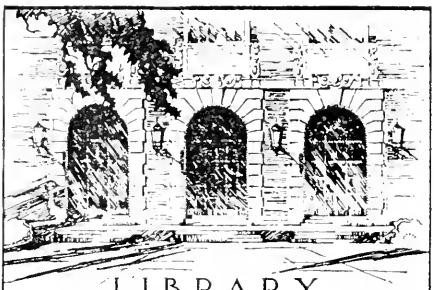
HISTORY OF BEARDSTOWN AND AND CASS COUNTY

(1925)



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—BY—
MRS. T. J. SCHWEER

1925

Written for Use as a Text Book in the Third Grade
Beardstown Public Schools

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CHAPTER I

Illinois dates its white settlements among the first in North America. Four years before the settlement of Plymouth, Le Baron had explored Upper Canada, and twenty years later the hardy and ambitious French voyageurs and traders, and the zealous missionaries had erected trading-posts and missions along the rivers and upon the lake shores of the land that now comprises the present states of Illinois and Wisconsin.

At that time the surface of Illinois was much lower than it is at the present time, and our early settlers of two hundred years ago navigated the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to the Great Lakes.

Two hundred years ago northern and central Illinois was inhabited by two very powerful nations of Indians, the Illinois and the Miami. The Miami occupied the northern part of the present state of Illinois and a part of Wisconsin and their chief town was where the city of Chicago now stands. The Illinois occupied the country bordering upon the Illinois river and all the country between that and the Mississippi. The principal tribes of the Illinois were the Muscootens and their town was upon the present site of Beardstown, on the eastern bank of the river at the foot of Muscooten Bay and was called by the French, Mound Village. The Peorias, another tribe of the Illinois, occupied the country between the rivers, having their town on the west bank of the Illinois river, four miles above the present town of Frederick.

The present site of Beardstown was at that time an island surrounded on the north, east and south by almost impassable swamps containing dangerous quick sands and quaking bogs, which could be crossed only in canoes, and on the west by the Illinois river.

The Indian town of the Muscooten's was a beautiful place. It was built upon a series of wonderful mounds, which had been built so long ago that no one remembered anything about them or the people who built them. These mounds were covered with grass and partially shaded by tall trees, but so placed as not to obstruct the view of the whole town from the river. The island had been selected not only on account of its natural beauty, but for its easy defense and safety from the enemies. The two villages of the Muscootens and Peorias stood in plain sight of each other, the broad river forming a straight sheet of water

between, while north of Mound Village and directly in front of the Peorias was Muscooten Bay, separated from the river by a narrow peninsula which we now call Wood Slough.

Back of the swamp which protected the rear of the town, was a wide belt of rich prairie bottom land and beyond six miles rose the Sangamon bluffs between which and the island in the day time all approaching foes could be seen. This island town was a favorite resting place for the tired voyageurs and devout missionaries; a large cross was erected here and friendly relations established between the Indians and white men. But this friendly feeling on the part of the French toward the Illinois Indians excited the jealousies of the Miami and they determined to have revenge. In vain did the missionaries try to prevent war. The Miami invaded the country of the Illinois, and took some prisoners. At this time the brave chevalier LaSalle, who had built a fort where the present city of Peoria now stands, made a journey alone down the river to the Muscooten village but his effort amounted to nothing and the war continued. Moreover, the Muscootens thought La Salle was acting as a spy for the Iroquois Indians at that time the most powerful Indian tribe on the North American continent, who had formed an alliance with the Miami for the purpose of exterminating them. Many battles were fought between these hostile nations, but because of the greater number of Iroquois and Miamis the Illinois were defeated and beseiged in their towns.

The Muscootens were at last beseiged in their island town, and after many fierce battles were finally defeated. It was savage fighting savage, and death was dealt with relentless vigor on either side. The Muscootens began to fall back toward the river and their enemies, with yells of victory, rushed upon them with tomahawks and scalping knives and ended the battle. A few of the Muscootens swam the river and concealed themselves in the high swampy grass. A small number fled in canoes to the village of the Peorias. The women and children were taken prisoners.

The victorious Iroquois buried their dead in the great mound on the bank of the river with their bows and arrows and tomahawks together with the silver and flint crosses of the missionaries. After these ceremonies were over the Iroquois returned to their own country. The Miamis with their prisoners and sick and dying encamped upon the present site of Chandlerville.

Some years later Mound Island was taken possession of by the Kickapoo Indians upon which they built their village, known as Kickapoo Town, although still remembered by the French as "Beautiful Mound Village." This became a fa-

vorite trading post and missionary station, and continued in possession of the Kickapoos until its settlement by Thomas Beard in 1820.

About 1830 the great mound at Beardstown began to be dug into by spade and pick-axe of the white man. The decaying bones of the Indian Warriors as they lay in their lovely and quiet resting places with their bows and arrows, the silver and flint crosses of the missionaries, even the beautiful mound itself which should have been preserved was all shoveled away and nothing now is left of this once beautiful mound.

