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Sixth Annual Reunion of the Will County  
(Ill.) Pioneer Assoc'n, Sept. 1, 1886.



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SIXTH ANNUAL REUNION OF THE WILL COUNTY



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## Organization of Will County.

1836--1886.

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Will County History

# WILL COUNTY SEMI-CENTENNIAL.

Addresses of Geo. H. Woodruff and Judge G. D. A. Parks, delivered before the Will County Pioneer Association, Wednesday, Sept. 1st, 1886, with poem by Capt. Egbert Phelps and A. F. Kercheval.

## NECROLOGY, GREETINGS AND REGRETS.

At the sixth annual reunion of the Will County Pioneer Association held Wednesday, Sept. 1st, the venerable and respected president, Geo. H. Woodruff, delivered the opening address, which was so absorbingly interesting, so replete with facts and statistics in connection with the early history of our county that we give it in full. Its effect upon the assembled representatives of four generations, and especially upon the older ones whose memory runs back to the events detailed, was like a Pentacostal pouring out upon them of the spirit of youth.

### PRESIDENT WOODRUFF'S ADDRESS.

*Fellow Pioneers—Ladies and Gentlemen:*

That must have been a sober day in the history of our 100th regiment when, after its baptismal fight of three days at Stone river, it was mustered on the fourth day of January, 1863, for roll call, and Lieutenants Worthingham and Mitchell, and Privates Theill, Hopkins, Rham, Hess, Greenman, Atkins and Wagner, killed on the field, and many others wounded and in hospital, failed to answer to their names.

Not altogether unlike the sad feelings of those survivors, as they closed up their depleted ranks, have been ours to-day, as we have listened to the names of those pioneers who have died since our last meeting, and as, during our hour of social interchange, we have learned of this one, and that one, who have been prevented from meeting with us by the infirmities of age.

I trust a feeling of gratitude to Almighty God, for the life and strength still vouchsafed us, has not been wanting in our hearts.

On several of our previous gatherings we have found ourselves keeping a semi-centennial. In 1881 we commemorated the first settlement of this region, which practically began in 1830-31, altho' Father Walker's mission dates a few years earlier.

In 1882 we kept the fiftieth anniversary of the Black Hawk war, and we met on the 2nd day of August, the date of the late hostile encounter with the Indian, on this side of the Mississippi.

In 1883 we took note of the first stroke of enterprise in the Desplaines' valley, the commencement of the old McKee mill and dam

by the pioneer Charles Reed, and in 1884 we observed the semi-centennial of the city of Joliet.

This year we are called upon to observe one more of these memorable periods in our history, that of the organization of Will county which occurred just fifty years ago. Some brief historical notes of this event are therefore in order.

I am well aware that the story has been told several times before, and that the tediousness of a "thrice-told tale" has passed into a proverb. But I am obliged to bore you yet once again, and I assure you that you cannot feel the tedium of this repetition any more than I do. I suggest that there is one way you can avoid similar inflictions in the future. This can be done by retiring your president on half-pay, which I most seriously ask you to do to-day.

The emigration into this region after the Black Hawk war was so rapid that the people began to agitate the matter of a separation from Cook county early in 1835. It was felt to be too great an inconvenience to be obliged to go to Chicago—then an all-day's journey—whenever we wished to indulge in the luxury of a big law suit, or of getting married or divorced.

Accordingly, in the winter of 1835-6 Dr. A. W. Bowen of Joliet, and James Walker of Plainfield, went to Vandalia, then the capital of the state for the purpose of lobbying the project through the general assembly. They were successful, and on the 12 day of January 1836, an act was passed, by which the territory now included in Will county, and also all that part of Kankakee county lying north of the Kankakee river, was erected into a new county, to be known as the County of Will. This name was given to it, not because we were especially a wilful people, but because a senator of that name had just died, whose memory they could in this cheap way make immortal.

By this act Joliet was made the county seat and the public buildings were required to be put upon that part of the public square adjoining section 15. This is the part now occupied by the jail and by the debris of the old court yard fence and empty tin cans, broken jugs etc, etc.

The county was made part of the 6th judicial circuit, and it was also enacted that all justices and constables, also the County Surveyor, who were residents in the territory, should hold their respective offices for Will

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county. By this Addison Collins became our first surveyor, and also a justice of the peace, and Jas. McKee, C. C. Van Horn and O. W. Stillman our first justices. They were also made the canvassing board to whom the poll books of the first election were to be delivered. This election for the additional county officers was ordered to be held on the first Monday in March, at the various precincts established in the territory by Cook county. Voting at this time was in this state *viva voce* or by word of mouth, affording no chance for tissue ballots.

Whereupon the people of the new county began to move. Parties at this time had not been organized, or rather but one party was known—the Democratic. It was therefore both safe and proper to call a mass meeting without regard to party to nominate, as they always do, the best men for county officers.

Such a meeting was at once called for this purpose. I do not know who signed the call, but I suppose "many citizens." It met in the third story of the south store of the new and splendid stone block erected the previous season by M. H. Demmond on the southwest corner of Exchange and Bluff streets. This is now known as the D'Arcy block, and in describing it now we do not use the same adjectives. But then there was no other to dispute the distinction, and it furnished the largest room for the meeting to be found in the place. The West side was then of some importance, as we expect it will be again when the Exchange street canon is completed.

I am sorry that I cannot give you any of the particulars of this meeting. I do not know who was chairman or secretary. We had no paper then to record the proceedings. I did not attend it. For, having at the urgent solicitation of those same "many citizens," who had the welfare of the new county deeply at heart, allowed my name to go before the convention for the office of recorder, I thought my wisest course was to keep out of sight. I still think that for me, at that time, this was the best strategy, and perhaps it might be safely imitated by some others now, altho' in this degenerate age "check" seems to be most relied upon, and most successful. But in this case modesty carried the day, and I was nominated by a large majority over all competitors.

(N. B.—This was written a week ago).

