in 1852 and Mrs. Hitt in 1881. They are buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

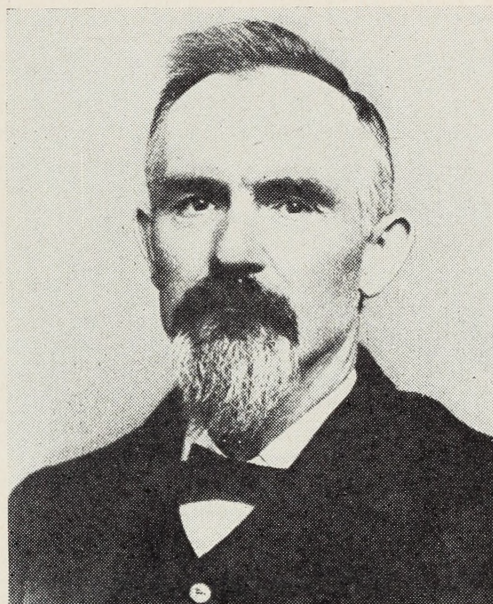


REUBEN S. MARSHALL came to Mount Morris with his parents, Caleb and Louisa (Sanborn) Marshall, in 1837, when he was but ten years old. They settled on a claim several miles north of Mount Morris where Mr. Marshall lived continuously until the time of his death, June 16, 1907. He was born in Clinton County, N.Y., Oct. 5, 1827, and was nearly 80 years of age at the time of his death. Mr. Marshall was married Jan. 30, 1850, to Matilda Steffa and they had twelve children: William C., Mary E., Mrs. Emma Clements, Ira W., Chas. C., Albertus S., Francis C., Ida C., John C., Mrs. Grace M. Rinehart, Mrs. Viola Bock and Oliver. Mrs. Marshall died Feb. 24, 1875.

ilies, known as the Maryland colony proper, left their eastern homes in Maryland and came to Mount Morris. Many of them took up claims here, while others went to Carroll County and other places. Among these families were the Ilers, the Etnyres, the Sprechers, the Allens and many others. In May, A. Quinby Allen arrived and taught the first school in Mount Morris Township. Others who came at that time were Philip Sprecher, John Coffman, John Smith, Henry Artz, Michael Brantner, Henry Sharer, Henry Hiestand and John Wallace. These are all familiar names in Mount Morris and many of the descendants of these early settlers still live in this vicinity.

Among others who came in the early forties, should be mentioned Jacob Turney, Michael Swingley, David Mumma, William Printz, Jonas Shafstall, Moses Crowell, Jacob Buck, Daniel Wolfe, Joseph Rowe, Jacob Detrick, Samuel

S. Fouts, Benjamin Myers, Silas Snyder, Adam Patterson, Otho Wallace, Solomon Nally, Henry A. Neff, Bartholomew and Benjamin McNutt, Jacob Hiestand, William Watts, Daniel and Frederick B. Brayton, Peter, Emanuel, Jonathan, Jacob and Joseph Knodle, many of them with their families. Still later came Benjamin Swingley, Frank Hamilton, Samuel Newcomer and son Charles, George Avey (father of Josiah Avey), Emanuel, Henry and Andrew Newcomer, Joseph and Frisby Watts and scores of others. About this time they began to come so rapidly that it would be useless to attempt to keep track of them. In fact, the Maryland people never ceased coming, and today the



JOHN F. FRIDLEY was probably the first child born in the "Maryland Colony" and was the son of John and Nancy (Hoover) Fridley, early pioneers of 1837. He was born in the old Ford cabin, Sept. 30, 1838, and lived his entire life in Mount Morris and Rockvale Townships. He died Dec. 16, 1910, at the age of 72 years. He was married three times, his first marriage occurring in 1863 to Elizabeth Hildebrand, to whom a son and six daughters were born: Irvin Fridley, May (Mrs. Wm. Hammer), Anna (Mrs. Fred Domer), Elizabeth (Mrs. Wm. Castle), Grace (Mrs. Frank Muller), Ella (Mrs. Carlton Wolf), and Nettie (Mrs. Dale Betebenner). The mother died in 1884. Mr. Fridley's second marriage occurred in 1886 to Mrs. Cecelia Middlekauff, who mothered his large family of children. She died in 1906 and several years later Mr. Fridley married Mrs. Alice Winter, who survived him.

