

A TRIP AROUND JACKSON AND SAMPSEL TOWNSHIPS IN 1934

As related by Dr. Thomas Gabriel Phelps at the age of 74 to his daughter Stella Culling and family of near Utica, and his daughter Cecil Nichols and family of Kansas City MO. As they drove in two vehicles over territory familiar to the older members of the party. The opinions expressed are neither edited, nor necessarily shared by Grand River Historical Society or it's membership.

Soon we began the descent of the Graham Hill where in the days of which we speak, many a horse was abused and strained in pulling the heavy loads of cordwood and rail-road ties up the steep hill bound for Chillicothe. Just a few paces further and we arrive at the old Graham Water-mill. Here for many years Uncle Jim ground (processed) the wheat and corn the farmers brought for bread for their families and disposed of the bran as best he could, for few of the farmers of those days had any use for it. Occasionally Uncle Jim would send by one of the farmers who was going to Chillicothe for a pint of "good old Bourbon" of which he was very fond, and occasionally took enough to make him a little top heavy and tangle-footed. But he was a fine old gentleman of the old school.

Now we pass through the wooden enclosed and covered bridge over Grand River, said to be the last one of its kind still in use in N.W. Mo. Turning to the left, we cross the river bottom, which in the days of which we speak, was often impassable for weeks at a time owing to the deep mud, but now is a nice graded and graveled road. Now, on our right is the former home of "Bottom" George Mast, quiet, successful farmer who raised a family of equally successful and splendid citizens. Mr. Mast might be seen most every Saturday bringing his produce to market in his spring wagon and enjoying his lunch and beer at Saale's eating room on the south side of the square, with friends of the same nationality.

On our left, we see the old Leo Tiberghien house where Mr. T. raised a quiet, law-abiding family. He was a great fisherman and could be seen, he or his sons, most any week-day, hauling cord wood to town. He came to a sad and tragic

death by being dragged under his wooden-wagon as his team ran away.

Now, we angle across the field to the Gibbs School house. Here Mrs. Phelps taught school in 1879. Off in the distance N. E. we can see the early home of the former noted Capt. Joe Kirk, who with a band of equally brave and daring men, during the Civil War, had many a clash and skirmish with Union Militia, whom they tried to keep out of Jackson Township. Capt. Kirk lived many years an honorable and respected citizen after the war.

Now, we go west up the steep hill, past the Dick Hargrave home, down the hill and past the George Hutchison home; now our graveled road angles north-west passing near the old home of Wm. Sterling and the home for many years of the maiden Hargrave sisters. Farther on we come to the home of that quiet, unassuming, reliable citizen, George Grouse, at the four corners. Off half a mile to the west, is the old Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church where Uncle Jimmie Turner is said to have preached for forty years. Near by it, is the old home of Mr. Noah, who has seen many things in his long life, but never as much water as the [Biblical] Noah; however he always liked to see enough rain for all to have good crops. He has raised a fine family of sons and daughters. Quiet and unassuming, he is at peace with all mankind.

Now, we go straight north and pass the Henry Hutchison farm. Mr. H. was considered by far to be the neatest farmer in all those parts in his day. In rush seasons, all the family—male & female—might be seen working in the field. The men never entered the house from the field without first pulling off their boots or shoes. Splendid quiet neighbors they were.

Next, passing the old Harve Williams place, we cited the erstwhile rocky hill and turn right and down the incline to the staid and quiet old village of Spring Hill which was once the rival of Chillicothe. But when the "Hannibal & St. Joe" railroad entered the latter, Spring Hill began to wane. On the west side of the town is the former L. H. Christison property where on April 29, 1881 Mr. Phelps took his bride of a day and where they lived that summer. His nearest neighbor was old Mr. Simpson and his hale and jolly spouse. In ante- and post-bellum days, Mr. S. ran a tan yard

nearby where the farmers took their hides and skins and pelts to be tanned into the finest of leather much of which was made into boots and shoes for their families by Mr. Baxter, the resident shoemaker.

Mr. Baxter, after becoming incapacitated by age, was carefully cared for by his thin, frail-looking, but faithful life companion. She also cared for her daughter and two sons. With milk, butter, eggs, and fruit and garden produce, she supplied the greater part of the family needs. The boys had no taste whatever for hard labor. The older, Sam, never got far away from home. He preferred to spend most of his time about the General Store listening to the gossipers. He never talked much. His mouth wouldn't go off right and he stuttered badly.

Sherman, the younger was tall, slender, stoop-shouldered and sallow. He took part in the store gossip and yarns and was always delighted when helping initiate some novice into the mysteries of the Woodman of the World lodge.