The following is the full ticket nominated at this meeting:

For County Commissioners—James Walker, of Plainfield; Holder Sisson, of Lockport, and Thomas Durham, of Bourbonnais.

For Recorder—George H. Woodruff, of Joliet.

For Sheriff—Robert Stevens, of Joliet.

For Coroner—Ephraim Daggett, of Joliet.

This ticket met with some opposition at the polls, but was elected, as will appear from the report of the board of canvassers which we give in full:

"At an election held on the 7th day of March, 1836, at the several precincts within the territory particularly mentioned and described in the act of the general assembly of Illinois, entitled, 'an act to establish the county of Will,' approved Jan. 12, 1836, and in pursuance of the 5th section of said act, the following persons received the number of

votes attached to their respective names, for the following described offices, as appears to us by the returns made to us by the several boards of canvassers, to wit:

George H. Woodruff, 144 votes for recorder.

Robert G. Cook, 70 votes for recorder.

Albert W. Bowen, 97 votes for recorder.

Robert Stevens, 225 votes for sheriff.

Charles Clement, 98 votes for sheriff.

Robert G. Cook, 44 votes for coroner.

Ephraim M. Daggett, 116 votes for coroner.

George H. Woodruff, 11 votes for coroner.

James C. Butler, 24 votes for coroner.

Moses N. Clarke, 10 votes for coroner.

Eri Dodge, 3 votes for coroner.

John Lyons, 5 votes for coroner."

(Here we have a farmer, a saloonkeeper, a doctor, a boy, a butcher, a millwright, a constable, and a carpenter "running a scramble" for this high office. Need I say that the saloon-keeper come out ahead! I suppose the people thought it would work in best with his business, although one of his competitors was a doctor and another a butcher!)

(To resume.)

James Walker, 169 votes for county commissioner.

Thomas Durham, 290 votes for county commissioner.

Jireh Rowley, 103 votes for county commissioner.

Harry Boardman, 123 votes for county commissioner.

Holder Sisson, 167 votes for county commissioner.

Given under our hand and seal this 9th day of March, 1835.

Addison Collins, J. P., seal; James McKee, J. P., seal; Cornelius C. Van Horn, J. P., seal; O. W. Stillman, J. P., seal."

Of the names that occur thus far in our record, O. W. Stillman and myself are the only survivors.

The highest number of votes was cast for sheriff, total 323. How many stay-at-homes there were I do not know.

At an election held in August for member of congress, 290 votes were polled for May, Dem., and 113 for Stewart, Whig; total 403; and at the presidential election in November, the vote stood 306 Dem. and 186 Whig; total, 592. I have to confess that my vote was counted with the majority, but the statute of limitations saves me.

The vote of Will county at the last presidential election was Republican, 5,792; Democrat, 4,722; Greenback, 364; Prohibition, 111; total, 10,989, almost twenty times that of 1836.

At the August election James Walker was elected to the general assembly, and Richard L. Wilson was elected county commissioner in his place.

At the March election those who resided upon the west side of the river were in the precinct of Plainfield, and had to go to that ancient burg to vote, while those residing upon the east side were in the Hickory creek precinct and voted at the log house of Philip Scott, on the farm now owned by John Shutts, Esq.

It is worthy of special notice that all of this first set of county officers were native Americans. We were then unfortunately compelled to rely upon such exclusively, as



neither our Gallic or our Teutonic friends had arrived to relieve us of the irksome duty of holding office. Save James McKee, a native Kentuckian, and C. C. Van Horne, a Mohawk Dutchman, there was not a "Mc" or a "Van" in the lot. Time has brought us a happy change in this respect, and both Irishmen, Scotchmen and Germans are now here in sufficient numbers, and are so patriotic withal, as generally to relieve us of this onerous duty.

The first county court was held on the 14th day of March, at the old "Joliet Hotel," which stood on the northeast corner of Ottawa and Van Buren streets, then kept by Thomas H. Blackburn. Holder Sisson, James Walker and Thomas Durham composed the court, not so imposing in numbers as the present board of supervisors, but three dignified, true and honest men.

Their first act was to appoint Levi Jenks clerk, in whose behalf a strong petition was presented by his many friends. He had come to our embryo city from Ohio during the summer of 1835, and was known as a ready scribe. Mr. Jenks is still living, and is beside myself the only survivor of the original set of county officers. They also appointed him school commissioner under bonds of \$12,000. Wm. Rogers, Aaron Moore, Wm. A. Chatfield, Archibald Crowl and Charles Clement, all good men and true, were his sureties—all of whom are now dead.

They also appointed Archibald Crowl treasurer and assessor, but at a subsequent meeting in May he was, at his own request, released from the great responsibility, and Charles Clement was appointed in his place.

The court divided the county into ten precincts, designated a place for holding polls, and appointed three judges for each. All the persons so selected, with but two exceptions, are dead. They also appointed viewers for various county roads, one of which was to Plainfield, then separated from us by a formidable and sometimes impassable slough—now happily united to us by bonds of steel. After transacting some other business, they voted themselves four dollars for three days' work and adjourned.

At a special meeting in May grand and petit jurors were selected. Of the two lists there is but one—George Tryon, of Channahon—that has not joined the silent majority.

One of the most important acts of this May session was the fixing of tavern rates, then considered a wholesome restraint. They were as follows:

For brandy, gin, rum and wines, 6¼ cents per glass.

For shrub, whisky, cider, beer, and all fermented liquors, 6¼ cents.

How these prices compare with saloon-keepers' prices now I am not able to say, and it is not for a moment to be supposed that any old settler here present could enlighten us.

They fixed the price of breakfast, dinner and supper at the uniform rate of 25 cents, ignoring the distinction said to have been sometimes made by early tavern keepers, when they charged 25 cents for "corn bread and common doings," and 50 cents for "wheat bread and chicken fixings."

The price of lodging was fixed at 12½ cents, without regard to the kind or number of bed-fellows.

