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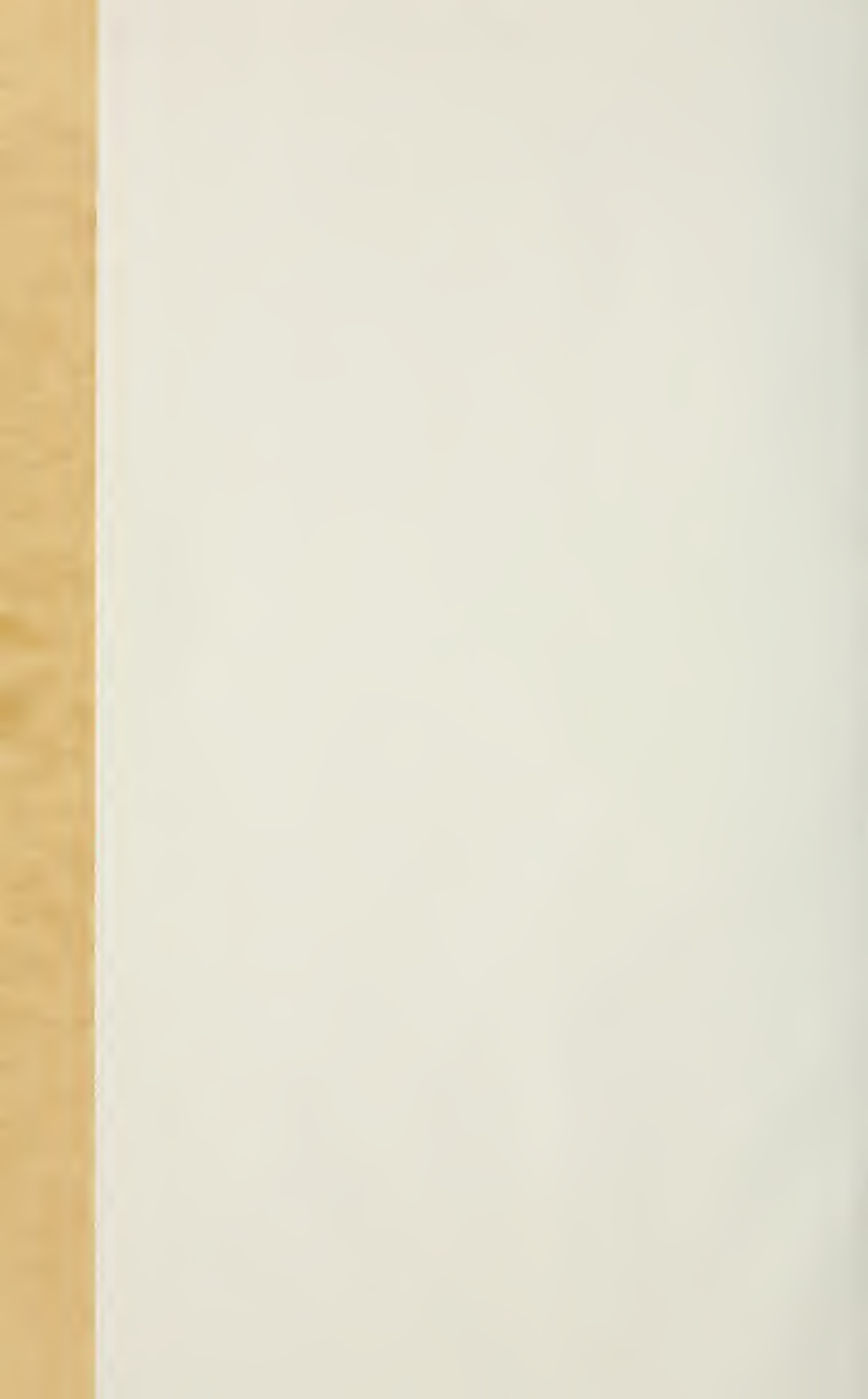
P. PULLIAM, ed.

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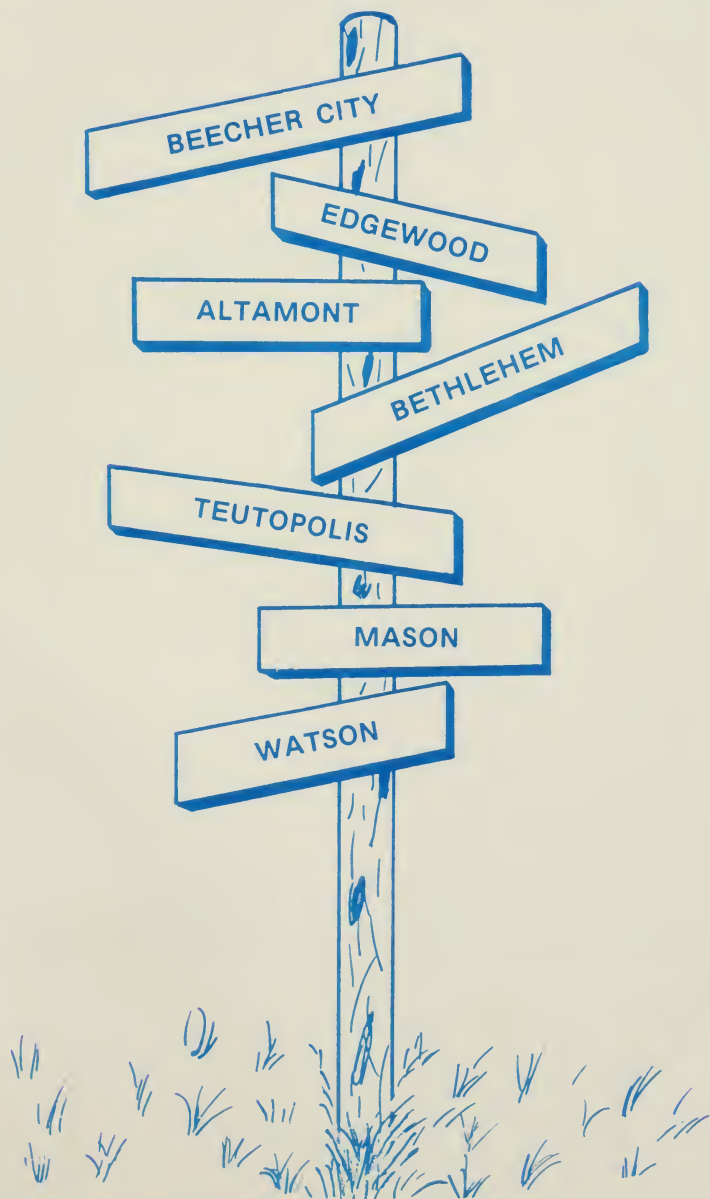
(1975)







# TOWNS OF EFFINGHAM COUNTY, ILLINOIS





**TOWNS OF EFFINGHAM COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

**Edited by Peggy Pulliam**

**1975**

**Compiled and Published by  
Effingham County Bicentennial Commission**





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Several people made contributions to this booklet. Paul Taylor prepared the chapters on Mason, Edgewood, Altamont and Altamont People for the radio programs in the late 1950s. Mrs. Ethel Lorton wrote the article on her native town, Beecher City. The Watson chapter contains some stories that the author, Mrs. Zona B. Davis, learned from her parents. Mrs. Lucile Hoedebecke compiled the Teutopolis material after consulting the histories of that town and parish. The information on Bethlehem and the Lutheran Church there was submitted by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Yagow, of St. Elmo, and their daughter-in-law, Mrs. Stewart Yagow; it was organized by the editor. The Yagows still attend the old church and are active in the life of that community.

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Zona B. Davis, News Director of WCRA, Effingham, prepared the story on Watson, from mementos collected during a long news career.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Buchholz of Watson township, she was employed by the Effingham Daily Record five years, by the Effingham Republican for two years, and was Assistant Editor of the County Review for five years before becoming News Director for WCRA in April of 1949. She twice won the Golden Mike, a national award presented by the American Legion Auxiliary for outstanding programs in the Interest of Youth, served as President of United Press International Broadcasters of Illinois, received an award from UPI in May of 1975 naming her SUPER CORRESPONDENT OF THE STATE. She is listed in *WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN WOMEN*, *ILLINOIS LIVES*, and *FOREMOST WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS*.

