

HISTORY OF CLINTON COUNTY, MISSOURI.

one in the north, west and east, and twenty-five windows. The contract was taken by Solomon Kimsey, and the building was completed the following year at a cost of about two thousand dollars. This building was erected on the public square and used and occupied until the year 1858, when it was torn down, and the present magnificent structure erected in its place at a cost of near fifty thousand dollars.

The first election of County officers was held on the first Monday in August, 1834, at which John Biggerstaff, Stephen Jones and Washington Huffaker were elected Justices of the County Court. At the first session after their election the new Court organized by selecting John Biggerstaff as Presiding Justice. About this time the name of the seat of Justice was again changed from Springfield to Plattsburg.

For nearly ten years it was not deemed necessary to erect a jail, criminals not being so numerous as now; but in 1842 it was determined that in order to maintain good government and enforce an obedience to the laws it was necessary to have a common jail. Hence it was ordered that the Commissioner proceed to let out the contract for the erection of a prison, which was to be two stories high and sixteen feet square, one room, or cell, below and one room above, the walls to be thirty-three inches thick, and floors and doors in proportion, with wrought iron hinges, bolts and locks. This building was erected on lot 77, by Martin M. Nagle, at a cost of eight hundred dollars, and was used as the County Jail for a number of years, when it was finally condemned and the present jail built in the basement of the court-house.

At the time of the erection of the first court-house Plattsburg, then Springfield, was quite a small place, and a lonely-looking County seat surrounded, as it was, on three sides by dense forests and thick undergrowth and on the other by wild prairie; yet, by the strong will and persevering hearts of the pioneer settler, all difficulty was overcome and the little village soon arose to a state of prosperity.

The first session of the Circuit Court was held in the little eight by ten log house of Richard Rees, before mentioned, except in good weather, and then the Court would adjourn to the woods, and the Judge take a stump and the jury a log, the attorneys adjusting themselves as best they could. Many amusing pleasantries might be related in connection with the early sessions of the Circuit Court, but space forbids it here. In 1863 a small company of guerrillas, under command of Joe Hart, entered the town and set fire to the Court House and in the vaults of the Circuit Clerk's office, which resulted in the destruction of all the old Circuit Court records, and hence we are left in the dark as to the early history of this court in Clinton County, and cannot give either the first case or the names of the first grand and petit jurors.

The first merchants' license was issued to George W. and E. M. Samuel, October 17th, 1834, who at that time sold goods in a log house on the south side of the public square, as before referred to.

The first hotel was kept by Joseph Hunter in a double log house near where the Clinton Hotel now stands.

The first preachers who ventured into the wilds of Clinton County were William Caples, of the M. E. Church South, and Duke Young, of the Christian Church, each of whom are now dead, but their memory is still sacred in the hearts of many of our citizens who have listened to their valuable sermons.

PLATTSBURG.

The city of Plattsburg, the county-seat of Clinton county, is situated near the center of the county, fifty miles north of Kansas City, forty miles from Leavenworth and Atchison, in Kansas, and thirty miles from St. Joseph, is pleasantly located and has the benefit of the Junction of two great thorough arteries of commerce, the St. L., K. C. and N. and C., E. I. and P. Railroads; has a population of about 1,500, and its public buildings rank the best in the State. The principal streets are macadamized. The people are alive to the interests of education. The surrounding country on the north and west is high rolling prairie, and on the south and east is timber and wood-land. Plattsburg has seven churches, Methodist South, Missionary Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian, Catholic and colored Baptist, one large brick seminary besides a splendid public school building and a school-house for the colored people. It has two flouring mills, with woolen and saw mills attached, about twenty stores of various kinds, two newspapers, three hotels, two banks and all other branches of business and manufactures represented, besides a share of lawyers, doctors and preachers. There is no pleasanter place in the State to live than in Plattsburg.

CAMERON.

Cameron is situated eighteen miles northeast of Plattsburg, at the Junction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph, Cameron and Kansas City, and Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroads; has a population of near 2,000, and is surrounded by a rich and productive country. Its public buildings are among the best in the State, particularly the public school building which is second to none; the church buildings are first class, and almost every denomination is represented with a fine house for worship. The people are wide awake to their interests, industrious, and persevering and enterprising. It has two large hotels and many smaller ones, two newspapers, two banks, two mills and about thirty stores with a fair representation in the way of preachers, doctors and lawyers. Cameron is quite a town, and in fact is one of the most important places on the line of the H. and St. Jo. R. R. It is well adapted to manufacturing interests, and a pleasant place to reside.