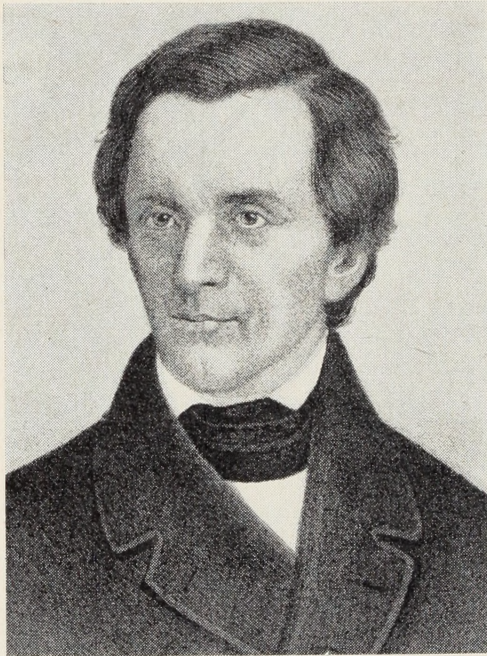
great majority of the residents of Mount Morris Township are either natives of Maryland or children of emigrants from that state. It was a noticeable fact, and one often commented upon, that the obituaries of those dying in this com-

munity, as published in Mount Morris papers, almost invariably contained the clause, "was born in Washington County, Md." Many of them came from Hagerstown in that county.

THE VIGILANTES

MUCH more than what has already been said concerning the appearance and condition of the country in the thirties and early forties and of pioneer life in those days, could yet be written. As has been stated, the Indians had practically left this part of the country when the first settlers arrived, and no trouble was experienced with them. But the township did not entirely escape from the ravages of the early bands of

prairie robbers who harassed the settlers principally by stealing their horses and smuggling them during the nighttime along certain lines of dishonest settlers, somewhat in the manner of the "underground railway" by which slaves were aided in their flight to Canada before the war. These prairie pirates were well organized all over the country, being a combination of horse thieves, counterfeiters and murderers. At a very early day they held almost undisputed and unobstructed dominion throughout this whole section of the country, and very few of the honest settlers were fortunate enough to keep their property from being swept into the network these land pirates had spread around them. The principal leaders of this gang of cut-throats were John Driscoll, John Brodie and Samuel Aikens and their eight sons, and William Bridge and Norton Royce. Although none of them were residents of the township, their operations were often carried on in this vicinity. Their nefarious transactions became so intolerable at last that an organization of settlers, known as Vigilantes, was formed, the members of which proceeded to clear the country of these villains in a summary manner. A man by the name of John Campbell, of White



THOMAS FORD took up a claim of 1000 acres located about three miles east of Mount Morris about the year 1836, on which stood the log cabin in which a number of the old settlers (who arrived in 1837) stopped while the first cabins were being built. It is not known whether Ford actually built and lived in this cabin or whether it had been built by a squatter previous to the time he took up the claim. He sold the cabin and claim to John Fridley in 1837. Mr. Ford was born in Uniontown, Pa., in 1800, and came to Illinois where he was educated. He became a prominent man, first being appointed circuit judge and was elected governor of the state in 1842. He died at Peoria, Ill., Nov. 2, 1850.

PHILIP T. SPRECHER, the first Sprecher to locate in Mount Morris, was one of the original pioneers who arrived in 1837. The homestead was established on a claim one and one-half miles east of Mount Morris on what is now known as the Moats farm. Later he moved to the village where he died when more than 80 years of age, having survived his wife about one year. The wife's name was Catherine Houke. There were three sons and two daughters in the family as follows: Daniel, who died many years ago; John, who became a prominent merchant in Mount Morris; George, who was a farmer and later moved to Zion City; Anna, who married Henry Moats and purchased the old homestead; and Mary, who married George Windle.

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“THE DAYES THAT WUZ”

This letter, written from Mount Morris by a Marylander in 1846, is a colorful literary document and gives a rare picture of the times, reproduced as it was penned, in the author's own style, spelling and all.

(Postmarked) Mt. Morris, Ills.,
November 23rd, 1846.
(Postage) 10c.

Mr. David Ports,
Lappens X Roads, Washington County,
Md.

Well old friend I take this opportunity to forward you a few lines to inform you that we are all well at present and hoping theas few lines will find you all ingoing the same blessing—it has been pretty sickley all around us with the chils and fever and some cases of the bilious feaver but not many deths—I suppose you heard of the deth of my father. He was ant well from the time we left Maryland til his deth—And I supose you heard of the deth of old Mr. Palmer and Isaack Emore—it tis bin the sicklist spring and fall that has bin sinse any of our Marylanders has bin out heare—Well I must let you heare what I think of this little valley as I cal it for it tis onley about 800 miles to the Alagany and 2000 to the Rocka mounten—I must tel you the truth I don't wish myself back you may depend on it to be a slave. I am in a free state and a plenty of worke and good wages. I can get more for my family by wirking 2 days in the week than you can and wirk 6 and I will give you my reason for saying so. I make my dollar per day in the summer and get into the winter one Dollar pir hundred for making rails and in the fall you get 4 bushels of corn for one days wirking on the stack—well this fall porks will bring abught 2 dollars and maybe 2.50—wheat is selling heare from 30 to 37½ corn from 10 to 12½—potatoes we don't keep any account of them and the best I ever eat is hear—if you will pleas to bring me a waggon load of appels and sider I will give you 4 bushels of potatoes for one bushel of appels.