The General Merchandise store was run several years by Mr. L. H. Christison who finally sold out to Mr. George Wingo.

Mr. Meserve, whose son, Albert, now lives in Chillicothe, was the blacksmith at the time we write. He shod the horses, sharpened the plows and set the wagon tires for the farmers. A faithful old smithy!

One of the outstanding characters of those days was "Uncle" Levi Goben. He was one of the earliest settlers in these parts. He conducted the Spring Hill Hotel for years and owned considerable property in the town. In later years, he spent his time either working on some invention in his strictly private workshop in one room of his home, or looking after his town property when not entertaining the loafers at the store by telling of the ghosts and spirits he has seen, or giving his reasons why he did not believe the Bible.

It was in Spring Hill that the late daring and skillful surgeon Dr. A. J. Simpson grew to manhood while his father, Dr. W. R. Simpson

rode the hills and valleys thereabouts dispensing pills, powders, calomel and quinine to the ailing and was the careful and skillful accouter to many a mother.

Early in the history of Spring Hill the South Methodists planted their cause here and were regularly attended by the Circuit rider who expounded to them the doctrine, rules and regulations of the Discipline and his view of the gospel. This regime is said to have been interrupted at least once by the Union soldiers who bivouacked about the chapel and stabled their horses therein.

Near here Mr. D. C. Stewart grew to manhood and became a traveling grocery salesman. After following this business for a few years he became one of the firm of Stewart and Mahaffey who for several years conducted the first cash or trade grocery store in Chillicothe. Next he engaged in the Abstract and Loan business which he conducted until his health failed.

His son, Joe and daughter Miss Fay, conducted it until Joe became the present efficient and obliging postmaster in Chillicothe. Miss Fay continues the Abstract and Loan business. Mr. S. raised a family of sons and daughters who are high standing and influential citizens in the communities where they live.

Mr. S. was always a strong opponent of intoxicants of any kind and gave his money freely in Local Option campaigns and other temperance movement. He was a lover of poetry, especially that of Robert Burns. Possessing a remarkable memory, he could repeat a great deal of Burns which he said he memorized at noons and evenings while busily engaged during the days at his regular business. He so greatly admired the Scotch poet, that he named one of his sons "Burns" in honor of the Bard of Ayrshire.

(To be continued)

LOCATING LUDLOW*compiled by Sue Jones*

Ludlow is one of the younger towns in Livingston County. It did not begin until a post office was needed in that area, which was put near the location of Monroe Center Cemetery and a Baptist Church. Soon after it was named Ludlow (after the home town of the local representative to Congress, Henry S. Pollard) a movement was under way for a new railroad, the Milwaukee and St. Paul. Unfortunately the railroad missed the settlement with the post office by one mile, so the post office was moved south one mile and eventually the church and a few other buildings were built, and became the town of Ludlow. The town is located in Monroe Township very near its center.

[*The Chillicothe Spectator* - 28 June 1866]

A Wicked and Horrible Murder

On Saturday evening last a murder was committed in the southwest part of our county, of such a wicked and cold-blooded character as to make one's life-blood curdle and refuse to flow, and cause a chill of horror to run through the entire community. Silas Smith, a farmer of middle age, and in good circumstances, residing about seven miles west of Dawn, and four miles south of Mooresville, was murdered in his own house in cold blood on Saturday evening last, by three men or rather, ruffians.

The circumstances as far as we could learn them make this one of the most barbarous murders on record—almost equal to the murder of the Deering family. From all that appears, Mr. Smith was murdered for his money. He was known to have had several hundred dollars of money for livestock sold, and on the day of his murder he had been to Dawn to receive \$1,000 due him there. One of the murderers saw him and talked with him there during the day. Mr. Smith had got to his home late in the after-noon and had reclined upon the bed to recover from his fatigue. His wife was milking outside of the enclosure, a short distance from the gate and near a clump of timber or brush. Three men coming from behind this clump passed her with threats, ran toward the gate, where one was stationed, and the two passed into the house. As they entered they inquired for Mr. Smith of two little girls of the family, who directed their attention to the bedroom.

On hearing the noise Mr. Smith raised up and as they came to the room door he was sitting on the side of the bed. The smaller of the two ruffians exclaimed "We have you now," and fired with his pistol, and continued to fire four times, each time striking his victim on the breast. He fell forward on the floor, bruising his face very much, and soon expired. As the first shot was fired the oldest of the two girls ran out screaming and ran towards a neighbors house in sight. As she passed out of the house, one of the ruffians stepped to the door and called to the man at the gate, "shoot her." When the ruffian fired it was without effect. This girl is about eleven years of age.