During the early part of the nineteenth century immigration was greatly retarded to this part of the country because of severe earthquakes. From 1811 to 1813 they were as severe as ever happened on this continent and the few settlers here were in constant dread from these disturbances. Then too the Kickapoo Indians, fierce and powerful as they were, while friendly to the French, had no use for the Americans and discouraged their settlement in this part of the country. Finally, negotiations were entered into with the Kickapoos and on the 30th of July 1819 the tribe ceded to the United States an immense tract of land known as the Sangamon County.

CHAPTER II

The first permanent white settlement within the present limits of the city of Beardstown was made by Thomas Beard, who came here on horse back when it was a Kickapoo town in 1819. Mr. Beard built his cabin upon the steep bank of the river at the present foot of State street and began business as a trader among the Indians. He was rather unfortunate in selecting the site for his cabin, because the next spring he found that he had built it upon a den of snakes and (the next spring) when the weather was warm many thousands of them of all kinds came out upon the bank by his cabin. Soon after he built a two story brick hotel where our post office now stands and this old hotel stood at the foot of State street for 85 years. Many of the early immigrants going and coming across the river stopped at this hotel.

Mr. Beard was the father of our town. He came here as a young man twenty-four years old on horse back from the state of Ohio. His parents did not want him to go so far from home but he had the pioneer instinct in him and wanted to seek new and strange lands, so he came west as far as Alton and Edwardsville at first, and while in the latter place he made the

acquaintance of a young man by the name of Enoch C. March. They soon formed a strong friendship for each other and came to Beardstown together. The first land entry was made by Thomas Beard and Enoch C. March jointly. Mr. Beard's cabin marked the western most out-post of civilization at this point. He thought it such a wonderful country and wrote most alluring descriptions of it home to his parents and so interested did they all become that the whole Beard family moved to Beardstown, and now most of them lie buried in the Beard cemetery at the top of Seamon Hill just five miles out of Beardstown on the Chandlerville road.

The first licensed ferry across the river was granted Mr. Beard by the County Commissioners of Schuyler County, upon his paying six dollars into the treasury of that county. There was no road from Beardstown through Schuyler County in that day. Mr. Beard managed the ferry himself using a pole to propel it. It was so small that only one wagon and a single team of horses could be accommodated at one time and very little room was left for passengers.

On the 28th day of October, 1827, Beard and March made another land entry which extended their river front down low the great mound. The original town of Beardstown consisted of 23 blocks fronting the river, three blocks deep, reaching from Clay to Jackson streets, of which the block between the park and Main street and State and Washington was the central one. The town was laid out and platted by Thomas Beard and Enoch March, and was named after Mr. Beard.

Now at this time there was not a bushel of corn to be had in central Illinois. The settlers lived on venison, blackberries and milk. The men had to go down into the southern part of the state to buy corn. The southern part of our state was called Egypt; it was older and longer settled and they gathered corn down there like the sands of the sea, and so the immigrants went down there to buy corn as the children of Isreal in their want went to Egypt to buy and bring forth from thence corn that they might live.

Money was very scarce in those days and often the early settlers would gather a lot of bee's wax and loading it in canoes would take it to St. Louis and sell it to raise money with which to buy their land.

The winter of 1830 was a remarkable one and will always be remembered by old settlers as the most terrible for suffering within their memories. The snow fell at first about 30 inches deep then the weather settled and another snow fell and another, until it was from four to six feet deep. In drifts it was much deeper. Fences were covered and lanes filled up.

There was much suffering everywhere. Stock died for want of food. Deer stood in their tracks and died. Prairie chickens and quails having alighted in the snow could not get out. Man was the only animal that could walk, and game alone of the food kind was all he had in plenty. That could be had for the picking it up from the snow for it was helpless. But finally even game became so poor from starvation that it was unfit for food. The snow stayed on the ground nearly all winter until March and people ran short of everything particularly fuel. Thomas Beard remembering a widow with a small family living at the bluffs, generously walked out there and found her and her family on the verge of starvation and hovering over the last remnants of a fire, she having used all of her fuel. Mr. Beard tore up some fences and chopped a large pile of wood for her and afterwards carried provisions to her through the snow on foot, a distance of seven miles, as a horse could not travel.

In 1831 the Indians became very troublesome and threatened to over-run the white population. They were led by Black Hawk their chief and prophet who pretended to have power given him by the great spirit to destroy the pale faces. He attacked the whites with so much vigor that Governor John Reynolds who was governor of the state at that time, issued a call to arms. He asked for seven hundred able-bodied men, who were willing to fight the Indians, to come to Beardstown on the tenth day of June 1831. On that day three times that number came to Beardstown. They were at once organized and Enoch C. March was made quartermaster. March was equal to the occasion; he soon furnished the necessary supplies but the governor was at a loss to know how to arm those who had not brought rifles. However a man by the name of Francis Arenz, one of Mr. Beard's good friends came to their aid. He was a merchant here and a short time before had purchased some light brass barrelled fowling pieces, that had been manufactured in the east for a South American government, and not answering the purpose for which they were made, they were shipped west to shoot birds with. These served the purpose very well and the troops were encamped above the town where Mr. R. B. Glenn's Ice and Fuel Plant now stands. Some of the best men in this vicinity assembled here and we are told that Abraham Lincoln was among them serving as a privateer.