And then you can raise as much off one acre heare as you can raise of 3 in Maryland. Mr. Curren bild a house 16 by 20 on Mr. S. Hitt land last winter—he found all and I done the wirk and I get for a tirm of years. He break up some land—and I just put holes in the sod and planted my potatoes pumpkins cabbage and never done anything til I dug them and had better potatoes than I ever had among your stones—I forgot to tel you the price of beef I can buy the best of beef for from 2 to 3c pir pound—and it would do your hart good to sea the . . . prairie hens partredges, rabbits wild geese ducks and then go to Rock River with us when we cetch pike that will way from 20 to 25 pounds and sturgeons that way from 70 to 100 lb. and all kinds of the best fish—I am nitting a sain (sein) 50 yards long for Mr. Heth brother James and myself—James lives 3 miles and Will 8 from me and doing will—I live one mile and half from Mt. Morris

—And if I could get my money I ben by (would buy) 20 akers one mile from Mt. Morris and all my old Marylanders around me—the man that owns the land is abilden am another place a mile from it and wants money bad so now its my time if I had my mony. I want you to get to see H. Palmer and tel him to go and see Dr. Titghman and then let him tel you what luck and wright to me—also I rote to V. Taves laste fall abut some business and haven got any answer—I wold like to no what he has done for me—also I rote to Thos. Albaste and haven't got any answer—but I reken out of site out of mind. I got a letter from E. Blom and a mail paper—and by what I see in it I think all the Locofokes has turned rong side out—you have made a pore sho. I am glad that I am out of the scrape—so I think you and some more had better come to this free state—before you get to be a whig.

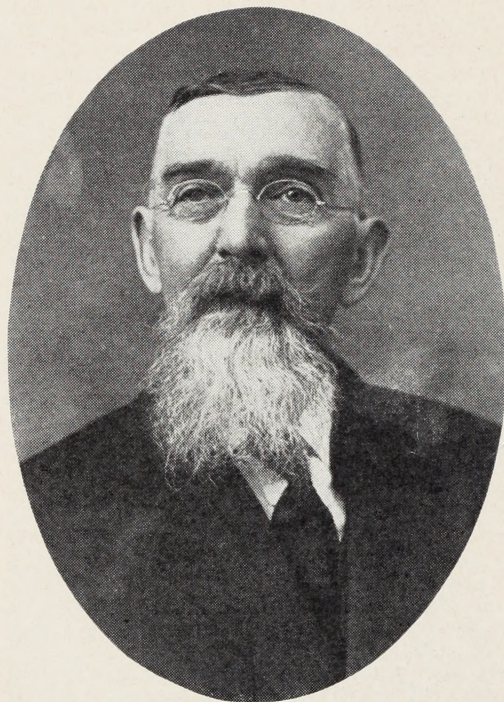
O I forgot to tel you the prise of whiskey, Ohio Whiskey is 60c per gallon—the rot-gut that they make heare is 37½ but when you drink it you must hold your brith and it tastes a week old by 6 days and if you get any in the summer you must hurry home as it will get sawer. And if you wold see Mrs. Albart how she can jump abut you wold think it was a gal of 16 and she never was hartier than she has ben this summer—my old woman, Mrs. Albart, Lawrence, Mary and the rest of my family send their best respects to you and wife and Miss Pofenbarger and to all thare enquireing friends—also my respects to all my old friends and if you and some more will come over some saturday I will have you some Ohio whiskey and a good mess of our big fish and some fried venison—I must close and I hope you will get my letter and will see Mr. Palmer you will rite and I hope to heare that you are a comin to this fine cuntra—Nothing more but still remain your old friend.

(Signed) O. H. Wallace.

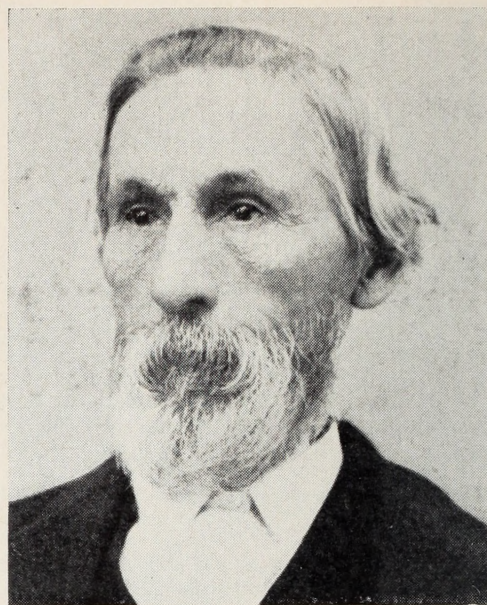
Nov. 24, 1846.