She is the County Chairman of the Effingham County Bicentennial Commission.

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Sarah Lucile James, daughter of Seth L. and Cora B. (Field) James, was born Oct. 30, 1907, in Dieterich, Illinois.

Elementary education was received at West and East Side Schools, in Effingham, and she was in the first 8th grade graduating class from the new Central Junior High in 1921, and graduated from Effingham High School in 1925.

Lucile was employed at Effingham State Bank from June 1925 until Jan. 1930. She married Louis F. Hoedebecke Jan. 15, 1930, and is the mother of seven daughters. Since her marriage she has resided in Teutopolis. Lucile helped with maintenance of the grocery business until retirement in 1969.

At present her interests are Genealogy, Local, County and State History. Her ancestry has been traced back several generations to the 1700's on several different lines and they were some of the earliest county residents. Lucile is Chairperson of Teutopolis Area Bicentennial projects.

Ethel Cathryn Allsop Lorton was born on the Allsop homestead about one mile north of Beecher City (Effingham County) on April 10, 1908. Her parents were Cleveland Samuel Allsop and Zoa Hunt Allsop. Ethel attended public schools in Beecher City, excepting one year at Turney School in Shelby County. She was graduated from Cowden Community High School in 1925. She later received a B.S. degree from Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana.

She spent twenty-eight years teaching in Illinois and Indiana. In 1967 she published a book, *PRAIRIE BOY*. She has a second book in the hands of an agent. *PRAIRIE MOTHER*.

Her present address is Arcadia, Indiana (46030), where she lives when she is not traveling with her retired husband.

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Paul Taylor spent his entire life in Effingham, Illinois, and served his community well. Born Mar. 9, 1890, he attended the old West Side School and graduated from Effingham High School. He worked intermittently for Judge R. C. Harrah as a general office boy and secretary and finally decided to study law. In addition to the valuable practical experience he received from the Judge, he took a course of study from the Chicago Correspondence School of Law. He passed the Illinois Bar exam in 1911. That same year, when he was only 21, Taylor was elected City Attorney.

That election began his long career as a lawyer and politician. He served four terms as States Attorney from 1920 through 1936 and was elected to the Illinois State Legislature in 1942 where he remained for 12 years. His last position as a public servant was as mayor of Effingham from 1955 to 1959.

Paul Taylor and Ruby Adams were married in 1912. Their daughter, Mrs. Betty Baldwin, lives in New York; their other children, Paul Jr. and Mrs. Shirley Claar, reside in Effingham. After Ruby's death, he married Hazel Kerans, who lives in Effingham. Mr. Taylor died in 1964.

Always fond of history, Taylor wrote an extensive account of his life and times during his retirement. He gave many talks on the history of Effingham County on the Zona B. Davis radio program over WCRA during the late 1950s. His talks have been slightly edited for this publication; no attempt has been made to update his material.

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The editor regrets that the history of each town and village in Effingham County is not included in this publication. Due to lack of time, only material already at hand was printed. Some information on other places is found in the booklet, *TOWNSHIPS OF EFFINGHAM COUNTY, ILLINOIS*, published by the Effingham County Bicentennial Commission.

# I. ALTAMONT

Altamont is located in the approximate center of Mound Township, and is located upon the Mound or elevation, which gave Mound Township its name. And the word "Altamont" itself, means high ground, which is thus descriptive of its location. Altamont is the highest point in elevation on the Pennsylvania Railroad between St. Louis and Terre Haute.

While it is the second largest city in Effingham County, Altamont was not founded or established, until long after some of the early settlements in this County, such as Ewington, Freemanton, Elliottstown, Teutopolis, Mason and Edgewood, which were all first established before the Civil War. Altamont was not laid out and established as a town until 1870; it was laid out by one J. W. Conlogue, who was an official of the old Vandalia Railroad, now the Pennsylvania Railroad, which had shortly before that been laid through the town site. You will find on the plat records of Altamont, an addition known as Conlogue's Addition, and then there is also Conlogue's First Addition and Conlogue's Second Addition.

The first town lot sold in Altamont appears to have been bought by Abner Dutton, and I would guess that he was one of the forefathers of the Dutton family who have lived in Altamont in my time. Then one R. S. Cutter bought the next lot, and opened a store. Among the settlers who soon followed were Daniel Boyer, Dr. J. N. Groves, H. H. Brown, J. C. Russell, and some of the Broom family, who I believe were the same Broom family as is now located in Effingham. Dr. J. N. Groves later came to Effingham, and served as an early mayor here.

The first railroad at Altamont was the old Vandalia Line, but a little later, both the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Central and Eastern Illinois Railroad were built through Altamont, and in earlier days it was quite a railroad center. The first station of the Vandalia Railroad was opened there September 4, 1870. In later years, with the coming of good roads and the automobile and airplanes, the railroads have all lost a large part of their traffic, and now, at Altamont, the railroads are not nearly as important part in the life of the community as they were a generation ago.

Two banks were established in Altamont, one whose successor is now the First National Bank in Altamont, and which under that name is still in business at Altamont. Another, which I knew in my youth as the Hogan State Bank, was founded in 1876, but it voluntarily liquidated something over twenty years ago.

The first hotel in Altamont was built in 1871 by Daniel Boyer, and was known as the Boyer House. He died when I was just a boy. The first post office in Altamont was opened in 1871. Before that, there had been a station or settlement a few miles south of Altamont known as Montville, on the National Road, but when Altamont opened up, Montville just disappeared, and that post office was moved to Altamont. I never knew him, but know that there are still several families of Millevilles in and about Altamont, and presume they are his descendants.

Altamont was organized as a village in 1872; the first Board of Trustees were Daniel Boyer, A. H. Dutton, J. Hotz, J. L. Hoffman and W. L. Snook. I recall W. L. Snook, who lived to old age, and lived in Altamont when I first began to get acquainted over there as a young man.

Altamont has always had several lawyers, and I see from history that the first lawyer at Altamont was a Hale Johnson, who was located there in 1873. Several later lawyers located at Altamont are still remembered well by many of our older people, being W. S. Holmes, Jacob Zimmerman and Byron Piper, who were all first located in Altamont for a time, but later moved to Effingham. A regular weekly paper, now the *Altamont News*, was first established in Altamont, within a few years after the town was laid out in 1870, and has continued ever since under ownership of several different persons.

Altamont has also had several different industries; the Johnson Hicks Milling Company, the Altamont Manufacturing Company which is still in operation, and at one time, a canning factory or packing plant, as well as several grain elevators and other industries, such as the present pants factory. About twenty years ago Altamont had quite a "boom" when Loudon Township Oil Field was developed just a few miles northwest of Altamont. During the drilling and development of that oil field, hundreds of families connected with the oil industry located in Altamont, and its population was almost doubled. Now since the field has been drilled out and fully developed, many of the oil workers have moved on to other fields, and while there are still a number of families in Altamont who work in adjacent oil fields, the number is not nearly as great as it was years ago.

## II. ALTAMONT PEOPLE

I first began to get acquainted over at Altamont during my teens, in two ways. First, when I was a boy, I loved to try to play baseball, though I was never much good at it. But I played with several of our local "kid" teams here, and several times we exchanged games with similar "kid" teams at Altamont, and I went over there to play ball several times, and thus began to get acquainted.

And then a little later, when I was about eighteen, I and several of my boy friends here, among them Don Levy, Bill Holmes, and George "Copper" LeCrone, got started to going with some of the local girls at Altamont, and continued it and had regular dates for several years. Almost every Sunday afternoon, we would meet down at the railroad depot here and go to Altamont on an accommodation train that then left here about 4:00 P.M., go to Altamont, have supper there and spend the evening with our girl friends, and return to Effingham on another Pennsylvania Railroad accommodation train which left Altamont about 11:00 P.M. Thus I began to get acquainted at Altamont, and of course continued to get better acquainted when I grew a few years older and started practicing law here. So I shall now mention a few of the prominent families in Altamont which I made acquaintance with in my youth, but whose older members are now deceased.