Several licenses to keep tavern under these wholesome restrictions were granted at prices from \$7 to \$15, according to location, the higher sum being for Joliet.

Oh, happy days! Oh, palmy, golden days! when one could get license to "rob, murder and destroy" (as the prohibitionists would say) "for \$15."

The court also rented the second story of the Wilson store for a court room and clerk's office. This is the building now occupied by Swanson's carriage shop.

At the meeting of the commissioners' court held in March, 1837, it was resolved to build a court house and jail, combined. Richard L. Wilson, a member of the board, and Allen Pratt and Albert Shepard, were appointed a building committee, and authorized to contract for the erection of a stone building two stories high, and 35x40 feet on the ground. The contract was let to Blackburn & Wilson for \$2,000. Our present one we believe, has cost us about \$180,000. How many extras the contractors of the first one got in I do not know. Suffice it to say that a stone building was erected of these modest dimensions. A pretty good idea may be got of its appearance from the illustration published in the Historical Edition of the *News*, which Mr. Paige has had transferred to the walls of one of our new court rooms. It certainly had not as imposing a facade as the one just completed, and there was no ceremony of laying its corner stone. The building committee were not bothered by any questions of a tower, granite columns, plate glass, frescoing, steam heating or bronze butts, as you will readily conjecture from a look at the illustration. But it had four cells excavated to the rock which held all the criminals and tramps of that day, except when we had a canal riot. Over these was a court room whose walls and ceilings only displayed the rough work of a common plasterer, but they echoed the voices of the lawyers that composed the Will county bar in the first few years of our history—the voices of Newkirk, Wilson, Osgood, Boardman, Fellows, Pepper, Little, Norton, Henderson, Gardner, Gregg and Paddock—all save the first named now silent in the grave, but then a brilliant array of legal and forensic talent which has seldom been surpassed.

Many interesting memories are attached to this old court room, some of which I have elsewhere recorded. But there is one which I have never made historic, and must do so now. It was in that old court room that in the campaign of 1848 a young editor of Lockport made his maiden political speech, which I am happy to say was for "free soil"—the half-way house between Democracy and abolition. And it was then that the people of Will county discovered that they had an orator among them—one of whom they have ever since been proud.

The old first court house, and indeed the second one, by which it was superceded in 1850, make but a sorry appearance beside our new one. Fifty years hence our children and grand-children will no doubt keep the centennial of Will county. While no one can predict the changes and improvements of the next half century, I believe that the present generation has done its work so wisely and so well that yonder beautiful building will then

be standing intact and still answering the needs of Will county. I hope the city papers will put this prediction on record. It may give the speaker of 1936 an opportunity to smile at our expense. For so great a progress in the coming fifty years as we have seen in the past would give Will county a court house equal at least to our State capitol. But should such a one be built I do not think it will be upon the ruins of the present new one, but on some one of our highest bluffs, with so high a tower that from it one will then look down upon a city of 300,000 or 400,000—its gorgeous stores and dwellings and extensive manufactories not only filling up this valley from Lockport to Joliet Lake, but also crowning all the enclosing bluffs, and extending far out upon the outlying prairies; while through this same rocky bottom shall then flow an enlarged canal, fed directly from Lake Michigan, and bearing upon its pellucid waters the commerce both of the lakes of the North and the great rivers of the South and West. Our new and beautiful court house of to-day will then be occupied by the city magnates of the council and school boards—not the present incumbents probably—and by a grand city library, containing something besides novels.

In estimating the progress in city and county during the half century we close to-day we must use twenty, and in some things eighty, for our multiplier. Using twenty for the next fifty years, and our children and grandchildren will see the fulfillment of our dream.

But, fellow thirty-sixers, we shall not see it, at least not in the flesh. What we may see and know as disembodied spirits it is not worth our while to speculate upon, for we shall soon know.

Of the county officers elected in the spring of 1836 Robert Stevens declined to serve as sheriff, and at the August election Fenner Aldrich was elected. The first circuit court was held in the Wilson building in October by Judge Ford, afterwards governor. He appointed Levi Jenks clerk of the court, thus heaping honors and offices upon him; and Uri Osgood State's attorney, and so the new county was fairly launched upon its glorious career.

Among the records of the county clerk's office there is a curious little book about six inches square, in which are recorded the ear marks of the early settlers. These marks consists of slits, crops and holes of various shapes made in the right or left ear. The mark selected by a settler was recorded with a pen and ink illustration of the same, and when so selected and recorded became the exclusive franchise of such settler.

The first entry in this book is as follows:

Name, Robert Zarley; date, April 2d, 1836; mark, crop of left ear and slit in the right.

I ought to have said that these marks were intended for the ears of the settler's swine, sheep, cows, calves and mules; and that they were for the purpose of identification merely. For in those happy, palmy, golden days no one thought of questioning the right of any man's swine or cows, whether their ears were frescoed or not, to occupy the public streets, or to enter any yard or garden, at their own sweet will. Such tyranny was reserved for "this degenerate age."

There is another curious little book of the same same size, in which are recorded the marriage licenses issued. An examination shows that thirty-five were issued in 1836, and that our old friend, O. W. Stillman, tied the first knot under Will county auspices, April 5, 1836. During the seven months which have elapsed of 1886, the number issued has been 306, and Mr. Zarley says that owing to the hard times it has not been a good year for the little God either. The last number was 11,490, which shows that our increase in population has been largely a legitimate home product.

There were other events which made the year 1836 memorable. Many valuable citizens were added to town and county. Not to mention others, J. A. Matteson, afterwards governor, and George Woodruff, late our banker, and Brother Hardy, came that year. It was also the year in which ground was first broke on our canal.

But I have already occupied more than my share of time, and must leave something, both of time and topic, for Judge Parks. I am afraid I have already stolen some of his thunder.

In conclusion, permit me to say that I must sincerely thank you for the honor bestowed upon me for the first six years of our organization, and I most earnestly renew my request to be relieved from the honor in future.