There is one instance connected with the Black Hawk War which is interesting because it relates to the settling of Chandlerville.

David Ephler, a resident of the North Prairie district came to Beardstown to purchase two barrels of salt. He drove two

beautiful horses well harnessed and a good wagon, altogether just what Colonel March wanted for war material. He accordingly seized them under the law that might makes right, and took them from Mr. Ephler. But Mr. Ephler refused to give them up and with his face livid with anger declared that he would defend them with his life and that the Colonel with his troops would have to walk over his dead body before he would give up his best team, at least until he was paid their value. Colonel March then offered to pay what two disinterested men should say they were worth. This was agreed to. There were then stopping in Beardstown two comparative strangers, Dr. Charles Chandler and a man named Crawford. To them the cause was referred. They having come from the east were wholly in ignorance with the low prices of this new country and priced the team at eastern values, which Colonel March felt in honor bound to abide by and the consequence was Mr. Ephler got $350 for his team, which was a large price then. This incident recalls the fact of how Dr. Chandler came here. He left Rhode Island where he had a good practice in his profession and a new house which he had just built, and started west with his family with the intention of settling at Fort Cl[illegible] where Peoria now stands. When the steamer upon which he came up the Illinois river arrived at Beardstown the hostile attitude of the Indians in the vicinity and the preparation for a general Indian war induced the captain to discharge his passengers and freight at Beardstown, thinking it unsafe to go any farther north with his boat. While here Dr. Chandler took a ride up the Sangamon bottom with Thomas Beard and he was so well pleased with that part where Chandlerville now stands that he determined to go no farther north and settle there. This was in the spring of 1832. The bottom of the bluffs had burned over and new fresh green grass and beautiful flowers had sprung up and the trees and vines and shrubbery were dressed in their most inviting foliage, indeed it was a most beautiful sight. Later he took his wife and little daughter to see their future home and they too were delighted with it. So the doctor entered sixty acres of land that spring and although it was late in the spring he raised a crop of buck-wheat upon it. There was a universal custom among the settlers at that time, that every man should be entitled to eighty acres of land on each side of the land already entered by him. He could have the right to this land until he was able to enter it at $1.25 per acre from the government, and it was considered stealing for another man to claim it.

Shortly after this a man named English came to this vicinity to settle. He too was much pleased with the prospect of

living in this new country. The Doctor assisted and befriended him all he could offering to give up his claim to one-half of the eighty acres tract next to the land that English wanted and let him enter it. English told the Doctor that he was going to Springfield and enter the whole tract, that he did not care for the customs of the country, that he was going to have it right or wrong, and started for Springfield. All the Doctor's efforts to keep him from doing it availed nothing. The Doctor went to his cabin and looked over his little pile of money and found that he had fifty dollars. He thought that his neighbor might have some money and so he saddled his best horse. He rode to this man's house and borrowed fifty dollars more. Thus provided, he took a different route through the woods and prairies from that chose by English and putting his horse to his best speed started for the land office.

When about ten miles from Springfield, Dr. Chandler over took two young men on horseback and as his horse was foaming with perspiration and really tired out he rode slowly along with the young men, as well to rest his horse as to relate to them the cause of his haste. When he told them of the meanness of the man, one of the young men was so indignant that he offered the Doctor his own fresh horse that he might make all haste and thwart the efforts of English, while the young man would ride the Doctor's horse slowly into town. But the Doctor rode his own horse, got safely to the land office and entered the land before English got there. Sometime after that he wanted to have his land surveyed and the county surveyor lived at Jacksonville but a neighbor told him that there was a better surveyor living at Salem in Sangamon County named Abraham Lincoln. So the Doctor sent for him and when he came with his implements to do the surveying the doctor found that Abraham Lincoln, the surveyor, was the same young man that had so kindly offered to lend him his horse so that he might defeat the rascally man named English.

Dr. Chandler was the first physician in Illinois to adopt quinine in his practice as a remedy. The first to introduce the practice of the infliction of bodily pain as a remedy for an overdose of Opium, and the first who opposed bleeding as a remedy. When he went to Sangamon bottom he was called into practice before he could build a stable and for weeks when at home tied his horse to a tree and pulled grass to feed him for he had no scythe to cut it with. He built the first frame house within the present limits of this county. It was ten by twelve feet, one story and shingled with split and shaved oak shingles, which made a good roof for twenty-five years—a fact worthy of notice. He built it for a drug store and office, and up to 1876

it was still in existence. In 1836 he built a large residence. His reason for building so large a house at that time was that it was exactly like the one he had built and left in Rhode Island and as his family had sacrificed so much in leaving their comfortable home for the wilds of the west, he wished to make a home as near like their former one as possible.