LATHROP.

Lathrop is situated about seven miles east of Plattsburg, at the Junction of the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Northern with the Cameron and Kansas City branch of Hannibal and St. Joseph railroads, and has a population of about 750; is well supplied with churches and schools. The public school building is among the best in the State, and its churches and other buildings compare favorably with other towns. It has quite a number of stores, two hotels, one large flouring mill, one newspaper, one bank, and is well represented in the various industries and manufactures. The citizens are noted for their enterprise and industry, and take great pride in their thrifty town and beautiful surrounding country. This is a good point for all kinds of business, and is a healthy, sweet, and pleasant town.

OSBORN.

The town of Osborn in reality, is situated in Dekalb county, thirteen miles north of Plattsburg, yet the plot shows one half of it to be in Clinton. In fact the substance is in Dekalb and the shadow in Clinton. Hence, we can only refer to the plot for our part of the town, and to the history of Dekalb county for the substance.

HAINESVILLE.

The town of Hainesville is situated about twelve miles south east of the county-seat, has a population of about 150; is well off in the way of churches and at one time prided in its schools, is surrounded by a wealthy country, and at one time was the most thrifty town in the county; but the building of railroads and the establishment of new trading points have greatly retarded its progress. Yet it is a town for all that, and its citizens and the people in the neighborhood are noted for their genuine hospitality and friendship.

TURNKEY.

Turney is situated on the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad about ten miles north east of Plattsburg, and was named in honor of Judge Thos. E. Turney of Cameron. It has two churches, two stores, wagon and blacksmith shop with other trades and professions represented. It being situate in the midst of a fine agricultural country, has a good trade.

It is said that David Hughes was the first physician in the County, and Richard R. Rees the first lawyer.

The first road petitioned for and established was the Plattsburg and Richmond road. John Livingston, James McCowan, Elijah Jackson and Littleton Roberts were appointed Commissioners to view and locate the same.

The first bridge erected in the County was across Horse Fork of Platte, at the place where the Railroad bridge now spans said stream, just east of the town of Plattsburg.

As before stated, Jackson township was laid off and organized in 1833; Ezekiel Smith first constable.

Lafayette the same year, and James Hall first constable.

Concord the same year; Abner Jackson first constable.

Hardin was laid off in 1834; Joseph Gist first constable.

School township was laid off in 1839 and was first called Baldwin, in honor of Isaac D. Baldwin, one of its first settlers, and who was also the first constable.

The townships of Clinton, Atchison, Platte and Lathrop were not laid off until the year 1871.

The following are the towns situated in the County, which will be more particularly noticed hereafter:

Plattsburg, as before stated, was selected as the seat of Justice and laid off into lots, squares, streets and alleys in 1833, by authority of the County Court, and was first incorporated May, 1835. John M. Evans, James H. Long, Shadrack B. Taylor, Elijah P. Howell and James Smith were appointed trustees.

The town of Hainesville was laid out by Solomon Kinsey, William F. Franklin and James R. Coffman in July, 1840.

Osborn, the south half of which is in Clinton County, was laid out on the 21st of June, 1858, by John Duff and William Osborn.

In the year 1859, and on the 12th day of May, the town of Cameron was laid out and dedicated to public use by E. M. Samuel, William E. Croysdall and Col. M. F. Furnan.

On the 6th of January, 1863, the town of Turney was laid out by James S. Harris, land commissioner of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad Company.

Lathrop was laid out on the 6th of June, of the same year, by the same parties.

In 1870 the town of Gower was laid out by Daniel Smith.

Grayson was made a town on the 19th day of April, 1871, by Henry B. Baker.

Perrine was laid off by Thomas E. Turney on the 25th of March, 1873.

The towns of Bainbridge and Starfield were founded some years since, but have no place on the record; unlike some others, they show more in substance than on paper.

Nothing of particular importance transpired in the history of the County until the year 1839, when the troubles began with the Mormons, who had made a settlement and established themselves at Far West, about twenty miles northeast of Plattsburg in Caldwell County, and who were openly violating the laws of the land and resisting the officers of the county. Then it was that Governor Boggs issued his proclamation, ordering General David R. Atchison to call out the militia in his division which he promptly did, and many citi-

zens of this County volunteered their services. This prompt action on the part of the State officials and the citizens soon resulted in the surrender and expulsion of the Mormons without serious trouble or bloodshed.