P.S. If you have any noshen to come out heare and if you want me to attend to anything abught your farthers estate I will with pleasure. Smith lives abught 30 miles from me and if you want me I will find out if your farther maid a will or not and how it stands. It wold ben the best thing you ever done to come out here—and a good many more of my old friends to make a easy and a good living—I want you to see V. David Davis—I want to know what he has done for me for I must have a meshean augar—he can get achance to send it by some one in the spring—Don't fale and right to me as soon as you see the persons I have menshend—and I will be happy to hear from you and all my old friends.

Rock, captain of the Vigilantes, was shot by the Driscolls in 1841, and immediately the entire country was scoured until the murderers were caught. A brief trial was given them, the entire one hundred and eleven Vigilantes serving as a jury, and being found guilty, they were shot without further parley, each being pierced by over fifty rifle balls. By this vigorous action, the settlers protected their interests very effectually until the time when the regular courts of justice dealt with this class of criminals. A number of settlers from this vicinity had a hand in the execution of the Driscolls.



NATHANIEL ALBERTUS ANKNEY died April 9, 1913, aged 79½ years. He was the son of Samuel and Elizabeth (Swingley) Ankney, and was born near Hagerstown, Md., August 17, 1833. At the age of four years, Mr. Ankney was brought to Mount Morris by his widowed mother, with a party of emigrants from Maryland, the trip being made overland by teams and requiring over a month. They arrived in the spring of 1837 and Mr. Ankney continued to live in Mount Morris the rest of his life except for about nine years that he spent at an early day in Mississippi and California. He was engaged in farming from 1866 to 1883, when he moved to town and followed his trade of carpenter. In 1869 he married Margaret Mumma, daughter of Shafer and Naomi Mumma, and they had one daughter, Mae. Mrs. Ankney died in 1904.



WILLIAM H. WATTS was among the early settlers to arrive at Mount Morris. He made a claim of 300 acres south of Mount Morris and this land has been in the Watts family ever since. Mr. Watts was born Jan. 29, 1819, at Funkstown, Md. He was a carpenter by trade and helped to build many of the first houses in Mount Morris. He worked on "Old Sandstone" during the entire time it was being built. He also broke much of the ground in the vicinity with an ox team. In 1849, he was married to Anna Amelia Ankney by Rev. N. J. Stroh. They had 11 children as follows: Thomas O., Albertus N., Ella E. (Mrs. Albert Fahrney), Mary Ann and Martha Ann (twins), William H., Anna Mae, James L., John E., Fred L., and Oliver S. Mr. Watts died Feb. 11, 1899, at the age of 80 years, and Mrs. Watts died Feb. 21, 1897, aged 67 years.

PRAIRIE FIRES

ANOTHER serious difficulty with which the early settlers had to contend, was the prairie fires. Occasionally some careless settler would allow fire to get started in the long, dry prairie grass and before it could be put out, the flames, fed by the thick growth of vegetation, would soon be speeding across the prairie with the speed of the wind, often faster than a horse could gallop—a leaping, devouring wall of flame and smoke. The settlers attempted to protect their homes from this danger by plowing a wide tract of land around their cabins, over which the flames could not leap. Occasionally, persons

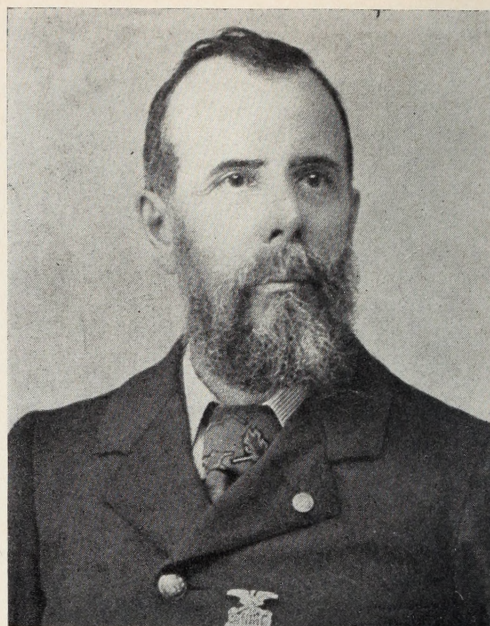


THE ABOVE PICTURE represents a reunion held in June, 1896, of the descendants of the pioneer, John Wagner, which interesting family consisted of six sons and six daughters, all of whom were present at this reunion except Joseph who died in 1891.

were caught out on the prairies by these fires, and were compelled to adopt quick measures for safety, if flight were found impossible, by starting a new fire at the place where they stood. This, caught by the wind, would soon start ahead and burn a tract upon which they could advance and be free from the fire advancing in the rear. When the country became fairly well settled, and one of these fires would get started, the men over the whole neighborhood would turn out to fight the devouring element.