CHAPTER III

In 1833 when Andrew Jackson was president of our country and John Reynolds governor of our state Beardstown was a flourishing town and port on the Illinois river. The reason for this was because of its transportation facilities. It was a great grain and provision market. Most towns from the interior of the state got their supply of goods here and from here they shipped their supplies to market.

Chicago and Springfield were just small settlements. But Beardstown really won its public attention chiefly through the busy scenes at its hog-pens and slaughter houses for this was its chief industry. As many as seven firms were located here at one time, Beardstown possessed the most extensive pork trade of any city west of Cincinnati. The average number of hogs slaughtered was from fifty to sixty thousand every spring.

For pork-growing few regions were so favorable as the Illinois prairies. The hogs were allowed to run at large and they multiplied very rapidly and it was often a difficult matter to decide to whom a lot of grunting porkers owed allegiance. There was no hog cholera at that time or other disease until the spring of 1859. Hogs were a good means of converting the corn of the state into good marketable form. In those early days Beardstown was often called Porkopolis.

Thus in the early days Beardstown was the commercial center for miles around. Great wharfs lined the river banks. Huge side-wheelers brought merchandise from New Orleans or St. Louis and on the river bank were seen boxes, barrels, and crates.

These goods were hauled from Beardstown by six or eight spans of long horned sturdy oxen or steers attached to huge four wheeled wagons, high in the front and rear with concave sides, to towns in the state where merchandise and food were needed.

A plank road was built from the sand ridge to the bluffs and sometimes caravans of wagons would stretch in an unbroken line from here to the bluffs.

But the coming of the railroad in 1859 changed the business life of Beardstown somewhat. More of the hogs were taken to Chicago to be slaughtered and the river was not used so much for transportation. So for some years Beardstown was at a great disadvantage and desperate efforts were made by its citizens to secure railroad facilities. Large sums were subscribed by the corporation and large amounts were subscribed by private citizens and finally the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, and The Baltimore and Ohio railroads came through Beardstown.

The first newspaper north of Jacksonville and south of Chicago was the Beardstown Chronicle and Illinois Military Bounty Land Advertiser. Francis Arenz was editor of this newspaper and J. B. Fulks publisher. This was the only news paper published here until 1845.

It is interesting to note some of the prices of staples published in an 1833 edition of this newspaper. Flour, imported, per barrel $4.25, wheat, in 90 days per bushel, $.50. Wheat cash, $.45. Salt, per bushel, $.75. Corn, per bushel $.12 to $.16. Beans, per bushel $.50. Whiskey, per gallon $.48. Pork, per pound $.02½. Butter, per pound $.10. Beef per pound $.02½. Cigars per 1000 one dollar. Cigars per box, the best, $1.00.

The first church in Beardstown was erected in 1841 at the corner of Fifth and Washington Streets and was called "The German Evangelical Church at Beardstown."

Everybody attended this one church no matter to what church they belonged before. It is said that every Sunday it was crowded, people coming from far and near to worship. During the week days it was used as a school.

The second church in Beardstown was erected at the corner of Third and Washington Streets in 1845 as a Presbyterian Church, but in February 1850 it became the First Congregational Church of Beardstown.

The Methodist Church was organized in Beardstown at the early day of 1837 and a church was built on the corner of Fifth and State Street in 1849, but before it was dedicated to divine worship, it was used as a hospital during the cholera epidemic of that year.

The first school house in Beardstown was built in 1834 on the site where the residence of Dr. W. D. Pence now stands. It was built by Mr. Beard and Mr. Arenz and presented by them to the town.

Thomas Beard did a great deal for Beardstown. He presented the Park to the city, a spot that has been made historic by many public meetings where such orators as Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were heard.

But the most noteworthy gift was our City Hall and the ground upon which it was built. This building should be as dear to this city as Faneuil Hall or Old South Church is to Boston or Independence Hall, and the Betsy Ross house is to Philadelphia. Built in 1844, it was Cass County's first courthouse. Here Abraham Lincoln tried many cases, most notable among them was the Armstrong murder case.

In 1836 Mr. Beard purchased 560 acres of land at the bluffs about six miles northeast of town just a little east of the Brick school house on the Chandlerville Road. The property is now owned by Mrs. Ella Seaman. Here Mr. Beard built his summer home of oak and walnut, a very substantial house. Here he planted choice orchards and vineyards, kept open house and enjoyed life.

The first general Illinois Thanksgiving feast was celebrated in the Beard homestead.