One early prominent family was the Hogan family. Mike Hogan was then the principal owner of the Hogan State Bank in Altamont, an extensive land owner and well to do, and one of the community leaders. He died many years ago. I also met his son, Tom, but he left Altamont when I was just a young man. Mike Hogan was a brother of George, who had a department store in Effingham and was well known here in earlier days.

Another well known family in Altamont was the Rhodes family. James E. Rhodes was one of the principal owners of the bank, and I believe for a time its president. He served as mayor of Altamont, and was president of the Altamont Manufacturing Co., one of the principal industries, and was a community leader. His brother, John, commonly called "Jack", was also connected with the bank as director, and with the Altamont Manufacturing Co., and a leading citizen for many years. The only one of the Rhodes Brothers still left in Altamont is Joe, who is still there, and managing the Altamont Manufacturing Co., though some of the widows and children of the name are still with us.

Fred Naumer was also one of the prominent people in Altamont in my younger days and until his death some twenty years ago. He was a business man, property owner, and quite prominent in Masonic Lodge affairs, and a leader in the community.

H. H. Bailey was for almost a lifetime, and until his death, owner and editor of the *Altamont News*, the weekly paper in Altamont. He was also well known all over the County as a speaker and lecturer at Chautauquas and similar public meetings. George Hilleman had the lumber yard and owned other property at Altamont, and was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in Altamont.

Dr. G. M. Baker was one of the leading physicians at Altamont and vicinity. I knew him and his family well, because his daughter Elnora was one of the girls I went with for several years, and I often spent evenings at their home. His sons, Cecil (who later became also a physician and is since deceased), and Bill (who is still at Altamont), were among those who played baseball on the Altamont teams that I played with. And I can remember their youngest son George, who recently retired after many years service as a member of our state police, was then just a little skinny, freckled kid wearing short pants.

In my youth there was also one of the few colored or Negro families who have ever lived permantly in Effingham County, The Ellises who has a barber shop in Altamont. They lived in Altamont many years and were nice people and well liked. I became well acquainted with their son, George, about my age, who also played on the Altamont Baseball Team. This family left Altamont many years ago.

Others that I remember include C. E. Munday in real estate and insurance business, Otis Faught, a well to do contractor, Charles Blakely, for many years Mound Township Supervisor, Charles Alwerdt, Fred Herzberg, the shoemaker, Philip Goers who had the harness shop, Dan Fritz, the policeman, George Grant, David Piper, and the Heiligensteins and the Schlotterbecks.

### III. BEECHER CITY, ILLINOIS

In 1867 the Springfield and Southeastern Railroad was chartered. The company commenced to build a line from Shawneetown to Springfield. Tom Ridgeway and Charlie Beecher came to Effingham, the new county seat, to see exactly how much the city would give as an inducement to include Effingham on the rail route. It had been started at the southern end at Shawneetown. The people of Effingham hesitated too long and the wide-awake townships of West, Mason, and Liberty secured the road. Liberty Township gave five thousand dollars and so the Springfield and Southeastern was built twelve miles west of Effingham, through Edgewood, Gilmore, Altamont, Moccasin, and Beecher City. The railroad was opened for traffic in 1871. It ran about twenty-two and a half miles through Effingham County, including the northwestern corner of the northwestern township of Liberty.

The actual platting of the town of Beecher City was done by railroad engineers. It was recorded by Edward Woodrow of St. Louis, Missouri, a proprietor of the land, on April 8, 1872. Charles A. Beecher was vice-president of the railroad so the town was named for him. When a post office was applied for, another Beecher was found in Will County, so the "City" was added to Beecher to avoid two towns with the same name in Illinois. The postal department might persevere through rain and snow and the dark of night but they were careful about having two towns with the same name in the same state.

There was a small settlement in Fayette County about two miles west of the present cemetery corner. This pioneer village was named Bob Doan. It had a general store, which also housed the postoffice in the days of horse-back delivery, a schoolhouse, a lodge, a church (later Greenland), and a cemetery to the north of town. It was clear that a town needed a railroad to survive in the 1870's. Many of the old buildings of Bob Doan were put on skids (in the summer) or sleds (in the winter) and moved to the newer townsite on the railroad. Skidpoles and a team of six-yoked oxen was the beginning of Beecher City.

Beecher City was closer to the stagecoach line that ran from Springfield to Effingham. This line always made a rest stop where they crossed Wolf Creek, but it was the horses that needed the break. However, as was usual, the stagecoach was soon out of business with the advent of the railroad.

The Perrin History of 1883 says that the first store in Beecher City opened in a house that was brought there from another place (Bob Doan). It was operated by Miller and Nelson. Henry L. Beecher kept a small stock of goods at the depot. Probably the only part of the present town's buildings that were moved from Bob Doan is the one in the oldest part of the lumber yard building. It is not being used at present except for rummage sales. When the Engel Brothers remodeled the building they added on to the older building that had been skidded from Bob Doan.

In 1883 the businesses of Beecher City were three general stores operated by William H. Jennings, Henry L. Beecher, and William Sweazy. There was one grocery store owned by A. Talley, a drugstore of John

Allsop, (also a doctor), one butcher shop, a shoe shop, hoop-pole factory, and a brick kiln. George Brown bought grain for Brumbach and shipped large quantities from Beecher City in every month.

Scott Hancock has written a very interesting history of the Hancock family, who were early settlers in Beecher City. His father, Winfield Scott Hancock, came to Beecher City about 1872 when it was first being organized. Win Hancock walked from Ohio as rail connections were poor and he could make better time walking than riding a stagecoach. Later Win went back to Ohio and returned to Illinois driving a horse and buggy rig. This was one of the finest of early equipages in Beecher City. Win had connections in Beecher City because his sister, Emma, was the wife of Henry L. Beecher, who had been appointed agent for the railroad by his Uncle Charlie. Another sister, Florence, was married to Elijah Hubbard. It is interesting to note that the Beechers influenced the Cains and Warners to come to Illinois from Ohio.

Win Hancock worked at several jobs in the new town. At one time he sold fruit trees as an itinerant salesman. He also tried his hand at farming. Living around Beecher City after his second marriage on January 20, 1886, was far different from today. "After their marriage they set up housekeeping on a hill way out in the woods...They owned land there and Win farmed. Their log cabin was relatively luxurious as it had a few panes of glass in the windows. It had two rooms. In the backwoods most of the wives smoked pipes or chewed tobacco. Leah Hancock did neither although she was urged to take up the habit. It was such a comfort when the men were away.

Sarah Allsop Tennery smoked a clay pipe. Many of the first generations of settlers used the tobacco that they grew in their gardens. Most of the older people in Beecher City today can remember the old women smoking their pipes or chewing the tobacco.

Finally Win Hancock ended up as a merchant in Beecher City. He was a glib-tongued individual who could sell anything. He had no trouble getting rid of the meat, groceries, and coal, for which he accepted eggs, poultry, game, butter, hides, mine props, crossties, stock, grain, and skullcap. The latter is a plant of the mint family used by herbists along with ginseng and other medicinal plants. Win also operated huckster wagons, became an undertaker, and ran a brick kiln.

The oldest house in town is the present John Turner home on George Street. It was built by Henry L. Beecher and was finished in 1872 shortly before the first baby was born in the new town. This baby was named Florence Beecher (Close). A picture of her hangs in the present First State Bank. When this baby was born a sheet was to be hung in an upstairs window as a signal for Polly Sweazy to come as a midwife. But Polly did not see the signal sheet. Sarah Allsop Tennery did see the signal and she came to the new house to take care of the first baby born in Beecher City. This was on June 18, 1872. Florence was a good friend of Kate Burgoon (Barr) and her sister Allie Burgoon (Clow) all of her life.

The second oldest house in town is the Miller TV and Radio Sales and Service. This house, owned by Roland Miller, is at the corner of Poplar and Sweazy Streets.