WILD GAME

THE early settlers found an abundance of wild game roaming over the prairie and in the forests. The most plentiful were the deer, thousands of which were native in this part of Illi-



CAPT. PETER HOUSEHOLDER came to Mount Morris with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Eli Householder, in 1837, with the first Maryland colony, when he was only two years old, and lived his entire life here. He was born August 10, 1835, at Williamsport, Md., and died in Mount Morris, March 14, 1914, at the age of nearly 79 years. When the Civil War broke out he enlisted in Co. H, 34th Ill. Inf., under Capt. J. M. Miller of Mount Morris. He was promoted to first lieutenant and later to captain of his company. He was wounded at the Battle of Stone River in 1862 and at Resaca in 1864. He was married in 1869 to Annie A. Sheets, to whom were born six children: Claude, William, Roy, Earl, Melvin and Blanche (Mrs. Arthur D. Klontz).



MICHAEL BOVEY came to Mount Morris with the "Maryland Colony" in the spring of 1837. He was born near Clear Spring, Md., Nov. 15, 1818, and was married there, but his wife died several years later. Soon after arriving at Mount Morris, where he worked for Capt. Nathaniel Swingley, he took up a claim in Maryland Township. He built a cabin on this claim and lived there for many years. In 1839, he married again to Margaret Welsh, and four children were born to them: Mary C. (Mrs. David Petrie), Samuel, Elizabeth (Mrs. Josiah Avey), and Lewis. Mrs. Bovey died in 1880 and Mr. Bovey moved to Mount Morris where he died in 1910 at the age of 92 at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Josiah Avey.

nois. They roamed in herds of from twenty-five to one hundred. These herds were to be found roaming on the prairie during the daytime but retreated to the timber at night. The settlers were able to keep a liberal supply of venison on hand most of the time.

Small game was also very plentiful. Prairie chickens were very numerous and hunters could bag them by the hundred. Wild ducks were also plentiful in certain seasons and they afforded many delicious repasts for the hard-working pioneers. There were rabbits on the prairie and plenty of squirrels and pheasants in the timber.

In addition to the game, there were two varieties of wolves, the grey and the red, the latter being much smaller and more numerous. These animals

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were too small and timid to do the settlers bodily harm, but they sometimes made the night hideous with their barking and yelping. During the winter when food became scarce, they became quite bold in attacking some of the smaller domestic animals.

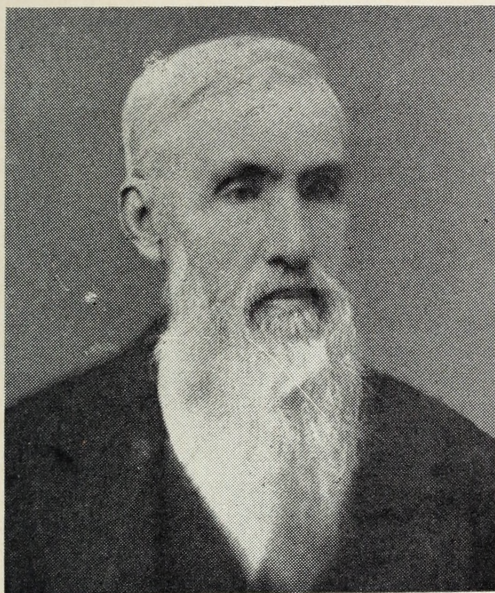
The thick prairie grass harbored a large variety of snakes, some of them

being of a poisonous variety. Rattlesnakes were probably the most numerous, and occasionally some of the settlers were bitten by them, but they knew the proper treatment to avoid fatal results. Copperheads, blue racers and bull snakes were also plentiful, but in a few years the country was freed from these dangerous pests.