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#### JUDGE PARK'S ORATION:

The orator of the day, Judge G. D. A. Parks, delivered a highly interesting speech that commanded the most profound attention of the assemblage. The address is lavishly complimented on every hand and is as follows:

In following the president of your society, I feel a good deal like the famous Thackeray before commencing one of his lectures upon the Four Georges. Reconnoitering his audience and spying that encyclopedia in breeches, Macaulay, on one of the front seats, the dismayed lecturer whispered to a friend: "A guinea to any man who will manage to get that fellow out of the room. Egad in his presence I feel like a poor devil with a six pence in his pocket in the counting house of the Barings."

That, my friends, is about my size as I find myself rising on this platform after the distinguished gentleman who has now for so many years been looked up to as the Colossus of Joliet and Will county history. As to all the facts of that history, big or little, having the least interest for anybody, I would readily own up that he has forgotten more than I ever knew, were it not for the other fact that he has forgotten nothing, and that whatever he touches he somehow makes interesting. It's a mere knack, of course, but it is his knack.

The task assigned me, as you have learned from the executive proclamation announcing the order of exercises, is to speak the *piece de resistance*, a French culinary term which means, I am informed, a tough piece to chew on. That piece you shall duly have, and it will be, I fear, all that the phrase implies.



There are, however, some other disagreeable things which I can and will spare you. You will, I know, be rejoiced to hear from me in the outset that I intend to steer around all perilous comparisons and in fact to give that man Woodruff a wide berth in my excursions. I shall not, you may rest assured, be caught here gleaming after such a reaper and binder in the historical field who has gobbled up every Will county story, tale, anecdote, narrative, legend *on dit*, *geu d' esprit*, tradition, joke or item worth repeating which has appeared in these parts since the Sac war. Nor do I intend to make myself an object of commiseration delicately flavored with contempt by feebly essaying to *touch up*, to use a painters' phrase, the fine panorama of old times he has unrolled before you. In short, the historical, pictorial and statistical part of these exercises you may consider as done, and the little that remains to me is a short summing up, somewhat in the nature of a doxology.

The county of Will, offspring of Cook and mother-in-law of Kankakee, came into existence by the *fiat* of the legislature and was fully organized in 1836. This year, therefore, disregarding the *minutiae* of days and months, is the semi-centennial of its birth, a chronological fact, which could scarcely fail to be recognized with interest by those who have spent their lives wholly or for the most part within its limits.

The commemoration of important public events upon the anniversaries of their occurrence has become a most popular custom, especially in our new world where old Father Time, as yet, has furnished us but a scanty supply of centuries or semi-centuries for purposes of celebration. Hence it was not to be supposed that your society, devoted as it is to keeping alive the memories of the past concerning your own county, could forget so remarkable an accessory to the programme of this reunion.

The interest of the affair, doubtless, is circumscribed—of small concern to those whose lot was cast outside of these Elysian fields. But we are the foster children of old Will, and to-day we flock lovingly to her side with birthday offerings.

The Genius of Home by some mystic spell upon the heart endears every spot where a hearth-stone has been planted, a roof tree raised, an altar set up, a school house built, a grave opened where kindred hands have laid the form of some one loved and lost.

The fields, the prairies, the groves, the springs, the streams, the highways, the lanes, the streets, the churches, the play grounds, the homesteads, the hillsides dotted with those other homes appointed to ail the living, these objects, composing the scene and background of our daily lives and interwoven in the web of memory with all the vicissitudes of our earthly existence, become like the lineaments of a dear old mother's face, and our hearts cling to her soil as to a mother's bosom. I owe and pay homage to the Union and to my state; but the only patch of earth which, by any figure of speech, I can be said to love, lies within the compass of that county where my whole active life has been spent and where, God willing, my bones are to be laid.

It is natural for us, then, as the children of Will county, to regard in some becoming

manner, this incident in her history. To the customary festivities of our annual reunion we are now permitted to add our mutual congratulations that we behold under circumstances so auspicious the fiftieth anniversary of the year when she assumed her place, a proud one from the first, upon the imperial map of Illinois. And to-day, like a band of travelers gathered together at nightfall upon some commanding eminence, we pause here and turning our eyes back amidst the deepening shadows, endeavor to catch glimpses here and there of our long and winding way. In this commemoration I think you do no more than your duty as citizens. So distinguished a mile stone on your road could not decently be passed without some sign of notice. A nation or a community indifferent to their history, without national, state or county pride, without sensibility or public spirit, knowing no good save what is good to eat, with hearts strung like a banjo, incapable of being stirred with bright visions of their country's future or tender recollections of its past, immersed in what Carlyle calls the pig's swash of selfish gain and swinish enjoyment, such a race if such a race were supposable, would make up a commonwealth, be it large or small, about as sympathetic as the clusters of an oyster bed and not half as much to my taste. I could conceive of such a congregation of bipeds—it would really be of no consequence whether they had two feet or four—only under the idea of a desert waste like that described by Junius in one of his scathing letters, "where no flower takes root and no verdure quickens."

Your speaker has often, perhaps too often said, for it is a thought which such occasions always suggest to his mind, that the true superiority of a nation is in its heart; not in its granaries, warehouses, treasuries; not in its flocks and herds, not in its fleets and armies, not even in its institutions of government, however excellent, but in the universality and intensity and supremacy of that love of fatherland and home, which is the germ of all social and domestic charities, all civil association, and all true, national spirit. Without this inspiration no hero would draw his sword, no monuments would rise to sainted names; Art would drop the brush and chisel from her palsied hands, and Music, Poetry, Eloquence that now move and delight the world would be stricken dumb.