It is not known whether they got any money, but it is supposed not. He kept no money about him and his money taken for property was hidden away so securely that his own family do not know where it is. It is evident the ruffians intended to overtake him on the way home and get the money—the exclamation would indicate this—or come on to him so soon that he would have no time to hide the money. There is as yet no certainty as to the murderers. Two of them were disguised by being blackened. One was not disguised. They were stripped to shirt and pants and bareheaded. The boy says he knows one of the men talked with his father at Dawn, while Mrs. Smith says she well knew one of the men, although at the time he was blackened.

We trust thorough measures will be taken to ferret the matter out. Such foul murders must not be passed by lightly. The County Court should meet at once and by an offer of suitable reward and a thorough investigation bring to light the guilty parties and secure their certain conviction and punishment. The dignity of the law must be vindicated, the guilty brought to justice, or we hold our lives and property on the most slender tenure. Unless something is done we will be at the mercy of every ruffian who may choose to turn robber and murderer.

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FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH In Town

On a bright September evening in 1857, a weary traveler rode up to the "City Hotel" in Chillicothe and sought lodging. He entered the ancient hostelry at the corner of Jackson and Washington Streets (later Swetland's Drug Store) and registered as plain "John Hogan."

He soon discovered that the town was the home of only two Catholic believers, Mrs. Eliza Bell and Mrs. Catherine Turner. The Bell family lived on the northwest corner of Jackson and Woodward Streets. For a time Father Hogan roomed with the Bells and mass was also held at this location.

The word soon spread of the presence of a priest in town, and some of the townspeople, perhaps from curiosity as well as Kentucky liberality, wanted to hear what he had to say. The story goes that the editor of a local newspaper secured a venue for Hogan to speak, and Mr. John Graves offered him a plot of land to build a Catholic Church.

This building, constructed the following year, was located directly south of the railroad tracks and east of Washington Street. (The current location of an auto rental business and the State License Office.) The building was completed and dedicated May 16, 1860, called St. Columban's after a patron Saint of Ireland. In 1879 the name was transferred to the "north" (present) church upon completion of that structure.

Sources do not say what happened to the original structure of the "south" church, but after 1895 a lot in the same Block 2 of Graves Third Addition was purchased from Bridget Cunningham by Rev. Joseph Ascheri, pastor of the new parish, and a church building was quickly constructed by builder T. B. Franc. Two lots adjacent on the north were donated to the parish by Thomas McNally and Eugene Cashman, to be used for construction of a pastoral residence. The south parish was called St. Joseph's.

...Information provided from The History of St. Joseph's Church 1859-1956 by L. A. Martin; and Historical Sketches of St. Columban's Congregation 1905 donated to GRHS by E. J. McClure.

STATE ROAD SURVEY IN 1843

In Livingston County this survey followed portions of the Hannibal to St. Joseph wagon road, first surveyed in 1820. The 1843 survey started at the southwest corner of the public square in Chillicothe, and ran generally southwest to Utica. From there it ran generally west to the Caldwell County line, then southwest through Kingston to Transue's Mill near Plattsburg in Clinton County. The certified route description was signed in June 1843 by John S. Harper, Surveyor.

The route snaking through Utica is described: "The road entered town from the northwest, intersecting Main St., then west on Main, south on Catherine St., west on Matson St., south on Throop St., west on Vanzandt St., south on Fellow St. to the south line of the town of Utica."

The state hired overseers to supervise the maintenance of the road. In 1849, part of this road in western Livingston County was managed by John Stuckey (1810-1890). His contract required that the road be "causewayed and dug, the ravines therein filled up, and the small watercourses therein abridged, the roadway cut out and maintained thirty feet wide and cleared of trees and limbs which might incommode horsemen and carriages, and cleared of stumps exceeding 8 inches in height"

A map of Mooresville Township was published in 1878. It showed that the 1843 survey ran west through the upper fourth of sections 24 and 23, then north along the section township line between 23 and 22 and directly west on the section line between 15/22, 16/21, 17/20, and 18/19. In the early part of the 20th century before Highway 36 was paved, signs posted on this road between Chillicothe and Mooresville identified it as the "Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean" road..

From Breckenridge the survey angled southwest to Kingston, a very different angle than the one familiar to travelers in later years. If this portion of the road was actually built, little evidence of it remained in 1907 when a map was published.

...Old maps and local Atlases are part of the collection at GRHS Museum.