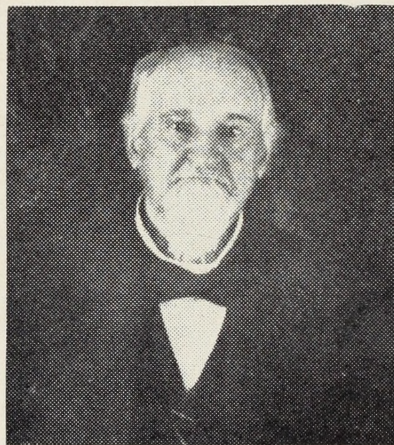
FOUNDING THE VILLAGE OF MOUNT MORRIS

THE stories of the founding of Mount Morris and of Rock River Seminary are one and the same, and in a chapter devoted to the latter the subject is treated at some length. It will suffice to say here that the Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was deeply interested in the cause of education, had, at the earnest sollicita-

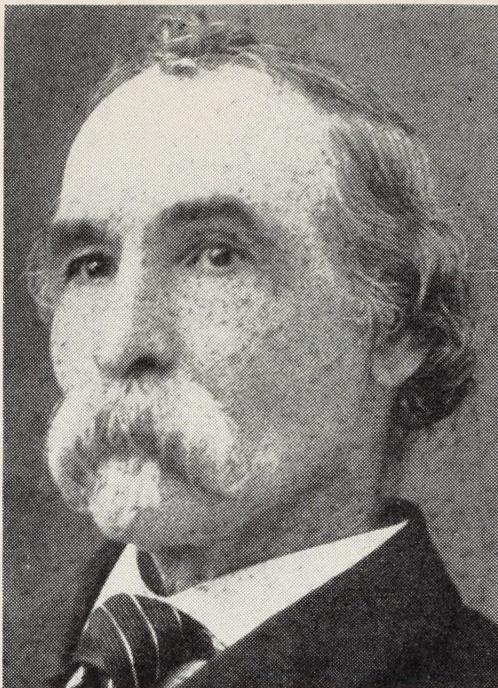
tion of many of the then limited members of the church in the state, concluded to establish a seminary in Illinois, and appointed a committee to select a location. The members of the Maryland colony determined to land the enterprise if possible, and finally, having pledged an extraordinarily large sum, both in cash and in lands, they succeeded. The committee on May 4, 1839, proceeded to select a site for the proposed seminary, which was destined to exercise such an important influence in northern Illinois, and they drove the stake for the building on the summit of the open prairie. From this point the committee had a commanding view of the surrounding country, dotted on every side with near-approaching



PETER KNODLE, son of Jonathan and Barbara Knodle, was born in Washington County, Md., Jan. 12, 1822. He came to Mount Morris in 1841 and assisted in the office of the Rock River Register, which was the first newspaper published in Ogle County. For many years Mr. Knodle was a familiar sight on the streets of Mount Morris. From the building of the railroad through Mount Morris until his death in 1892, Mr. Knodle was the owner of the bus and dray line, a period of over 20 years. In 1848, he married Mary Stauffer, and they had four children: Geo. M., Mary A., Alice I., and Andrew. His first wife died and in 1863 he married Mrs. Mary Crowell, and they had one child, Leona M. Mr. Knodle served the community as constable, tax collector, sheriff and school trustee.



REUBEN WAGNER, early settler and member of the well-known Wagner family, died Oct. 8, 1903, aged 76½ years. He was born April 8, 1827, near Hagerstown, Md., and at the age of ten years came with his parents in 1837 to Mount Morris. In 1853, he married Leah Brubaker, and they had four children, Harry, Nettie, William and Edwin. He engaged in farming, later owned a livery business in Mount Morris, and also spent a number of years in Polo and Chicago, retiring to Mount Morris two years before his death.



HENRY L. THOMAS, son of Joshua and Salina Thomas, was born in Washington County, Md., Oct. 24, 1838, and died in Mount Morris, Feb. 3, 1927, aged 88 years. When he was but two years old, his parents came to Ogle County, making the trip by team, which required six weeks. The family settled near Mount Morris and lived a truly pioneer life. In 1866, Mr. Thomas married Mary Ellen Felker and they finally settled on a farm northeast of Mount Morris, which was the family home until 1907, when they moved to Mount Morris. There were nine children in the family: Lillie, Ada and Nellie, who preceded the father in death, and Edgar, Florence E. (Mr. Chas. Zoller), Chas. H., Fred H., Kathryn (Mrs. Ed. Mumma), and Noble F. The mother died Feb. 13, 1928, aged nearly 82 years.

groves. All of the cabins built up to that time were located in or near the edge of the timber, and not a building was standing within what now constitutes the corporate limits of Mount Morris. Thus the selection of this site in the center of the prairie at the crest of the hill constituted the real founding of the village.