Early in the year 1843, the country now called Northwest Missouri, had increased in population so much that it was necessary to establish a new land office. And the Government, through the instrumentality of Judge James H. Birch, located it at Plattsburg. Judge Birch was the first Register and E. M. Samuel the first Receiver of the new land office. The office was continued at Plattsburg with various changes in its officers, as the political tendency might determine, until the year 1859, when it was removed and consolidated with various other offices at Booneville, in this State. Charles W. Porter was the last Register. The first tract of land entered at the new office was by John Culver, of Kentucky, and is at present owned by Samuel G. Biggerstaff. During the next few years the County continued to increase in prosperity, wealth and population; when, in 1846, the Mexican war began, and Clinton was again on hand and among the first to respond to the call for volunteers. Quite a number of these veteran soldiers still survive and reside in the County.

In the year 1857 the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was completed through the county. There was a steady and growing increase in population and wealth, until in 1861, domestic war fell upon our country and in the excitement and heated contest of that period our people took a lively interest, and were nearly equally divided in sentiment, the natural results growing out of, and incident to the war, did not fail to reach Clinton county, and hence our former prosperity was checked, and that rapid progress that characterized our people was retarded during the years of war. To narrate all or even a part of the events which occurred during this unfortunate period, would be to consume more space than is allotted to us in this history. Let the future and impartial historian take up the threads and heal if he can the wounds and bitterness of that great civil strife. We leave the subject and draw the veil over these most unfortunate years of the country's history.

Shortly after the close of the war, the Cameron and Kansas City branch of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was completed, and hence opened another artery of commerce through the county.

In 1869 the construction of the St. Louis and St. Joseph Railroad was commenced, and in the year 1871 was completed, running diagonally through the county from north west to south east, which road is now in the hands of and operated by the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Northern Railway Company.

Shortly after the completion of this road, another the Chicago and South-west was completed through the county from the north east to the south west; this road has been leased and is operated by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company. To aid in the construction of these two roads the county of Clinton issued its bonds to the amount of \$200,000, \$100,000 to each road, which action of the county court was authorized by vote of the people previously taken. The interest on these bonds has been promptly paid, and the principal reduced to \$175,000. Thus our credit has been kept up by prompt action and good management on the part of the people and county officers, and we can boast to-day of more miles of railroad for less money than any county in the state.

CITIES AND TOWNS.

GOWER.

This place is situated ten miles west of Plattsburg on the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Northern railway. This is a new town and drives quite a trade in various branches of business. Its merchants and business men, are noted for honesty and fair dealing. It is surrounded by what is said to be the richest and best agricultural portion of the county.

CONVERSE.

This point is situated on the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Northern railway twelve miles south east of Plattsburg, has one store and post office, with fine country surroundings.

PERRINE.

Perrine is a new place and shows better on paper than any other way. Yet its surroundings would indicate at no distant day quite a lively town.

STARFIELD.

Is situated on Castle creek six miles west of Plattsburg, is an old place, and at one time bid fair to make quite a town; but like many other she has no doubt, seen her best days.

BAINBRIDGE.

This place is situated on the East Fork of Little Platte six miles south west of Plattsburg, has flouring and saw-mill, and distillery, one store, and a school-house in the neighborhood, is in the oldest settled portion of the county.

GRAYSON.

Last, but not least, is situated about six miles south west of Plattsburg, on the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific railroad. Judging from its surroundings, it bids fair at some future day to make quite a town.

The population of the county at present may be safely put at 18,000; in 1870 it was 14,000, and in 1860, 8,000.

There are sixty public schools in the county, endowed with a permanent fund arising from the sale of school and swamp lands. Ever since the organization of the county, the school fund has been securely guarded to advance the public schools in the county. The county court is the custodian of this fund, and it is loaned out at the rate of ten per cent. interest, payable annually. The interest together with the amount annually received from the state school fund aggregates about \$12,500. The schools in the county are kept open in most districts six months of each year and in many districts as long as nine months. Most of the school buildings are new and substantial structures, and denote the interest manifested by the people in the cause of education.

Clinton county has an area of four hundred and twenty square miles, much the greater portion of which is improved and in high state of cultivation. The land is rich, fertile and productive, adapted to the growth of all kinds of small grain, corn, hemp, grass and tobacco, and we think it can be safely said that there is no county in the state that can excel Clinton as an agricultural and stock county, and as to the growth of grass, even the boasted soil of Kentucky does not produce finer blue grass than Clinton county. Nature has lavishly bestowed her gifts on Clinton county. Soil rich and fertile with water and timber in abundance, and no doubt future developments will result in permanent and valuable minerals. Experiments have been made, but by lack of perseverance have been abandoned. It is only a short distance to the rich coal fields of Ray, and why not develop our own beds which underlie the whole county? No doubt in the future great developments will be made and our minerals will be another source of wealth. As well will the future writer of the history of Clinton county improve on the present feeble effort.