Among other old buildings in town is the old Methodist Church on James Street. It was moved to its present location in 1887 from a site one half mile northeast of Holland where it was called the Olive Branch Methodist Episcopal Church. Youngsters attended Sunday School in the church sitting on little red chairs on the raised platform. Many were the Children's Day programs that were held there. Returned missionary, Laura Brooks, told harrowing tales of Guam to a spellbound audience. Weddings were conducted in the old fashioned setting. Among the latter weddings was that of Mary Hancock to Clifford Rassweiler on August 6, 1927. The church was decorated with Boston ferns from the homes of the town when a big Boston fern was a sign of quality. Most of the town's people were invited to the wedding of the home-town girl who made good.

Beecher City had a few industries dating before 1900. Hancock's Pond was located back (east) of the mobile homes on Charles Street. Win had brick kilns going because the right kind of clay was present. One of the few places in town where these early made bricks can be found is in the oldest part of the present *Journal* office. Dr. John Cook built this building which housed his office and his family. Later it was sold to the Oddfellows Lodge and later it was purchased by the weekly newspaper, *The Beecher City Journal*.

There was also a pond farther south, closer to the cemetery corner, where a mill ground grain for the farmers. The Tennery family had a brickyard on their farm south of town in the 1850's. There was a canning factory, owned by Hiram Engel, near where Florence Maxfield now lives at the corner of Sweazy and Vine Streets. Nora Jennings Cook worked there as a girl canning tomatoes and pumpkin.

In early Beecher City it was not necessary for every effort to be made to make a living. An early account of the first Christmas tree was given by Mrs. Ann Tennery Culbertson and Mrs. Kate Burgoon Barr to Mrs. Pauline Cook Coffman. In 1883 Dr. John S. Cook made plans to have a community Christmas program with a big Christmas tree for the children of Beecher City. Dr. Cook had traveled from England and had seen Christmas trees in previous places. This first tree in Beecher City proved a delight to the adults as well as the children.

The people of the community worked for two days making preparations for the event, which was held in the United Brethern Church. The women baked pies and prepared foods to be brought to the church. In this way no time was lost in going home for a lunch on the day of days.

Dr. Cook drew letters in white muslin and the women sewed evergreens over the letters. In order to have enough greenery, Win Hancock and Ann Culbertson drove to Apple-tree Jones' Nursery, near Shumway, where they cut and bought the evergreens. After the evergreen was sewn on the letters of MERRY CHRISTMAS, verses from the Bible such as "On earth, peace, good will to men" appeared. These various verses, embroidered with evergreen, were hung at the windows of the church.

George Eccles and Albert Larimore traveled to Shelbyville to buy a Christmas tree suitable for the occasion. They paid one dollar for a tree that extended from the floor to within a few inches of the ceiling, about ten feet. Dr. Cook had sent to New York for tree decorations, among which was a



Santa Claus, an angel nine to twelve inches tall, a baby buggy, a peacock, and a big star made from tinsel. Two of these decorations are still in the community. (See Pauline Coffman).

The night of the program was memorable to Kate Barr who was quite young at the time. She always remembered it as a very special night. There was no organ but a choir consisting of Henry L. Beecher, William Hen, and Dave Sweazy sang Christmas carols. Each of these men had a good voice and the harmony was beautiful. The old carols touched the hearts of everyone there.

There was a gift for each child---a stick of candy. The evening was closed with a prayer.

Ann Culbertson always said that the evening and the program was one of her most treasured memories.

The custom of a community Christmas tree was continued throughout the years. The program was moved from the churches to the new school gymnasium after it was built in 1923. The combination of evergreen tree, (real), burning candles, and plenty of white cotton for snow must have made a fire hazard of the first magnitude. The Depression and changing times, as well as enforced fire laws, caused this enjoyable custom to be discontinued.

Timber for houses and buildings in the new town was available from groves along the creeks in the prairies. Terwilligers of Fancher (to the north) had a sawmill. They would pull their steam engine and set up sawing operations on any outlying farms, if the demand was warranted.

After the railroad went through the countryside in 1871 there was only a fringe of buildings along the tracks. It was several years before people ventured to build farther from the rails and settle the remainder of the town. This process is still going on as witness the Jennings Addition in the last few years. In 1875 the railroad was bought by the Ohio and Mississippi, which later became a part of the Baltimore and Ohio.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century business was at an alltime high in Beecher City. There were three grocery and general merchandise stores (changing locations and owners frequently), two furniture businesses, two doctors, an undertaker, four churches, a creamery, cream stations, a hardware store, millinery shop, two restaurants (also changing hands and cooks often), a barber shop, post office, newspaper, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a bank, two hotels, a drayman, and later one filling station. Most of these buildings and businesses were located on Charles Street, named for Charlie Beecher, who never lived in the town but had a lot to do with its early foundation.

The two largest stores were two blocks apart on Charles Street. Win Hancock first lived in the second story of his store building, which is still being used by Charles Perkins as a store. The family had a parrot that was placed on the front porch during the summer. The parrot called out "Polly wants a cracker" to all passersby on the street below. Later Win Hancock built a home on a lot northwest of the store. It has lately been purchased by Roy Aitkens, (1974).

The other general store, two blocks to the south was owned by Stinson Barr who built a home adjoining the store. He and his wife, Kate, lived there for many years. On Saturday nights Kate was an institution sitting on her small front porch which edged the sidewalk. Truly she knew most everyone in the surrounding community when she died in 1962.

The hotels deserve a paragraph of their own.

The W. W. Timmerley Hotel was in the rooms of a building on Charles Street, that stood where Frances has her restaurant today. The hotel restaurant served ice cream, fish and oysters in season. It was a much longer building in those days of 1910. One room had an open well with a curb and pulley. But the prized feature was a soda fountain for the soft drinks. Soda fountains were a novelty in those days.

Bandalows ran a hotel for many years in their home at the corner of Charles and Columbia Streets. Mrs. Bandalow was famed for her cooking and she set a memorable table for the "drummers" that rode the trains into town. In those earlier days of the century there were four passenger trains each day and it was common for salesmen to make their sales pitch between trains.

The two general stores were what the name implies. They were dimly lit by kerosene lamps and blackly grimed by smoke from the pot-bellied stoves in the winter. Even the advent of packaging in 1898 (with the five cent package of Uneeda Crackers) did not immediately phase out the barrels of molasses, sugar, and pickles. There were no interesting displays on front windows as plate glass was too expensive. Cash was scarce and farmers traded their produce for coffee, sugar, flour, and spices. Shoe blackening, soap, and cartridges were mixed with poultry feed, sauerkraut, and salted codfish.

There was a ladies department, near the front of the store where brass tacks were driven into the counter exactly one yard apart and the fractions thereof. These tacks could be used to measure cloth, lace, and ribbons. The men's wear was back of this and contained jeans, celluloid collars, suspenders, and the inevitable long-johns. It wasn't very neat or very clean but the store had everything that its customers needed. In the farm wagons children sucked on horehound candy or peppermint drops on their way home from the weekly trading.

In the olden days of three quarter century ago, the people were country orientated. Most homes in town had stables for horses. The buggy or wagon was the accepted mode of travel. Housewives kept a flock of chickens for eggs and meat. Everyone worked a garden in the summer. The surplus was canned for the winter months which were likely to be long and cold. The ambition of every housewife-cook was to have new peas and potatoes with freshly fried chicken for the Fourth of July dinner. The potatoes were likely to be mighty small and cooked in their thin, red skins and the chickens were likely to be young and skinny but a good provider had those items on the menu for the holiday.

Few homes had any sort of indoor bathroom facilities or even a pitcher pump in the corner of the kitchen. This latter was a sop to women's conveniences which was just coming into vogue in the early 1900's The water

still came from wells sprinkled among the homes. In looking over the town in 1974, these wells proved to be the most enduring of all accouterments that were left. There was and still is (1974) no sewage disposal facilities. In the flat country of the prairies this is a handicap to further growth of the town.