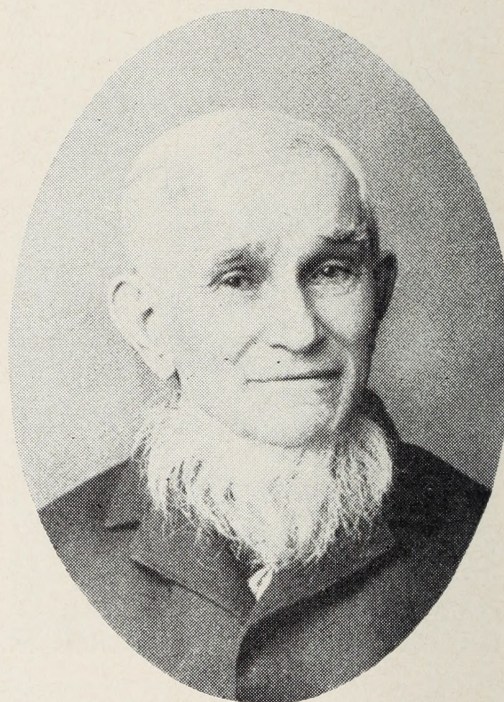
The contract for the erection of the first seminary building was let to James B. McCoy for the sum of \$18,000.00 and work was begun immediately.

Before starting work on the seminary building, Mr. McCoy first erected a frame building in which to board his workmen. This building was actually

the first house built within the present corporate limits of the village. It was located within the present campus limits on the south side, and after it had served its purpose it was moved in 1841 to the southwest side of town where it was occupied for many years as a residence by William Fouke.

The cornerstone of the seminary building was laid on July 4, 1839. This building stood through many years of usefulness but was finally torn down in 1893 to make room for the erection of a ladies' dormitory, which was built a few rods west of the old foundation.

The next building erected was a barn by Rev. John Sharp in 1840, but living quarters being in great demand at that



JOSEPH WAGNER was one of the very earliest pioneers of Ogle County. He was the son of Henry and Elizabeth Wagner, and was born near Boonsboro, Md., Sept. 21, 1826, and died at his home in Mount Morris, Jan. 14, 1908, aged over 81 years. He was of a family of 11 children and they came overland from Maryland in 1838, settling on a farm five miles north of Mount Morris. He engaged in farming until 15 years before his death when he retired to Mount Morris. Mr. Wagner was totally deaf for 30 years. He was married in 1859 to Susan Gearheart and seven children were born to them: Rosa B. Diehl, Mary E. Thomas, Rev. D. G. Wagner, Clara E. Ross, Samuel A. Wagner, Edith K. Roberts and W. F. Wagner.

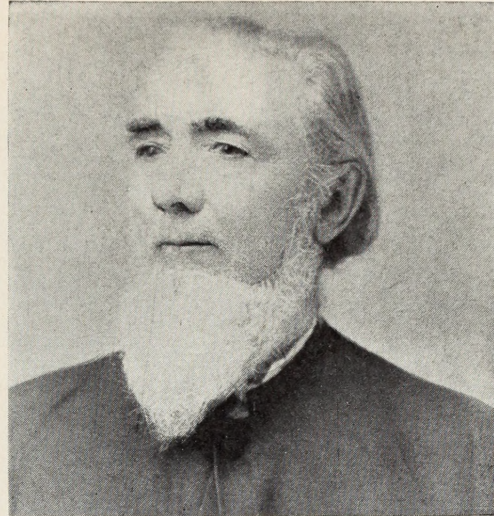
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time, it was later divided into two apartments and occupied by Rev. Philo Judson and Frederick Petrie and their families, with one family in each room.

The next house built, the first one expressly for a residence, was a brick structure erected on the northeast corner opposite the Methodist Church. It was used for a time as a hotel and was finally torn down in 1872 by Andrew Newcomer who built a large frame building in its place which stood for many years and was recently replaced by a modern residence.

After the completion of the first seminary building, there was quite a building boom in the years 1840 and 1841 and on Jan. 1, 1842, there were twenty-one houses in the village. During the first several years the seminary was the only enterprise in the village, the inhabitants being principally those connected with that institution. The Rock River Register, Mount Morris's first newspaper, which was established in the latter part of 1841, contained the follow-



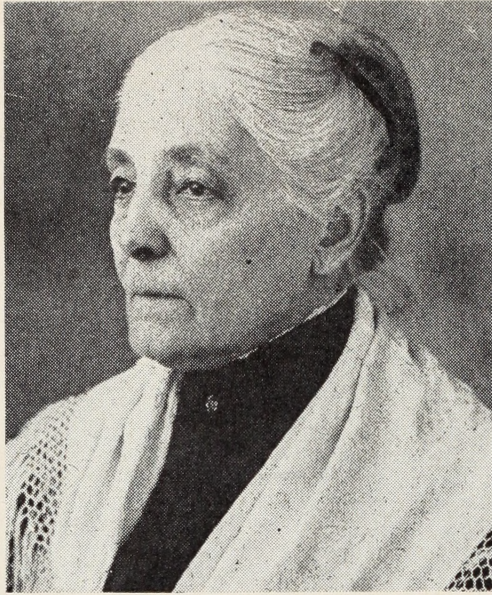
BENJAMIN SWINGLEY was one of the early settlers in Mount Morris Township. He came west with his father, Michael Swingley, in 1842. He was born in Washington County, Md., Sept. 17, 1816. He was married Nov. 31, 1837, to Catherine Hershey, and was the father of eight children: John H., Oliver H., Mrs. John E. McCoy, Mrs. Samuel Mumma, Mrs. Jacob G. Miller, Mrs. Wm. H. Rowe, Mrs. Henry Domer and Mrs. Joseph Moats. Mr. Swingley died Sept. 8, 1905, aged 89 years.