"In November 1845 by the recommendation of the governor of the state, the first day of public Thanksgiving was observed—a venerable custom in New England but of recent observance in the West and South. On this occasion, invitations were sent by Mr. Beard to his friends and kindred to come and enjoy his hospitality. He had been wont to celebrate New Years Day with similar festivities. But partly out of respect to executive authority and partly to kindred, who had so recently immigrated he had chosen this day to honor the former and welcome the latter. People came from all about in great numbers, but religious exercises, unlike the old Puritan Thanksgiving were lacking. Probably not a minister in the county had ever conducted exercises on such an occasion. But it was a wonderful feast. Turkey, everything that goes to make Thanksgiving a happy day was to be had in plenty. Eighty people, young and old sat down to eat together. Mr. Beard at the head of the table had Thanks offered and then bid his friends welcome to the feast. Every one was happy, old friendships were renewed, new ones made. Mr. Beard entertained his friends with stories of his early days in Beardstown. He told of his early struggles and his hopes and desires for the future of Beardstown.

Four years later in 1849 Mr. Beard was taken ill with typhus fever and died at the age of 55 years. Friends came from all over the county to attend his funeral. The Honorable Francis Arenz, a life long friend of Mr. Beard's performed the funeral rites. He spoke of the many years of intimacy they had enjoyed as friends how Mr. Beard had always helped the unfortunate; how no new settler had ever applied to him for help and advice in vain; that his character, through an ev-

entful life was always above reproach; that he never took advantage of any one in a business transaction; that he was a man of good judgment, kindly, friendly, a worthy pioneer and founder of our city of Beardstown.

CHAPTER IV

The Illinois river has always meant so much to the life and industry of Beardstown that our history of Beardstown would not be complete without something written about it. It has already been stated that the Illinois river was first navigated by white men in 1640, twenty years after the settlement of Plymouth Colony.

In 1673 Marquette and Joliet with five followers crossed the Wisconsin in canoes to the Mississippi river. They paddled down that stream and up the Illinois to Lake Michigan, the point of their departure, the entire route being at that time and for one hundred years later navigable for canoes and a larger boat called by the French "pirogue." The route was from Green Bay, and the Wisconsin, Mississippi, Illinois, Kankakee and St. Joseph rivers. There was another navigable connection during the whole of that period between the Illinois and Lake Michigan, by means of the Des Plains and Chicago rivers, which some of our very oldest settlers have traveled in pirogues all the way.

Then later we know how La Salle and his followers traveled up and down the Illinois. Every year more people navigated this river, until in 1750 forty vessels from the Illinois river landed at New Orleans loaded with every kind of commodity. From this time on, for many years the principal part of the produce received at New Orleans was shipped by way of the Illinois river.

When St. Louis was founded that gave a new impetus to commerce on the Illinois river because it was a nearer market. In 1725 occurred the first of the great floods on the Illinois river. 1772, 1780, 1786, 1792 were all years of very high water. In 1844 occured the greatest flood on record in this country or any country since the days of Noah, so one of the early historians tells us. But every river west of the Alleghenies and north of the gulf of Mexico rose at one time and the channel of the Mississippi was unable to pass out the vast amount of water which came into it. Four hundred people and a great number of horses, cattle, and other stock lost their lives.

Beardstown was again an island with ten feet of water between it and the bluffs.

In the 1840's and 50's the finest river boats in the world floated on the waters of the Illinois. They were really floating palaces for travel upon the river and canal exclusively, there being no railroad convenient for first class travel.

During the high water of 1852 and 1856 these steamboats went entirely around Beardstown without any difficutly.

It is interesting to note that while the river was often very high at times it was also extremely low. In 1864 fr September 1 to October 13 with only two feet of water in the channel, navigation was suspended.

But the coming of the railroad changed all this activity on the river and fewer and fewer boats plied up and down until now two or three a week is the average number.

CHAPTER V

Great men visited our town in the early days. Most worthy pioneers lived and died here. But one great man America's greatest citizen and president, Abraham Lincoln made many visits to Beardstown.

He always stopped at a tavern on the corner of State and Second Street, where the Salon Pharmacy now stands. Many of our old residents knew and appreciated Mr. Lincoln, when he came here as early as 1844, an itinerant lawyer, gathering evidence for cases to be tried in the courts at Springfield. He was very friendly with the people who managed the tavern and this story is told of him, one time when he came in too late for dinner.

He wanted to find some way to ask for his dinner without embarrassment. Going around to the kitchen door, and partially opening it, he displayed a large white pebble, and asked for an old boiling pot and about a quart of water. The request was granted, but he was asked what he wanted the pot and water for. Again showing his pebble, he said, "I want to make some soup, I am hungry." It is needless to say that he was invited in and served with a good meal.

The bronze tablet on our city hall once the Court House of Cass County was placed there by the Woman's Club of Beardstown in order to commemorate Lincoln's association here and the event which brought him in close touch with our people.

This was May 7, 1858 when Mr. Lincoln cleared Duff Armstrong of the charge of murder which accorded Lincoln great

er fame than he gained in any other case he ever tried.

Here is the story of the trial as was told by "Bud" Armstrong, a resident of Ashland, Illinois, who was a brother of the man defended by Lincoln and a boy of 18 years at the time of the trial.