Such occasions of patriotic communion come like showers to our souls parched with business cares, and therefore I can but congratulate you on this feature of your present meeting. You, old pioneers, who have fought through the long campaign, you surely can well felicitate yourselves on the reflections which are yours to-day. If life lengthened out to cover the most eventful epochs of all time, be worth living; if we may call it a happy fortune to have been actors in a drama of moral, intellectual and physical progress, such as no other age has witnessed; if the soil of Will county has been for us the appointed stage on which we have played our respective parts; if it be fitting for rational beings to recall and ponder upon events closely connected with their own individual fortunes and with the fortunes of the state or community to which they belong as

members, then O! ye men and women of 1836, lift your voices in thanksgiving, clasp your hands together in mutual greetings, that you behold this day.

The shades of night indeed are falling, and oblivion with its fast pursuing tide has submerged all but faint and broken traces of your long, long road. It is like evening straining its dim eyes to recall the impressions of the morning. Yet now for this short hour, without vain regrets, without idle murmurs, even if not entirely without the tears which are due to human fellowship, let us give ourselves up to cheerful and exultant retrospect of the past.

You whom I address by the general appellation of old settlers were not all here when Will county first saw the light as a body politic, but I rejoice to recognize a goodly number who were here, and among that number especially one long, tough connecting link that can easily clasp both sides of half a century, with some years to spare at the other end. Your worthy president, not only was here full grown and ripe when the county was born, but he was one of the nurses, a *dry* one, who officially rocked its cradle, helped teach the urchin its first *posse comitatus*, and true to his propensities even at that early day, scribbled *records of its deeds*. Go read them in the court house—if you can. As to the *pap* pertaining to his kindly and tender office—well, as to the *pap* I am afraid he took the most of that himself as fees. No matter—let bygones be bygones. I for one forgive him the fortune he accumulated in the first term of the recorder's office, and to-day have only to be glad with you that a life so genial and so useful in rare forms of public service has been spared so long.

There are others here also, contemporaries with the event, bearing honored and in some instances I may say, distinguished names in the annals of our county, but which it is not within the scope of my short discourse to mention.

My friend Woodruff, of course, forms an exception, because, you know, he is *the* typical old settler, and on such an occasion your speaker could no more refrain from naming him than a Bunker Hill orator could refrain from pointing up to the monument.

But ignoring now all nice distinctions of rank and seniority as old settlers, we are assembled in our common character as fellow citizens of Will county to greet with some proper forms of recognition the semi-centennial that meets us here to-day; an anniversary of venerable aspect, its locks blanching with many winters, its visage seamed with many cares and conflicts; but its outstretched hands full of good gifts and thank-worthy blessings.

Ten years since our nation by one universal impulse knelt with reverence and awe, as the clock of centuries struck a hundred years from the date of American independence. Four years ago you of this society again noted as an event not without interest even to the pioneers of Will county, that almost forgotten battle at Bad Ax, which with its little volley of a score or so of rifles terminated the reign of the red man in the whole Northwest. And to-day again you honor your character as an intelligent community while marching past this conspicuous

and noted waymark, to halt for one short hour of recognition and remembrance. And now, fellow citizens, if I give way to my propensities, I should from this on, do little else than brag. But in the crowd there may be strangers from abroad, men possibly from Grundy or Kendall, and these guests must be treated with tender consideration. The duties of hospitality must be respected, and I will simply ask these ill-starred foreigners, if they have not often felt a little sad as they reflected upon their lamentable mistake in not settling somewhere in some blessed township in some range from 9 to 15 E. of the 3 P. M., and 32 to 37 N. of the base line.

It is impossible to stand where I stand to-day, in the midst of such a scene of prosperity and health and happiness, with such a past for proud remembrance, and such a future for intoxicating hope, without giving vent to the superlatives of exultation which it inspires. Half a century, not merely of great progress and improvement—such words seem tame—but half a century, let us rather say, of miracles and marvels! Where will you find in all history another like period of fifty years? What generation hereafter can surpass our experience? Long ago I lost all courage in setting bounds to the empire of human intellect, but still I find it hard to believe that in any future cycle of like duration a like advance is possible. It would indeed almost seem as if preceding ages had moved forward as a mere preface to our own; and had been chiefly charged to accumulate the germs and prepare the conditions for this wonderful development.

In this march of progress, it is enough to say, that Will county has never been caught lagging behind the most forward of her sisters, but has always pushed bravely to the front. And here would be the place to produce the positive evidence of this proud boast, if my limits allowed. Nothing from me, I am aware, could be so entertaining as an ample statistical exhibit, presenting with precision and impressive force the contrasts between the young Will of 1836 and the old Will of 1886 in all the *phenomena* of growth which can be expressed by figures. But your president's address has at once saved me that labor and cut me out of that honor. And, indeed, why the necessity at all? The tomb of Sir Christopher Wren in the crypt of St. Paul's cathedral, of which he was the architect, arrests the visitor with the inscription, "*If you are seeking for the monument, look around you.*" So I might say of the evidence of our progress, the volume lies open before you. Who does not remember Webster's still more sublime expression in referring to the state, whose fame at a critical moment seemed to hang upon his lips: "I shall enter upon no encomium upon Massachusetts. She needs none. There she is; behold her and judge for yourselves."

For our own Will county, I would to-day almost dare to imitate that compendious and majestic eulogy. I need not, as I cannot measure her diversified products or count her population, add up the long columns of her wealth or prepare an inventory of her resources. On this occasion, I point, not to her numbers or riches; not to her net-work of railroads, by which every township nearly is throbbing with the arteries of commerce;



not to her multitude of markets, convenient to every pasture and cornfield; not to her wide expanse of rich and well-tilled farms; not to her advanced agriculture, furnished with all the mechanical appliances, which can strengthen the sower's and reaper's hand, and with all the methods of fertilization and drainage which can redeem or ameliorate the soil; not to her mines and manufactures; not to her towns and cities; not to her light burthen of taxation, and its necessary concomitant, an honest and economical public service; not to these things would I point, but rather to her grander aspects as a cultivated and Christian community. I would point to her tens of thousands of elegant and tasteful homes in towns and country, the seats of domestic virtue and refinement, the citadels of industry and order. I would point to her schools and sanctuaries, of which no traveler within her limits anywhere can lose sight. I would to-day point with special pride to that Temple of Justice just completed, that speaks, with all the emphasis with which stone and iron, made eloquent by architecture, can attest, to her profound loyalty to the institutions of government, and to the rank which her inhabitants for fifty years have held and still hold as a God-fearing, order-loving and law-abiding people.