The small town had several memorable institutions. North of the village was the Sweazy Pond, and John Allsop had a pond west of town. These places were popular skating places in the winter with a big bonfire to warm fingers and toes. Ice might be cut and stored in the icehouse until needed in the summertime. The ice was packed in sawdust and youngsters knew where Henry's icehouse was located and where one might get a small sliver of ice to suck when buying a larger chunk in the hot months. Ice cream in the hand turned freezer or a big jar of iced tea for the threshing crews were reason enough for buying the ice.

Speaking of ice reminds one of big snows. The most remarkable one was in the spring of 1918 when the present mayor of Beecher City, Richard Allsop, was a first grader just starting to school. The short legged little boy could not nearly navigate the heavy snows and his father or cousin pulled him to school on a sled. But school was kept going, unlike the present days of school buses that cannot navigate on a few inches of snow. On the curve north of town the train was blocked by snowdrifts, that defied the cow catcher. The men of the town took shovels and relieved the tracks of the accumulated snow so that the train could get through. Whether winters are getting colder or warmer is of little consequence when one remembers events like these.

Earl Barr bought rabbits and furs in the winter time. Rabbits brought seven cents each during the Depression of the 1930's. The author's youngest brother learned his seven times tables by selling rabbits, killed by his older brothers.

Building blocks were made from sand and cement in the yard back of where Grace Neihls lives on Palm Street. This was a subsidiary of Engel's Lumber Yard. The cement blocks took the place of bricks, no longer made.

There were other changes made. Win Hancock sold his Undertaking Parlor to William Ray Hunt who went off to World War I and never came back. Clare Cook bought the funeral business in 1919 and continued until February 1, 1973, making him one of the oldest business men in town. Mr. Cook died in 1975. The Hogge Brothers, George and Walter, replaced their burned out store with a brick hardware that was one of the best in central Illinois about 1921.

There was a big croquet ground on the corner of Charles and Poplar Streets where Hogge and Campbell later built the Internation Building. When the Central Illinois Public Service ran electric lines into the town, about 1928, the croquet grounds were lighted after dark. The town never had much luck with band concerts but FREE SHOWS went over better. These movies were sponsored by the town merchants who reaped a big Saturday night of business when the shows were presented.

There was even a movie house in the top of the brick bank building with its own peanut heaven. This was a favorite place for traveling benefit shows and the author remembers a Tom Thumb wedding that played there.

The churches in the town were important to the God fearing early settlers. In 1874-75 the United Brethern built a church. It was a good frame building which cost about eight hundred to a thousand dollars. Then with money from Dave Sweazy this church was remodeled into the Sweazy Chapel. The United Brethern merged with the Methodists in 1966 and built a modern church on Route 33 in the Jennings Addition. Neal Wood remodeled the old United Brethern Church into a home. The older Methodist Church has been purchased by Rexroads Furniture and is being used for storage.

The second one was the Universalist Church which was built in 1880 on land deeded to the church by Dr. and Mrs. John Cook. It cost about twelve hundred dollars. They sold the upper story to the Masonic Lodge as a meeting place. In 1883 the Masonic Lodge, known as Greenland Lodge No. 665 A. F. and A. M. had the following officers: Ben. F. Markland, Master; Orlando Campbell, Senior Warden; William Anderson, Junior Warden; Thomas D. Tennery, Treasurer; James Allsop, Secretary; Issac Tipsword, Senior Deacon; John F. Wood, Junior Deacon; and Thomas R. Dutton, Tiler.

In the same Chapter 21, page 241, of the Perrin History we read that the Beecher City Lodge No. 690 I.O.O.F. was instituted March 25, 1881, by the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Officers were J. W. Hotz, N. G.; Azariah Larimore, V. G.; George Eads, Secretary; and Albert Larimore, Treasurer. By 1883 the officers were George C. Eads, N. G.; George W. Brown, V. G.; Will H. Richards, Recording Secretary, John Cook, Secretary and Henry Hunt, Treasurer.

The Oddfellows moved to the brick building which had housed Dr. John Cook. The Masons bought the entire Universalist building when the Universalists built a second church about 1913-1914.

The second Universalist Church was razed and the American Legion built the Eva Casstevens Post No. 535 on the corner of Poplar and Vine Streets. The Holliday school house was moved to town to be the Masonic Lodge Home and the Eastern Star meeting place. The Lodge is still called Greenland No. 665.

The Church of Christ came into existence in 1906 and their first building, a wooden frame structure, was built in the following year. The parsonage was built in 1955. A brick structure, the first in a complete rebuilding program, came in 1957. The razing of the old frame building and the completion of a brick sanctuary occurred in 1962.

Along with churches, schools have been an important part of the community. Even before Beecher City was platted, there was an Eccles School in Liberty Township. It was at its height during the Civil War period but it burned in 1863. It was always thought that the Copperheads were responsible for its loss. Then school was held in an abandoned log cabin within the present limits of Beecher City. This stood about where Walter Hogge later built his home, now owned by Larry Neihls. Roland Allen Howard taught two terms here and Samuel Duncan Lorton was a director.

Louann Larimore Jennings Claggett attended the Eccles School. It was very primitive by today's standards, and the children sat on spilt logs that had legs on them. She remembered getting a splinter imbedded in her leg and the solicitude of her schoolmates. No wonder that people decided that schools were too important to be held in abandoned log cabins, smoke houses, or sheds.

A site was selected for a new school building, just east of the present *Journal* building. The building cost a princely sum of six hundred dollars and it was a one room building, almost square and lighted by side windows. It was in this building that John S. Cook scandalized the school patrons by introducing a course in physiology. He later became a preacher and a physician. But this building was damaged by fire and in 1881 a two story brick building was erected under the direction of George Eccles and Henry L. Beecher. The town was growing and the school was ideally located in a block bounded by Guernsey, Wyandotte, James and Palm Streets. Almost one hundred soft maple trees were planted and the school yard became a town park.

In 1903 a wing was added to the eastern side of this building making it a four roomed structure. The directors were: J. L. Hubbard, R. D. McElroy, and Jesse F. Jennings. For several years only three rooms were needed for schools and the lower room of the new annex was used by itinerant medicine men. It also was a handy place for meetings of the Ladies' Aid, Bankers' Union, and Village Trustees, which throughout the years have met on the first Monday night of the month.

A high school course was introduced in 1912 by C. E. Brewbaker and the high school was put on a recognized basis in 1915. Names of early teachers can be found in Effingham County School History of the Centennial Year (1918) which I will quote, "Prompted by various industrial and social changes and desirous of offering the children of this and other communities a means of securing for themselves a social, industrial and intellectual betterment the friends of higher education have continually sought to make educational improvements. As a result a splendid building, begun in 1916 and completed in 1917 was erected under the directorship of Messers. A. Frank Tate, Dr. Emery W. Brooks, and George Hogge."

This building is the present grade school. In 1939 the school unit became a community unit which went into a new building on Route 33, west of town in 1942. Then in 1948 the community school became Unit 20 and took in more territory. An addition to the high school was built in 1968. So Beecher City has made the transition from an ungraded school in an old abandoned building to a four year high school. The first gymnasium in Effingham County is the one on the old grade school grounds that was built in 1923 by public subscription. It cost about two thousand five hundred dollars and only had room for about one hundred spectators and the round bellied stove. But it had a stage, two dressing rooms, and it was a step ahead of anything else in the county for several years.

Wars have left their mark on Beecher City. The Eva Casstevens Legion Post has been mentioned. Eva Casstevens was a nurse who never returned from World War I. Ray Hunt, the undertaker, was lost at Chateau Thierry in 1918. The womenfolk of the town knitted sleeveless sweaters and wrapped bandages for the army. Then World War II came with its rationing and flattened tin cans. The Korean conflict was ended none too quickly for these sons-of-the-soil and the Vietnam undeclared war left the same two views that persisted in the rest of the country.

The last quarter of the twentieth century finds many changes in the town of Beecher City. New businesses such as Wesselman Hot Asphalt Roofing and Sheet Metal Company occupy a part of the brick building on Charles Street. The Kaiser Agricultural Company, managed by Larry Laue, has big tanks and bins by the railroad. Betty and Faye have a Ceramic Shop on Poplar Street. The Lutz Grain Company does a big business with the farmers around the town.