Armstrong was the son of a man who had employed and defended Lincoln in his youth, and the charge was that he had killed a man who had unquestionably died from injuries received at a camp meeting riot where Armstrong was present. This crime was committed in 1857 at Virgin's Grove, three miles from the South of Salt Creek. These camp meetings always commenced in the light of the moon and lasted about a month, and when this crime was committed, the camp meeting had been running about three weeks, so it was done, if done at all, in the dark of the moon. Near the camp meeting were the huskers wagons or whiskey wagons and the men made it a business to get drunk. The camp was in a hickory grove and on this particular night many of the men got to drinking and fighting. Press Metzger came from Petersburg that night, jumped off his horse and talked and laughed with the boys. He and Duff Armstrong were good friends. Armstrong was lying on a bench sobering up a little when Metzger turned over the bench and spit in his face. They then engaged in a fight, but it was only a tussle such as that class of people would indulge in, in those days. Another fellow by the name of Jim Henry Norris, also had a fight with this same Metzger that same night. When Metzger died a few days later from injuries received at the camp meeting, Armstrong and Norris were arrested for the crime and taken to Havana. The people and the newspapers were simply furious, and if both men had not been securely lodged in jail, they would probably have been lynched. Armstrong's father was dead, his mother old and poor, and there was no money to engage a lawyer. The boy overwhelmed by the circumstances under which he was placed fell into a melancholy condition bordering upon despair, while the widowed mother, looking through her tears saw no hope of earthly aid.

At this juncture, Lincoln hearing of the trouble in some way volunteered for the defense and was gladly accepted. He threw himself heart and soul into the case, and fearing that the poisoned condition of the public mind was such as to prevent the possibility of impanelling a fair jury in the court having jurisdiction, he secured a change of venue and a postponement of the trial. Armstrong was brought to Beardstown and placed in our city jail. James A. Dick was sheriff at that time. The man, Norris, was tried in Havana and sentenced to

eight years at Alton, because he had killed a man sometime before this last trouble, but Lincoln assured Armstrong that he would be freed. They tried to get bail for him, but that being impossible, he lay in jail all winter until the spring term of court. A fellow by the name of Allen from Petersburg, was chief witness for the state, and whether he was the one who really killed this Metzger (or as some really thought he had fallen from his horse in a drunken stupor and died from the injuries received) we do not know. However, Allen was sworn in as chief witness for the state. The case was finally brought for trial. The Armstrong's had taken this Allen to Virginia and had put him away in the old Virginia House so that he could not testify, but Lincoln insisted on his being brought into the court room. Collier, of Petersburg, was state's attorney. He gave his testimony and showed, what appeared to the audience, a strong proof of murder. Lincoln cross-examined very little; only looking up and ascertaining a few dates and places. His own witnesses were to show comparatively good moral character for the prisoner previous to the time of the murder. Collier feeling sure of his case made but a short and formal argument. Then Lincoln followed for the defense. He began calmly, slowly and carefuly. He struck at the very heart of the state's evidence, that of the chief witness, Allen. He followed up first one discrepancy, then another and then another, finally he came to that part of the testimony of the chief witness where he had sworn postively that by the light of the moon he had seen the prisoner deliver the fatal blow with a sling-shot. Then he asked a cousin of Armstrong's, Jake Jones, by name to go out and get him an almanac at the nearest store. Taking this almanac, Lincoln showed that on the night sworn to and the hour sworn to, the moon had not risen, proving that the whole of this testimony was a perjury. The audience was gradually moved and changed from a feeling of hatred to that of sympathy, and so strong had Lincoln made his case that a verdict of "not guilty" could almost be read in the faces of the jury, but this was not enough for Lincoln. Thoroughly kindled now in his intensely slow but fiery wrath he held up to the view of the audience, the court and the jury, this fellow who had attempted to swear away another's life, in such a horrible picture of guilt and shame that the miserable fellow felt thoroughly confused and dumbfounded and fled from the face of the incensed lawyer out of the court room. Then Lincoln appealed to the jury to lay aside any personal prejudice and do simple justice. He explained his own motive for being there, that of gratitude to the prisoner's father for kindness bestowed on him in his youth, and he did this in such a touch-

ing way as to bring tears to the eyes of many. The jury went out and returned within a short time with the verdict of "not guilty." The boy was freed, his life was saved and his character restored, and so ended in triumph a case that few lawyers would have cared to take, but Lincoln was showing his wonderful kindness to the widowed and fatherless.

CHAPTER VI

CASS COUNTY

Cass County was originally a part of Morgan County, but in April of 1837 a vote was taken to divide the county and form a new county to be called Cass, with the county seat at Beardstown until the people should permanently locate the county seat by election.

On the 14th day of August 1837, the county commissioners met and organized Cass County. At the first meeting of the board the new county was divided into six precincts, which were named: Beardstown, Monroe, Virginia, Sugar Grove, Richmond and Bowens.