The occasion bids me dwell yet a moment longer on this allusion to our new court house, which stands a visible and splendid monument, not only of the wealth, enterprise and spirit of our inhabitants, but of the wisdom, prudence and integrity of our public servants. Here, again, I am denied the privilege of going into details and awarding to individuals variously connected with the work, the honors they respectively deserve—architect, contractors, superintendent, building committee, and last though not least those members of our county board who were most prominent in originating or sustaining the project. I am now to speak of it only in its significance as a sensible and conspicuous symbol of progress—a mute but potent witness to our character as a political community. Of this indeed it is a most potent and a most opportune witness. The boundless license which our too lenient government gives to whatever chooses to call itself by the name of political theory, and our overweening confidence in institutions which we are wont to regard as immutable as they are good, have at length allowed the elements of a volcano to gather under our very feet. Even within our own borders some of our important industries were not long ago involved in the widespread revolt of labor against capital. And the end is not yet. Jurists and statesmen are daily receiving portentous admonitions in a thousand forms, that a revolution, either bloodless or bloody, as the power of government shall be wisely or unwisely wielded is preparing to readjust upon some new basis the relations between the several classes into which society has hitherto been divided.

At such a time, we ought to feel, and if not "to dull forgetfulness a prey," must feel with a peculiar intensity, that our chief safeguard against crime and violence, nay, that our best hope for every proper reform, however radical, is to be found within the pale of the law and the ultimate power of the ballot-

The sword of the magistrate is not, it is true, our only security. In my conception of the social edifice I see three great pillars of support—RELIGION, EDUCATION, LAW. No one of these, upon any hypothesis which I find yet justified by history, can be spared from the structure.

But in the view of the practical statesman, the great central column of the whole is the LAW. The prime concern of every commonwealth, which is to live by industry rather than rapine, and would not overturn in utter chaos the rights of property and person, is the firm pure, uniform, inflexible administration of civil and criminal justice in its courts. To that justice Will county has now in its fiftieth year, in the plenitude of its resources, completed another temple, not destined indeed, to be more honorable by the associations of an able bar and an upright judiciary and of public respect and confidence, than that which is now supplanted and over shadows; but which, in these times of evil omen, when Anarchy twin sister of Atheism is abroad, testifies in trumpet tones, that Will county is now as she has ever been, a land of LAW; and that she is resolved to maintain that high character as long as these solid foundations shall endure. So may it be! And if so goodly a gathering of the gray-haired patriarchs of our county may without impropriety perform today some rude rite of dedication, we here consecrate that temple to justice, inflexible as its walls, firm as its corner stone. Let it ever be a sanctuary now and in all coming time for that law, of which it was once so eloquently said: "Her seat is the bosom of God, her voice is the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power."

But I must not close without giving you briefly some proof that I am insensible to none of the objects of this meeting. I do not forget that this is a festival for reviving old friendships, a cherished season for social enjoyments, valued the more because we feel that they cannot often be repeated. Yet a few years, and the pioneers of Will county will have passed away to the last man. Such we know is the lot of mortality. These meetings like all meetings in the evening of life cannot be without some suggestion of the inevitable end. The harvest, year by year, grows more and more thin, but yet more and more ripe for the great Reaper. I cannot count up the places in the line made vacant since the last roll call. The necrological record has been reserved for another hand. Within the compass of a few recent months Peter Adams, William J. Heath and Calneh Zarley, amongst our earliest inhabitants here in Joliet, have joined the majority. Of these and others you will not, of course, expect me to speak at length. The name of Zarley, however, as one of the very oldest of our inhabitants, one of the best known editors in our state, and a marked and somewhat extraordinary character, both in his noble and less noble traits, can hardly be dismissed on such an occasion as this without the tribute of a word. A skillful and friendly hand has lately drawn his portrait, and little could I add to that. We shall miss his familiar face and form, seen daily by most of us for so many years, as we should miss an old famil-

jar tree from the prospect of our dwelling places. Though its boughs were gnarled and knotted and its symmetry sadly marred by the storms with which it had stubbornly battled, still we should miss it as an object inlaid with our life-long memories, and the void would be one which could never be filled. Even our old friend's infirmities and errors, as some would call them, grew out of his devotion to his party, as self-sacrificing as any which ever led a martyr to the stake or a patriot to the scaffold. Peace to his ashes!

Personal allusions crowd upon me, but I have outstayed my welcome and must close. In retiring I will not suffer myself to think or say that we shall all never meet again. Death is a hard creditor, I know, and he is very apt to collect the debt of nature punctually as it falls due, without discount, renewal, extension or days of grace. I notice also that he accepts no dilatory pleas. But still I say, let not the cypress of the grave project its shadows too far over the precincts of life. Let us take the jolly old epicure's advice, with some pious qualifications—and just "live while we live." A certain allowance of fun for us old fellows—I would join the ladies in the proposition, if I dared call them *old*, is not only a legal right, but a religious duty, and every interest in this world or the next, I am sure, is promoted by a cheerful temper. We elderly gentlemen—*elderly* is the word—have yet some useful duties to perform, even on the downhill of life, and we can best perform those duties by cultivating this happy disposition.

Thus living, patient and hopeful under all the ills, and grateful for all the blessings and alleviations of our lot, when the end comes we may realize the poet's Euthanasia—"Thou go, not like a quarry slave at night Scourged to his dungeon; but sustained and soothed

By an unfaltering trust approach thy grave, Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Dr. B. F. Allen, the necrologer, read the list.