The Continental Telephone Company of Illinois with offices located at Altamont is in charge of the telephone system. It is a far cry from the small local office located at the back of the Bank Building for years. One remembers Emma Miller who stayed at the switchboard during the big fire at Hogge Brothers in 1921, just across Poplar Street from her. She plugged the hot news until forced to climb out a back window on the south side of the building.

In 1974 there were two filling stations, one grocery, one insurance office, one barber shop, three beauty shops, a furniture store, a drugstore (no druggist), a bait shop, and an air conditioned post office built in 1961. Lockart and Sons have built a new funeral home in 1973 to replace the Cook Funeral Home that served the community for fifty three years. Gone are the doctors, hardware, creamery, ice house, railroad section crews, lumber yard, and small businesses that made a livelihood for so many in preceding years. Remaining in their original locations are the First State Bank and the *Beecher City Journal* Office. The big hardware in town is gone but Walter Hogge Jr., runs a thriving plant just one mile west of town.

The depot is gone and there are rumors that the Baltimore and Ohio may discontinue their few remaining freight trains. In this case the town will depend directly upon trucks to supply transportation. This may not be such a hardship as Route 33 already has a big truck traffic pattern. The mail has come by truck for many years.

The demise of the town is closely associated with the building of Route 33. It is a remarkable point that the concrete roads that were supposed to be a life line for the small towns proved to be their strangling noose. After the hardroads came, people could work at jobs in adjoining towns. This led to buying goods in Effingham, Decatur, Shelbyville, or Pana. The selections were larger in the bigger towns.

Enough people came back to Beecher City to live so that it became a typical bedroom town. Taxes were low and life was slow and easy. It was a good place in which to live but a poor place in which to make a living. The population is four hundred sixty-six according to the sign at the edge of town (1974).

This change in job location meant that fewer people were really interested in town affairs with buildings gradually deteriorating. In spite of the Kiwanis Club this problem is proliferating. Beecher City has become a place for retirees to come back to and to live out their days. Doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes are just a few minutes drive away.

So we find mobile homes, a garbage collection service, a volunteer fire department, and good water from wells in the Kaskaskia River bottoms. But there is much of the past worth preserving in Beecher City.

A Community Park borders the cemetery. These two institutions symbolize the town. The Park is for the enjoyment of the present generation. The cemetery is a final resting place for previous generations. They will rest easier knowing that Beecher City is dedicated to the past as well as the present and looking to the future.

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Thanks are due to many older citizens of Beecher City for data, advice, and pointing out pertinent points of interest in the early days of the town.

Ethel Allsop Lorton, (© 1974)

## IV. THE BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY AND CHURCH

Many of the first Lutheran settlers in this area came mainly from New York and purchased and settled on railroad land. At the time of settlement these homesteaders, thinking that the railroad (the Baltimore and Ohio) would eventually be built through this area, laid out the plat for a town to be called Bethlehem.

The first Lutheran congregation was started at Bethlehem 4½ miles southwest of Altamont, which was formed at a later date. The families started holding services in the late 1850's. In 1860 a building was erected. The early records are incomplete, and not much information can be found pertaining to the establishment of this congregation and its early years. It is known that from 1861 on there were baptisms and other ministerial acts and that the congregation was served by pastors of the Buffalo Synod. It is also recorded that the first three trustees were Godfried Hoffmeister, John Laatsch and August Wolf.

In 1867 the present church building was erected. The church has the highest steeple in this area, being 114 feet high. It is one of the oldest church buildings in Effingham County still in continuous use as a church.

The Bethlehem cemetery is located just west of the church. The first funeral was held for Auguste Louise Yagow on Sept. 15, 1862. There are approximately 543 tombstones in the cemetery and numerous unmarked graves of which there is no record.

Two Lutheran churches in Mound Township are daughter churches of Bethlehem. The first one was Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Altamont, formed in 1874. The second is Zion Lutheran Church located three miles east of Bethlehem.

Not much information is available concerning the establishment of the school and how it was conducted during the first years of the congregation's existence. A report shows that 123 children attended the school in 1873. The original school is still standing on the grounds; however a modern building was built in 1961.

Presently approximately thirty students attend classes which are taught by two teachers. The children go to high school in Altamont or St. Elmo, depending upon where they live.

The usual church services are held every Sunday. A German service is held on the second Sunday of every month. The present pastor speaks German; in the past a German professor from Springfield came for that service. All of the services were in German until 1948, and it was taught in the school.

Mrs. Paul Yagow told the editor that she and her family speak German but that her grandchildren do not. The younger church members don't learn it anymore.

Additional information on Bethlehem is found in John Russell's chapter, "Towns That Were" in the book, *EFFINGHAM COUNTY, ILLINOIS -- PAST AND PRESENT*.



“The little town of Bethlehem laid out in 1865 with 32 lots and a 462' x 479' lot for church and grounds, suffered about the same fate as Green Creek (another town that failed to grow), except that Bethlehem once had a store and post office. A Lutheran Church was built about 1860 for those in the neighborhood to attend. They also have a fine modern school for children under high school age. Besides the minister's home there are two or three other homes on the plot.”

## V. EDGEWOOD

Mason township is the only township in our County that has two towns of any size within its borders, Mason and Edgewood, each being villages of some four or five hundred people.

Edgewood is the only village, or smaller town in the County that has three railroads -- the Illinois Central, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the branch line of the Illinois Central that was built some twenty-five years ago, down in a southeasterly direction from Effingham into the coal fields.

Also, Edgewood is the only smaller community in the County that ever had two banks at one time. In my youth, there were two banks in Edgewood, the Edgewood State Bank, and the Peoples Bank. However, both of these banks went out of business many years ago, and now Edgewood has none.

Edgewood was laid out and plotted as a town when the Illinois Central Railroad was built through there in about 1857, over a hundred years ago. It was laid out and platted by a man named Galloway who was one of the officials of the Illinois Central Railroad. However, it was not incorporated as a village until 1869.

In an early day there was much timber in the vicinity of Edgewood. There was a great deal of timber industry: cutting timber, railroad ties and bridge timber, and mine props. A number of the early residents of Edgewood became prosperous in this business. Most of the timber was cut off long ago, and now like most of the small Effingham County communities, the principal industry is farming. However, some oil has been found and produced in the vicinity of Edgewood, particularly in Larkinsburg Township, the Clay County Township lying just south of Edgewood, which has several very good oil fields. In fact, Edgewood lacks just a little of being outside of Effingham County; it is almost in Clay, and the south line of the present village is practically the north line of Clay County.

I can recall that I knew, in my youth, quite a few of the prominent people of Edgewood, or at least knew of them. Many of them were quite prominent in Effingham County history and affairs.

One of these was William Gillmore, who was the father of Mrs. George I. Danks of Effingham. Mr. Gillmore, or “Uncle Billy” as he was frequently called, for many years had a large general store in Edgewood. He was a large property owner, and interested in the bank, and for many years one of the leading men in our County. Several other members of the Gillmores held County offices here, among them Leroy Gillmore, who was County Clerk. There are a number of the Gillmore family still living in and about Edgewood. Uncle Billy Gillmore passed on at past ninety years of age, when I was a young man.

Another prominent and well to do citizen of Edgewood was Henry Burton. He also was a large landowner, and was for many years, president of the Edgewood State Bank. Several of his children still live in the Edgewood vicinity, one of them being Harry Burton, who is the supervisor of Mason Township.

Henry Brown was a large land owner and bank director. So far as I know none of his descendants still live in this County. And among others were John Gladson, Pete Davis, William Landberger, Andy Cooper, and Elmer Hoffman, long since passed away, but who in their day were well known not only in Edgewood, but all over this County.

Edgewood is still a very good little community, and has a number of enterprising businessmen. But, as many of our smaller towns, it has not grown much in the past generation. The coming of the paved highway, which was much sought after at the time, tended to take business away from the small towns, rather than bring it in. Edgewood has had the same experience in that respect as has many other small towns.

But it is still a good place to live, has a prosperous farm country near it, and many good people among its citizens.