When this county was organized there was not a house, built exclusively for religious worship, in it and not one in all Morgan County outside of Jacksonville. Physicians were scarce, and fever and ague quite common. Game was plenty. There were wolves and once in a while a panther was seen. The wolves very seldom did violence to any human being; but when the weather was stormy and cold, and the ground frozen, they were so bold and threatening that nobody cared to risk himself out alone at night. It is said that once a man was returning home from town carrying a quarter of beef on his shoulder. A gang of wolves attacked him, took the beef and ate it and it was only because he happened to be near a cabin that he himself was saved from being devoured.

There were a few large grey wolves also, and they were much feared. This is another story told about a grey wolf. One bright cold night, there was a great fuss with the dogs outside a cabin door here in Beardstown. The man opened the door to see what was happening and his favorite little black dog pounced into the cabin, and the largest grey wolf he had ever seen was after him and tried to get in the cabin. The door was open and there was no time to get a rifle. So he grabbed a stick of fire wood and threw it at the wolf. The wolf was driven away, but in a short time a loud noise was heard over at a neighbors and crack went a rifle and then in a

short time all was still. It was found the next morning that the wolf had been killed. He was the largest wolf ever seen around here and measured 9 feet, 9 inches from his nose to the end of his tail.

In 1836-37, old settlers tell us about what we call a sudden change in the weather. It was the most remarkable of any we had ever seen, heard or read of. On a Saturday morning there was snow on the ground. The following Sunday was a very warm day, and Monday, until about four o'clock in the afternoon was still warmer, and on both of these days there was considerable rain. The snow had melted to slush and water, which was standing in ponds on the level ground. At that hour the weather turned suddenly very cold. In four hours after the change began the slush and water was frozen solid; and in two hours from that time the men were hurried crossing the river on ice. A vast amount of cattle, fowls, and game and many persons were frozen to death. One man who was crossing the prairie on horseback, killed his horse, took out the entrails, and crawled inside for protection and was found frozen to death.

Money was very scarce in the early days of Cass County and it was hard for farmers owning good farms to get money to pay their postage. It was not necessary then to prepay postage. Domestic letters cost from 5 to 25 cents a piece, according to the distance they had come; and foreign letters were still higher.

What was worse they must all be paid for in silver and it often happened that a letter would lie in the post-office for weeks before its owner could get the silver to redeem it. If the farmers wished to get goods from the store, they were forced to buy on credit, and pay in grain or other produce, or take butter, eggs, poultry, game, honey, wood or other articles, to exchange for skin goods.

Produce continually changed in price, even in store pay. Corn was known to sell at 6 cents often and farmers thought 10 cents in cash was probably all that corn ought to, or ever would bring and that farmers could get rich at that price. Wheat was sold in Beardstown at 35 cents per bushel and pork often at 1 1-4 cents per pound.

Cass County has many fertile lands and has always prospered. But the people had to develop this wealth. There were just a few farmers at first and the little town of Beardstown was all. But now it has many cultivated lands and beautiful farm houses . Wheat and corn are easily grown. And the sand-ridges scattered along the river bottoms are good to grow melons, sweet potatoes, beans, etc. The towns of the

county are prosperous. We have the Illinois river for navigation and several railroads.

Cass County is bounded on the north by Mason county, on the east by Menard County and on the south by Morgan and on the west by the Illinois river.

The surface of the county is for the most part gently slooping. Some pretty big hills, like the Chandlerville hill and then some broad flat prairie lands.

The soil is very productive.

Different kinds of trees, oak, hickory, elm, sugar maple, black and white walnut. Then in the bottom lands willow, soft maple, sycamore, cotton wood, pecan.

There is some coal found in the hills.

The principal towns of the county are Beardstown, the largest and oldest, Virginia, Chandlerville, Ashland, and Arenzville and Bluff Springs.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY SETTLERS

I.

In 1821 the reputation of the "Sangamo County" for wonderful fertility had reached the states of Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. And the fact too, that the Indians had sold it to the United States government and the settlers could have a clear title to it, caused a great migration into this country.

The people travelled in those days in an enormous covered wagon, called a prairie schooner. It made no pretentions to beauty, but was a most substantial wagon. It was constructed with four huge wheels, upon which rested a great box and this box was really a room, because there was a frame work over it and that was covered with white canvas. This great wagon with four horses or a team of oxen before it, and the driver in his saddle on the near wheel-horse jerking at a single rein looked, at a distance like a ship on the ocean, and so was called a prairie schooner.

This wagon was often the home for a large family for many months, and it held everything that a family would need, bedding, cooking utensils, provisions, ammunition, tubs and buckets. Upon the sides of the wagon hung the crow-bar, axes, spades, chisels and augurs; and underneath hung the kettles, tar-buckets, water buckets, and baskets. An extra big chain was coiled around the coupling pole under the wagon for use in emergencies which frequently happened.

II.