#### OLD SETTLERS WHO DIED SINCE LAST MEETING.

Mrs Mary Ashley, wife of Cyrus Ashley—Born in 1836; died at her home in Joliet of consumption, October 7, 1885.

Mrs. Louise W. Dibell, widow of Elder J. B. Dibell, and mother of Judge Dibell—Born in Ellington, Conn., in 1819; died at Joliet, October 17, 1885.

James Goodspeed, member of the bar—Born in Tioga county, Pa., in 1836; died at his home in Joliet, October 17, 1885.

Wm. Nettler—Born in 1810; died at Wyanette, Bureau county, Ill., October 8, 1885.

Jeptha Elderkin—Born in 1803; died Nov. 4, 1885, in Joliet.

Mrs. Rebecca Demmond, widow of Charles Demmond—Born in Rutland, Mass., in 1804; came to Illinois in 1839; died at the home of her son, M. G. Demmond, in Joliet, Dec. 4, 1885.

Mr. Corbett—Born in 1810; found dead in his bed Dec. 5, 1885, four miles from Wilmington.

Robert Strong—Born in Greensboro, Vt.,

in 1806; settled in DuPage township in 1831; died at his home Dec. 30, 1885.

Jacob S. Palmer—Born in 1810; died in Joliet, Jan. 14, 1886.

Mrs. Caroline E. Sunderland, sister of S. W. Randall, of this city—Born in 1813; died at Plainfield, March 6, 1886.

Sexton R. Rathburn, father of Valentine Rathburn—Born in Marcellus, Onondago county, N. Y., in 1805; came to Illinois in 1845, died at DuPage, March 11, 1885.

Mrs. Abiah Weeks—Born in 1797; died at the home of her son, Horace, in Joliet, March 26, 1886.

Dan'l B. McElhern—Born in 1819; died in Joliet, April 24, 1885.

Mrs. Rachael Barrett—Born in 1814; died at Brooklyn, Joliet township, March 21, 1886.

John Linebarger—Born in 1818; died at Bonfield, Ill., May 6, 1886, for many years a resident of Jackson, Ill.

Robt. L. Seward—Born in Otsego county, N. Y., in 1828; came to will county in 1850.

Morgan Ashley—Born in Lewis county, N. Y., in 1818; came to Illinois in 1833; first settled in Plainfield; died west of Lockport, June 20, 1886.

Wm. J. Heath—Born in Oswego county, N. Y., in 1804; came to Illinois in 1840; died at his home in Joliet, June 10, 1886.

Peter Adams—Came to Joliet in 1839; died at Galesburg, Aug. 13, 1886.

Calneh Zarley—Born in Pike county, Ohio April 21, 1822, came to Joliet in 1831; died at his home here Aug. 20, 1886.

#### OFFICERS ELECTED FOR INSUING YEAR.

President—Dr. Daggett.

Vice Presidents—Curtis Morse, Homer; Amos Paxton, Lockport; Thos. J. Sprague, Dupage; Robt. Clow, Wheatland; T. J. Lang Plainfield; D. C. Searles, Troy; Chas Smith, Chanahon; John Kelly, Wesley; Selah Morey, Florence; Jabez Harvey, Wilton; R. J. Boylan, Jackson; Clark Baker, Manhattant; H. H. Stassen, Green Garden; Fred Wilkie, Washington; A. P. Lilly, Crete; D. L. Christian, Peotone; Levi Doty, Frankfort; Thos Doig, New Lenox.

Executive Committee—Alex. McIntosh, Geo. Munroe. Clay Casseday, W. H. Zarley, Edmund Wixcox, Joliet.

Secretary and Treasurer—B. F. Allen.

Captain—S. R. Beggs.

The poem of the occasion was grand. It was read and dedicated to

#### THE OLD SETTLERS.

[By Capt. Egbert Phelps, the Poet Laureate of the Old Settlers.]

Once in a while in this journey of life,  
In the midst of its care and its trouble and tears  
The weary heart turns from its turbulent strife  
Back to the record of sunnier years—  
Back to the halcyon days of its youth.  
When the earth-life was built upon castles  
in air,  
Too bright for the after-time record of truth,



Freighted with hope visions brilliant and rare;  
Finding rest from the present in memories dear  
Of the joy-lighted skies of that long vanished prime—  
Of the happiness craved on each slow passing year,  
Redeeming the griefs of all earlier time.

Once in a while in this journey of life  
The heart of a green and a happy old age,  
Freed from all care and all trouble and strife,  
Halts and turns back to the tear blotted page  
Where the record of sorrow is graven too deep  
For the finger of time to obliterate all—  
The memories holy that never can sleep,—  
Or lift from each coffin its time-honored pall;  
And finds in each grief of the soul-hallowed past  
An influence holy that chastens the bliss  
By the gold of life's sunset o'er later years cast,  
Rounding up those dark days with the glory of this.

For while life is a drama but rendered complete  
When its lights and its shadows together are blent—  
The mazy paths trodden by toil-burdened feet  
With the flowers whose hues to the wayside are lent;  
Each has its own measure of sorrow and joy  
To round up its tale as the years circle by—  
Every rose with its thorns—every bliss with alloy  
To test its true strength for the record on high.

Gazing backward half a cycle  
Through the long, care-burdened years—  
Through the shining, flower strewn pathways—  
Through the mists of blinding tears—  
O'er the graves that time has sprinkled  
By the wayside thick and fast—  
O'er the towering spires and temples  
Of a faithful, earnest past—  
How the heart of age must triumph  
In the glory of to-day.  
Wrought by its untiring effort,  
Plodding each his lonely way,  
Laboring with an earnest purpose,  
Not alone for present weal,  
But for all the future ages,  
Working out, with eager zeal,  
God's own purpose, even blindly,  
Hidden though that purpose were,  
Now, that Time the veil has lifted.  
Unmistakable and clear.