## VI. MASON

From what I have learned about Mason, from history before my time, it was first settled about the time the Illinois Central Railroad was built through there in the 1850s, over a hundred years ago. Three men, who owned most of the land where the town is located, Aaron W. Henry, Josiah W. Robinson and Richard W. Rankin, laid it out in town lots and began to sell it out to others. We lawyers and abstractors, who go over old abstracts and examine land titles, find their names on most of the early deeds to Mason property. The town was first known as Bristol. Then for some years it was known as "Clio", and finally the name of Mason was adopted. It was incorporated as a village in 1865.

I have learned from the records of others, that Aaron W. Henry, who was one of the original men who laid out the town, had the first store in Mason, and was its first United States Postmaster. The second man who had a store was Steven Hardin. The Hardins have been a well known family in Mason ever since.

In speaking of other townships and communities in this County, I have mentioned that most of them were settled in part by people of English or Scotch Irish descent, and also by people of German descent, these groups having formed most of our early settlers. But Mason differed, in that it was settled almost entirely by people of English and Scotch Irish descent, and there are still only very few people of original German descent living in Mason.

Mason has had several things of interest happen to it within my recollection. First, it has had two very disastrous fires in the business district, which destroyed a large part of their business houses. One about sixty years ago; and the next one about fifty years ago. I well remember the second fire. As just a young man, I was going down there about some business, and left Effingham on an early Illinois Central Railroad train,

which then left Effingham at about 4:00 a.m. When I got off at the depot at Mason, practically the entire town seemed to be on fire, and a large part of the business section did burn down, and I know on that account I did not get my business attended to.

Then another event in later years, more favorable, was the discovery of oil in Mason a little over twenty years ago, at about the time our oil boom in this County first developed, and the first actual wells in this County were in the Village of Mason. There was a great furor of town lot leasing, and several producing wells were, in fact, drilled in the village. But, the boom developed more lawsuits than it did oil, and the wells did not produce very long. The oil boom in the village itself died out, though there is later development of oil a little south of Mason.

I can remember that I have had pointed out to me in my early years, a place just north of Mason, where I was told the Mason Salt Works were located, but it had been abandoned before my time, and I know little about it.

Among the early residents and business places that I can remember were the Mills General Store, which was for many years, the principal general store in Mason. Another early prominent resident and well to do citizen, was John A. Read, who was a large landowner, and for years kept the hotel in Mason.

D. H., or Hank, Holloway was another prominent citizen in my youth. Others were: A. K. Gibson, who managed the bank in Mason, and Harrison Ruffner, the father of Ed Ruffner who is still with us—Ed is now himself in his eighties so you can well realize that his father was one of the really old timers. Additional prominent citizens were several Martins, whose first names I cannot recall; W. O. Cornwell, who had the little drug store; and the Hardsocks who had the mill. Mason for years had a newspaper, for many years edited by a Nettie Richmond and another lady. Of course there were many other prominent, old Mason residents, whose names I do not recall off hand. But all of them now long passed away, except A. K. Gibson, who is still living at Mattoon.

Mason, like many others of our little villages, suffered rather than gained by the building of the paved highways, which instead of bringing people into the community, took business away to larger places. As stated in my first recollection, Mason had a bank, newspaper, railroad station, and hotel all of which are now gone. There are not now half as many business places in Mason, as there were at my first recollection.

But most of the people there now, are fine people and good citizens; and the farming community about it has grown in prosperity over the years, and it is still a good place to live.



## VII. TEUTOPOLIS THROUGH THE YEARS

A group of German-Americans in Cincinnati felt that opportunity lay west. A committee consisting of Clement Uptmor, John F. Waschefort, and Gerard H. Bergfeld set out from Cincinnati on April 17, 1837, to find a place, which should include good farm land. They finally selected a tract in the northwest corner of Effingham county.

Other members of the Land Company, John Gerard Meyer and Henry Roennebaum, were chosen to further inspect the site. The tract consisted of about 10,000 acres, and was purchased for \$1.25 per acre.

This community was named Teutopolis. The name signifies "City of Germans."

- 1839 - First settlers to arrive, Henry Worman and wife, John H. Bergfeld, John Bernard Tebb, J. H. Uptmor and family.  
John H. Uptmor built the first house, the first child was born Oct. 13, she was Elizabeth Boeckmann, daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth (Jansen) Boeckmann. Father Masquelet baptized the child at Teutopolis.
- 1841 - First stores, and construction begun for a windmill for grinding flour on the site now occupied by the tower of St. Joseph's Seminary.
- 1842 - A post office.
- 1843 - Rev. T. V. Mullen, O.S.A. pastor of Newton, was also pastor of Teutopolis, assisted by Rev. Roman Weinzoeplen, who had the advantage of being versed in the German language.
- 1844 - Rev. J. Vabret became the next pastor followed by Rev. Carl Joseph Opperman.
- 1845 - Teutopolis was incorporated as a village. The first official act of the trustees was the granting of a retail liquor license to Anton Rabe, at an annual fee of \$25.
- 1846 - A stage coach line started running through Teutopolis on its way from Indianapolis to St. Louis. Jacob Fuelle maintained one of the relay stations in connection with his tavern.
- 1848 - First major disaster, a tornado, struck on Feb. 19. Several of the townspeople were badly injured. Trees were blown down, fences destroyed, and the wings of the Uptmor Brothers wind driven flour mill were broken off. Several homes were destroyed, the church was unroofed, as were most of the other structures in town.
- 1849 - The army worm was disastrous.
- 1850 - A railroad survey was completed. Included in Teutopolis parish was Effingham, Green Creek, Bishop Creek and some surrounding counties.

- 1851 - July 20 date of Celebration.
- 1852 - Land sold to help pay for the church but not enough raised to finish it.
- 1853 - Easter Day, March 27, Divine Service held first time, also first Communion.
- 1854 - Rev. Charles F. Raphael took charge of the parish.
- 1857 - The parish had a debt of \$7000 and the church still not completed.
- 1858 - Cornerstone laid for a new parsonage. The situation in Teutopolis had not been solved, however. The turnover in pastors was high, as a result the congregation had no assurance of regular services. The Bishop went to Rome to obtain priests. The first priests and brothers arrived, and used the east brick wing of what is now Albert Hawickhorst's Grocery, as a temporary monastery for a few months. Rev. Damian Hennewig was the first Franciscan.
- 1867 - Father Hilterman purchased a new organ, erected the Girls' school and Academy and built the steeple for the church.
- 1868 - Surveying being done for a new railroad, bonds were sold to defray the cost of this survey.
- 1869 - Clement Uptmor transferred his postmastership to Joseph Habing, also the first railroad freight was delivered, two carloads of salt.
- 1870 - June 12, passenger trains began to run according to schedule.
- 1872 - Two village sons arrived with Doctor's diplomas, Joseph Brumleve and John Kroeger.
- 1876 - Rev. Damasus Ruesing, O.V.M., became pastor. He erected the boy's school east of the church and was soon appointed one of the first Definitors of the Province.
- 1879 - Improvements in the church, installation of new windows, renewal of the steeple in 1886. Installation of a new tower clock. John Waschefort, one of the early settlers, died at age 68.
- 1883 - Fire engine purchased.
- 1884 - Henry Uptmor, Teutopolis' first citizen, died.
- 1885 - The Waschefort mill owned by John Weis was destroyed by fire. Citizens went west to inspect western land under consideration.
- 1886 - Many residents left for Idaho to make permanent homes.