In conclusion we regret to say that much more might have been said in this short sketch that would no doubt have been interesting to many of our first settlers who are yet alive, but except to such history on so small and feeble a scale as this fails to satisfy the ambitious and searching reader, but it could not be expected that in grouping these facts together that we should enter into the minutia and detail of every day life, and each official proceeding in the county. Many facts connected with the early settlement and history of the county, we would have given had it been possible to obtain them. All the early records of the circuit court were burned during our late unfortunate civil war, and hence we have to leave out all that part of our history which no doubt would make an interesting chapter if properly put together, and detailed as the records

would show. Considering the difficulty in obtaining facts, we ask that all mistakes and errors be overlooked, for we have tried in our crude and feeble way to give an honest review of the early history of our county. We therefore leave the matter with you and trust that when another history of the county is written, it will be by an abler and more competent man.

BIOGRAPHIES.

GOV. GEO. SMITH.

Gov. Geo. Smith was born in Columbiana County, Ohio, on the 2nd day of February, 1809. In the fall of 1837 Gov. Smith was elected to the Ohio Legislature and served in the Session of 1837 and 1838, and was then returned by an increased majority and served in the Session of 1838 and 1839 and in the fall of 1852. Gov. Smith was elected to the Missouri Legislature as a Benton Democrat, and by Gov. Smith's efforts the Union men secured full control of the affairs of Caldwell County, Mo., and he was elected to represent his fellow Unionists in the Legislature of 1862 and 1864. In 1864 at the Republican State Convention Gov. Smith was nominated for Lieutenant Governor and was elected. For four years Gov. Smith presided over the State Senate with marked ability. He well performed the arduous duties that devolved upon the presiding officer of the Senate, in the most critical period of Missouri's history.

WILLIAM F. DAVIS.

Was born in Buchanan County, Missouri, near Rock Horse Prairie on the 12th day of January, 1840. He was the son of Ishmael Davis, who came from Lewis County, Kentucky, and settled in Hannibal in 1833, removing from the latter place to Clinton County in 1834, and in 1836 he was one of the first settlers of what was known as the "Platte Purchase," settling in that district in Rock Horse Prairie, living there until 1856, moving from there to Platte County, where he resided until 1863, and until a short time previous to his death which occurred in the fall of that year in St. Joseph.

William F. Davis, the subject of this sketch, lived on his father's farm until 1857, when he went to Kansas for one year. Returning to Missouri, he entered Plattsburg College, then under charge of Rev. L. M. Lewis, where he remained for a time; returning then to the farm again, he remained there until 1861 when he went into the Confederate army remaining there until 1863, returning home on account of ill-health after receiving an honorable discharge. He moved to Clinton County in 1870, and afterwards engaged in the mercantile business at Union Mills for three years. In 1865 he was married to Miss Virginia B. Ashby of Richmond Mo., and removed in 1870 to Plattsburg, Missouri, where he continued in the mercantile business until 1882, when he was elected sheriff of Clinton County over the regular nominee of the Democratic party, receiving the votes of both Republicans and Democrats, and obtaining a majority of 442 out of about 2,500 votes. He filled the position so satisfactorily, that in 1874 he received by a very large majority, the nomination of the Democratic party for a second term, and was elected over a fusion candidate nominated by a coalition of Republicans and Democrats, by 539 majority. In 1876 he became a candidate for Collector and was nominated over his opponent—who was a candidate for a second term in that office—in a Democratic primary election by 214 majority. Mr. DAVIS, it will be seen from these facts, is one of the most popular men in Clinton County. Indeed, it is a common remark that no man can beat "Frank Davis" for an office in Clinton County. He is distinguished for his politics, honesty, and accommodating disposition. He is a man who is always true to his friends, kind, benevolent, charitable, and a liberal contributor to every good cause and worthy enterprise. Mr. Davis is a splendid type of the self-made man, never having received any education except such as was furnished in the early days in the log school-house when he could be spared from his daily labors at occasional intervals. He is a good business man, correct and moral in his habits and a very consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. His word is good at all times, and he enjoys the absolute confidence of all his neighbors and acquaintances.