Where the lonely prairie slumbered  
In its solitude sublime—  
In its silence all unbroken  
Through the dreary lapse of time,  
Now a lordly city gathers  
To its broad and widening fold  
Thousands of untiring workers  
Turning earth's dull dross to gold  
Hum of traffic—clank of engine—  
Buzz and whir of tireless wheel,  
Sing the hymn of labor worship  
And life's glorious end reveal  
Clustering hamlets dot the landscape,  
Centers all of busy life,  
Happy homes of peace and plenty,  
Guerden of the olden strife:  
Thundering steam cars bearing onward  
Untold wealth from shore to shore,  
Teeming product of the prairies  
Fruitless in the days of yore;  
Slender wires whose viewless lightning,

Flashed thought from distant lands,  
Bind the whole broad earth to-gether  
in communicative bands—  
Thee the product of the life-work  
Of the throngs assembled here  
To review the fifty cycles  
Of a life grown old and sear,  
Well may every humble toiler  
Glory in a work so grand  
Wrought with other tireless workers,  
By his own untutored hand.

But in glancing o'er the pathways  
Of the bygone fruitful years,  
How the tombstones meet the vision  
With their tale of scalding tears!  
Ah! the graves that mark the wayside—  
Milestones on the path of life—  
Of the brothers that have fallen—  
By your side amidst the strife!  
How their holy memories mingle  
With our joyance of to-day,  
Chastening all the light and glory  
Of the old-time eager fray!  
Theirs the part with you to battle  
Bravely through the strife sublime,  
But alas for them no triumph  
Crowned the glorious after-time.  
All too soon they fell beside you  
Ere the eager, hopeful eye  
Caught the gleam of coming glory  
In the future's clouded sky.  
But perhaps in yonder Aïdenn—  
From their brighter, blissful sphere  
They may still hold sweet communion  
With the happy circle here.  
Waiting for that best reunion  
when the love of yore shall meet—  
All the old ties reunited  
And the circle all complete.

Youth it is cheery  
Age is not dreary  
When time but makes brighter life's holiest ties;  
Youth is not cheery  
Age it is dreary  
When grief bars the light from the tear-laden eyes.

Time it is fleeting  
Brief is the greeting  
Of souls that too soon from each other must part;  
Sorrow and pleasure  
Fill up life's measure  
Dividing the throne in humanity's heart.

Never the Burden  
Borne to life's guerden  
Is weightier laid than the spirit can bear—  
Never the lightness  
Born of life's brightness  
Comes to the happy heart more than its share

So in rotation  
God's compensation  
Comes to each sorrow and joy of the soul,  
Chastening each pleasure,  
Lightening grief's measure  
Shaping each life for eternity's goal.

Toil is the portal  
To the immortal  
Both of this earth and of yonder bright heaven.

Nothing worth living for  
Comes without striving for  
Just as each labors his crown will be given.

Happy, reposing,  
Near to life's closing,  
On the green laurels of victory won,  
He whose life-story  
Tells of the glory  
That gleams in the record of labor well done.

This be your portion,  
 Reward of devotion  
 To duty well done in the toil burdened past.  
 Through pathways of flowers  
 May life's closing hours  
 Glide peacefully, happily on to the last.

And when the Father  
 His harvests shall gather  
 May no one be missed from these brotherly  
 bands,  
 But all hold communion  
 In blessed reunion  
 In that beautiful city not builded with hands

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REGRETS.

The president, Mr. George H. Woodruff, received the following regrets and beautiful tributes supplementary thereto:

"LOS ANGELES, Cal., Aug. 23, 1886.—  
 FRIEND WOODRUFF:—I send you herewith a little poetical greeting for old Will's Old Settler's reunion, wishing yourself and the grand old society long life, abundant happiness, and unalloyed enjoyment at your coming meeting. I remain most sincerely yours,

ALBERT F. KERCHEVAL.

THE SETTLERS OF OLD WILL.

In tender thought though far away,  
 Where meet the hoary heads and gray  
 Old patriarchs of the olden time,  
 Our hearts are with you all, to-day.

From out the mist of gathering years,  
 And intermingled smiles and tears,  
 We send to-day from western shores  
 A greeting to thy Pioneers.

We see thy prairies wide outspread  
 Beneath thy smiling skies o'erhead,  
 As when their virgin, flowery wastes  
 First felt the impress of your tread.

We see once more old Hickory's gleam,  
 The bluebells flush by pond and stream  
 As in our boyhood's early prime,  
 When life was all a golden dream.

The shimmer of thy fair DesPlaines,  
 Like fairy magic that enchains  
 The soul forever in its thrall,  
 A glorious memory yet remains.

We see thy smiling Kankakee  
 Like some sweet maiden bright and free  
 When fancy weaves her tenderest spell,  
 Glide onward toward the Southern sea.

In whatsoever far retreat  
 May rest their weary, way-worn feet,  
 Thy children yet with filial love  
 Cling to thy memories pure and sweet.

And whereso'er their pulses thrill  
 In distant lands and countries still,  
 With tenderest thought of thee and thine,  
 They think of thee to day, "Old Will."

ALBERT F. KERCHEVAL.

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SAN FRANCISCO, Cal., Aug. 25, 1886—Will county pioneers of 1836, all hail! A thirty-sixer who cannot join with you in your semi-centennial, pauses a moment by the western sea to drop a tear for those whose once familiar forms are growing dim in memory; to send a word of congratulation to those of the earlier settlers still living near his boyhood's home, and to lift a prayer for the All Father's guiding love as the evening shades gather about us all. How swift the flight of fifty years as seen in retrospect! How stupendous the results as written in undying history! How different the Will county, the Illinois, the America, the civilization, the Christianity, of 1836 and 1886! Each earnest purpose, each heroic action, and each self-sacrifice has contributed its share to the grand result. With a firm loyalty to truth, with love for all, with trusting hope in the better days to come, we pass on and leave our places for the descendants of the "36ers."

JAMES M. HAVEN.



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