- 1889 - Steam heat was installed in church. The Franciscans were allowed a permanent collection.
- 1890 - A plat was made of the village.
- 1892 - The "grippe" was present and the suffering was great.
- 1893 - Caspar Nolte, architect and builder of St. Francis Church, at Effingham, died.
- 1894 - Uptmor and Siemer erected a new elevator, John Burford built steel cells for the Jail, Coxey's army came thru Teutopolis. Machinery for tannery arrived, 20 men were employed. Ben Weber and Clem Hoedebecke took over the Frank Adams' Hardware Store and thus were made the beginnings of Weber Bros.
- 1895 - Contract for 600,000 bricks for the college was awarded to George Deymann.
- 1896 - American Bell Telephone Co. began to stretch its lines thru Teutopolis.
- 1898 - *Teutopolis Press* was started by C. A. Worman. William Van Oy was appointed postmaster.
- 1899 - Erection of crucifixion group in the cemetery and erection of Society Hall. Louis Rieg celebrated his 25th year in the teaching field.
- 1900 - Census population was 485.
- 1901 - The Star Creamery was opened.
- 1902 - A small pox epidemic.
- 1903 - An Addition to the Monastery to serve as the Novitiate.
- 1906 - Clement Uptmor, the first child born in town, died.
- 1912 - Teutopolis' two doctors, Joseph Brumleve and Lawrence Brumleve, father and son, died within two weeks of each other.
- 1935 - "Wooden Shoe" identification was born.
- 1939 - Centennial commemorating the arrival of the first settlers.

(Source material: *1851-1926 Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee of St. Francis Church, Teutopolis.*)

## VIII. HISTORY OF WATSON

Watson was born October 26th, 1857, and at the time of this writing, March 29th, 1965, is 107½ years old.

Clifford Stevens, of Effingham, who did the research on Watson's history said it was named for an Illinois Central official named Watson.

Reasons for its popularity as a settlement included the fact that it was a center of travel. The Illinois Central Railroad was a boon to the town, being the first railroad to link the north and south. The main road from east to west was through Elliottstown, and Watson. There was also a road to the north parallel to the river.

Fords over the little Wabash river were:

A — to the Northwest in Section 22, Jackson.

B — to the Southwest in Section 34, Jackson.

C — to the South in Section 8, Union.

Watson was also located near the center of the county, which was probably responsible for the first fairgrounds being located there.

There are five bridges within a third of a mile of Watson. The first was the Old Salem Road Bridge, southwest of Watson. To the west of this bridge, some 15 feet, are the footings of the oldest bridge. The Illinois Central built a sturdy bridge south of Watson; a good bridge was built over the Wabash when state route 37 was laid, and now there is a new bridge to carry Interstate 57 over the river.

The earliest settlers of Watson, as indicated by records, were the following:

Mr. Davenport from Tennessee who came in 1830 and died in 1840; John Hutson of Alabama who came in 1835. Others included Benjamin Bryant, Mr. Browning, Mr. Hafhill, C. I. Blanksett, the hunter, John Funk who was born in Virginia, Mike Sprinkle, Dan Rhinehart, the County Clerk; Mr. Moody, Mr. Hillis, Mr. Taylor, Daniel LeCrone from Ohio whose son was an Effingham physician, William LeCrone, and the Loys.

The first store was opened in 1857 by David Trexler. After one year it was sold to Martin LeCrone. In 1859 it was sold to D. T. Burroughs; in 1860, it was again sold to Kire Bradley. He sold it to Moore and Greenleaf.

In 1862, William Abraham purchased the store. Mr. Abraham built a two story building and sold groceries, shoes, staples, hardware, clothing, dry goods and coffins. He bought hides, cream, butter, other farm products and farms.

Mr. Abraham also built the Watson State Bank, located on the south side of what is now Route 37.

He also built a very good house, replacing the little one they first occupied. The home, an ornate "mansion", is now owned by the Martins, and is still a handsome residence. It was located a block south of the store. (My mother, Mary S. Westfall Buchholz, worked there when she was a young woman.)

Mr. Abraham was born in Ohio in 1842; he established a store in Elliottstown in 1860. In 1861 he enlisted in the army and was honorably discharged in August of 1863. His mother died on the battlefield at Murphysboro, Tenn., in 1862. It was not unusual for women to visit or to work and aid wounded soldiers on the battlefield during the Civil War.

Other grocery stores in Watson were P. N. Martin's General Store. The store, located on the west side of the I. C., was a small one. My father, George Buchholz, later built a larger one on the corner. It too is gone now.

J. D. D. Williamson, a teacher, also opened a store. Located on the south side of Route 37, it was adjacent to the Watson Switchboard. Across the street from the Williamson store was the Millinery store operated by Rose and Mary Williamson. They had "naked" hats with many ribbons and flowers. You selected the hat you wanted and they trimmed it with the flowers and ribbons you selected.

Also in Watson was a canning factory. Bud Martin was influential in getting it to locate in Watson. (My mother worked in the factory - also her sister, Deniza, for two seasons.) The tomatoes were peeled and went down an assembly line to be cooked and canned in metal containers; hot lead-like material was used to seal them. Laura Humes of Effingham put the labels on. The factory "went flooey" after two years. Residents complained of the odor of rotting tomatoes, tomato waste, etc.

Watson had two hotels - Wilson Hotel, owned by the John Wilsons, across from the depot to the east. It was a story frame with about ten rooms. People who got off the train stopped there, drummers, and travelers. (My mother worked at the hotel cleaning rooms and served the tables. She worked there about two years.) The Hotel later was demolished and two houses built in its place - for the Wilson's daughters - Mollie Claar and Nellie Elliott. The houses were two of Watson's finest, and still stand.

The Bails Hotel was located on the south side of the present Route 37, and was also pretty busy. Later the Watson House was built on the west side of the I.C. tracks south of P. M. Martin's Store. It didn't last long.

Charlie Smith has a grocery store located near the Bill Withers store and post office. This was on the north side of the street. Both Smith and Withers were so grouchy that they had little business, according to reports.

Bill Jaycox had a store on the east side of the railroad, near the crossing. Located on the south side of the road, it was a two story structure; the Jaycox family resided upstairs. This store also "went flooey."

Jacob Claar was the first Illinois Central freight agent. Jack Claar succeeded his father as depot agent; he married Mollie Wilson.

The freight depot was the busiest business in Watson for many years. Adjacent to the depot were stacks of saplings called "whoop poles" which were used to put around barrels. Farmers cut them and brought them in. There were also railroad ties by the pile; merchants bought the ties from farmers who cut and split them in winter, and brought them in by sled or wagon. I have heard my father tell how they received "due bills" from Abraham's and other stores which they traded for groceries. No money was received. J. P. Reynolds and Jake Claar were in the business of selling railroad ties and hoop poles.

The I. C. cattle yards were north of the crossing on the west side.

Jaoh Bales and later his son, Henry, had a blacksmith shop. It was located east of the hotel. Dave Anderson had a blacksmith shop also. Another blacksmith shop was operated by Uncle Isaac Flemming who was a wagon maker. His business was located on the south side of the main road through town, at the east end.



Daddy Vinson's Drug Store was a business establishment.

The Watson Masonic lodge was organized Oct. 6, 1868.

Frederick Brockett had a saw mill on the river in section 7 or 8, south of Watson.

There was a grist mill operated by Jimmy Russell southwest of Watson. Each farmer used his own horses to turn the buhrstones to grind their own corn into meal. (we have one of the millstones.)

Henry Rhode was a shoe cobbler and harness maker. Shoes were also made in Watson.

Rabbits were bought, bringing about 8c each. They were shipped to Chicago - head, fluffy tail, insides and all.

Robert Martin, who lived south of Watson, caught live redbirds and shipped the males away.

Fin Todd Butler had a restaurant on the north side of the street. He always had tobacco juice staining the corners of his mouth and juice extending down in liquid form.

His sister, Mary Todd Butler, had members of the Christian Church in stitches on Sunday afternoon during church services when a wasp flew up her dress and stung her. Surprised and pained, she leaped to her feet announcing loudly, "One stung me, by doggies!" Then she told where.

A. J. Vance had a hardware store in Watson, and the Schooley brothers had a furniture store. George and Presley Neaville had a livery stable. A. D. Hurst also operated a hotel.

William Henderson operated a saw mill, hoop factory and grist mill in the south west part of Watson. A. J. Vance built a stem saw mill in 1867.

John Ryan Sr. operated a saloon. William Henderson and Sam Reynolds had a flour mill.

Many persons from Trapp Prairie, Salt Creek, Loy Prairie and areas west traded in Watson.















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