One could never think of a journey in one of these wagons as a pleasure trip, but pleasant things happened on these trips too, though sometimes they met great dangers, hardships and had hair breadth escapes. Generally every member of the family would be in robust health, sickness rarely afflicting these early travellers. There were few woods and bridges in those days, and the prairies had to be crossed on Indian trails, the rivers forded where there were no ferries, and the creeks and brooks where the banks were steep were still more difficult to cross. In such case sometimes a bridge was improvised or a tree was felled across it, the limbs removed, the wagons taken all apart and each separate piece and article of freight carried by hand across over the fallen tree, and set up and loaded in the other side. Sometimes one man would do all this alone. But, for convenience these immigrants travelled in companies and in that way could assist each other and thus make the journey much more pleasant, safe and expeditious. These immigrants generally drove a few head of cattle and horses, also a coop of chickens, so that they would have something to start life with in the new country.

III.

It was very hard for the first settlers to live in this new country. They had to do without all sorts of things we have now, but they managed to get along and have a pretty good time. They did not have friends or people about them as we have now. The brave pioneer who boldly cut away from his old home and friends and turned his face toward the land of the West, after days and weeks, perhaps months of weary travelling over prairies, where there were no roads finally settled upon a spot where his future home was to be. At once he began to build his little cabin, then break up a small piece of ground and plant a little corn. Soon other people come to this same spot and then a little town is formed and it grows into a bigger and bigger place until it is large like Beardstown. But at first some of our grandmothers would not see the face of a white woman for six months, and all the people they saw were Indians.

For food they had game and corn-bread with wild honey and that was their bill-of-fare every day for many years. The women made all the clothing worn both by the men and women. They used an old-fashioned spinning wheel to make their cloth. The men dressed deer skins out of which they made their pants, hunting shirts and moccasins; they made their shoes from leather that they dressed at home, of course this was a pretty

rough shoe, but they needed good durable shoes in those days to travel about in because they had to walk through brush, briers, swamps and grass.

Everything that was not made at home was called a "store" article, as, "store" shoes, "store" hat, and any one who could afford store clothes was wealthy indeed. If any young man or girl could buy some "store" clothes they were just very much dressed up.

In those early days people got along without nails, glass, sawed lumber or brick for the reason that they could not get them.

Their houses were small, just one story high, built of logs. The cracks between the logs were filled with sticks and covered with clay. The doors were made of boards fastened in place with wooden pegs and hung with wooden hinges. A wooden latch raised by a string fastened the door, the string had one end tied to the latch and the other passed through a small hole above it, and when the door was fastened, one end of the latch string was hanging out. "The latch string out" was an invitation to come in, with the early settler.

Every cabin had a wonderful fire-place because beside warming the cabin, the women did all the cooking in these fireplaces. They were big 6—10 feet in width and on cold winter nights they rolled in large logs, warming the entire house-hold. On one side of these old fireplaces always stood a huge kettle, filled with "blue dye" with which the old ladies colored their yarn for weaving. The kettle when not in use was generally covered with an old barrel head or something of the kind and used as a seat. One old man told how he wooed and won his bride seated on a kettle of "blue dye" by the blazing fire of his grandfather's cabin.

On the outside of the cabins one would see a number of raccoon skins and deer skins stretched against the wall to dry and sometimes the skin of a wild cat, wolf or bear. The ends of the logs sticking out, at each corner of the cabin, served as places to hang the various utensils used on the farm, such as hoes, rakes, bridles and harness. The house generally had but one room and two doors but no windows. Usually one door of the house was left open, no matter how cold the weather was to admit light and rarely both doors were closed except when the family was about to retire or rest. So accustomed were people to open doors that they left their doors open long after the introduction of glass into the cabin for windows. It is related that on a very cold day an eastern man who was visiting a friend in his log cabin proposed to close the door to make the house warmer. The owner expressed his surprise at the

request. But did not object to trying it as an experiment. After the door had been shut a few minutes he seemed much pleased with the results and said, "Well I declare I believe it does make a difference." Even beds were more accommodating then than now and would hold many more occupants. There was one usually in two corners in every log cabin and under each of these was a trundel bed which pulled out at night and then there was bedding to spare in most houses and when friends called and stayed all night, which they usually did, a field bed was made that accommodated all. When meal time came a large amount of good wholesome food would be supplied considering the few cooking utensils that were used. Even in well-to-do-families the articles for cooking consisted of a Dutch oven, in which first the bread and then the meat was cooked, a coffee pot, and a kettle to cook vegetables when they had any. But this is all past. The old land marks of the pioneer have long since disappeared. We of today, have forgotten about the hardships and struggles of our pioneer forefathers. Yet, we know that they did conquer this great wilderness with a bravery and fortitude that is somewhat difficult for us of a newer generation to understand. And we know that they made it possible for us to live in this great and glorious land, and we are grateful to them for their spirit of adventure, for their courage and daring to open up new lands.

"Ye pioneers, it is to you
The debt of gratitude is due;
Ye builded wiser than ye knew
The broad foundation,
On which our superstructure stands;
Your strong right arms and willing hands,
Your earnest efforts still command
Our veneration—"