JACOB A. KNODLE, early pioneer, died Oct. 23, 1903, aged 80 years. He was born near Fairplay, Md., Oct. 10, 1823. He was one of the nine children of Jonathan and Barbara Knodle, who in 1841 came to Mount Morris to make their home. They made the trip in an emigrant wagon. The father was the publisher of the Rock River Register, the first newspaper in Mount Morris, and Jacob doubtless worked in this primitive printing plant. He was first married in 1848 to Ann Little, and they had a son, Frank F. The mother died in 1855, and Mr. Knodle married again, after thirteen years, to Hannah Wagner, who survived him. Mr. Knodle lived in Mount Morris over 62 years. He was a wood worker by trade.

ing item in its issue of Jan. 1, 1842:

"We hail from the top of Mount Morris; and it is our purpose, while we reign editorially, to hail very effectually—each of our conglomerations being of the 'weight of a talent.' Most seriously, we hail from the new and hale little village of Mount Morris, in Ogle County, State of Illinois (en passant, we shall not be very ill in noise; we hope to do a share of noise—but to Ogle shall be far from us!). Well, Mount Morris was well founded in the spring of 1841, and it is now already found, when not yet ten months old, to hold 282 souls, inclusive of the teachers and students of Rock River Seminary, which dignifies the center of the village. This day, Jan. 1, 1842, the citizens number 137 and the town consists of twenty-one houses. Mount Morris is five miles west of Oregon city, in the same county, and eighty miles west of Chicago. It is handsomely situated on a considerably elevated portion of one of the most beautiful and extraordinary prairies which distinguish Illinois—especially the Rock River region, for abundance and excellence of



MRS. SARAH HIESTAND RICE was born in Washington County, Md., Jan. 27, 1836, and was brought to Mount Morris by her parents, Henry and Elizabeth Hiestand in 1837, when she was only one year old. The family settled on a farm north of town where Mrs. Rice grew to womanhood. In January, 1857, she was married to Dr. Isaac Rice, and three children were born to them: Roland, who died in infancy; Anna, who died at the age of 18, and Joseph L. Rice, who died in 1931. Mrs. Rice died July 18, 1921, aged over 85 years. The father died in 1897, and there are no survivors of this family.

agricultural productions. Mount Morris is named in honor of Bishop Morris, of the M. E. Church."

In regard to the actual naming of Mount Morris, there is some question. In a history of Ogle County, published in 1878 by H. F. Kett & Co., the following appears on page 296:

"Mount Morris (was named) after Bishop Morris, an eminent divine of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This distinguished and Worthy Bishop died at his home in Springfield, Clark County, Ohio, a few years ago."

On page 470 of the same history appears the following:

"During the summer and fall of 1839, a portion of the prairie around the building in process of erection was surveyed and platted by D. Fletcher Hitt, and the embryo town was named Mount Morris. The Rock River Register, in 1842, stated that the town was named

in honor of Bishop Robert Morris, and this is the prevailing impression among the present survivors of that day. Professor Pinckney states, on the authority of Horace Miller, Esq., of Kishwaukee, that he, Miller, gave this town its name in honor of Mount Morris, Genesee County, N.Y., his former residence. Mr. Miller was a prominent and influential member of the Methodist Church at Kishwaukee, who had been active in his efforts to secure the location of the Seminary at that point. He had failed, but he was still deeply interested in the enterprise; was one of the first trustees of the institution, and, under the circumstances, it is very natural to suppose that he might have been permitted the honor of naming the town where it was located. It seems probable that both may be correct. Judge Miller, having suggested the name of his old town, the Methodist Elders at once adopted it,



MRS. BARBARA McNEILL died April 21, 1915, aged nearly 80 years. She was born in Washington County, Md., October 6, 1835, and she was a member of the large Wagner family which arrived in Mount Morris in the spring of 1837. Her parents were John and Catherine (Rice) Wagner and there were twelve children in the family, two of whom were born after the family arrived in Mount Morris. Barbara Wagner was married in 1857 to Dr. F. A. McNeill, a prominent physician of Mount Morris, who died in 1872. Dr. McNeill had four children by a previous marriage, and the second union brought four children, Katherine (who became a famous singer) and Frank and two who died in infancy.

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