

CHAPTER XIX

MARRIAGE AND EARLY LIFE

Since the organization of Starke County there have been 4,380 marriage licenses granted up to Christmas of 1914, and during that time there has been about one divorce to ten marriages, making about four hundred and thirty-eight divorces granted during the same time.

It is a pleasure to hear some of the old citizens tell of their ways of living in an early day. Then there are the younger generation that recollect what their parents had to say about the county and its condition before they were old enough to recollect anything about the early days. Many of those now living here were not born at that time, but like the writer they can recollect the story that has been so often told by their parents. A good many, however, can look back into the dim ages of the past and see and have some knowledge of the early days, which of course is not clear to them but gives them a sort of distant knowledge of the past history of the early settlers in Starke County.

It seems though that marriage has not been overlooked in the county, notwithstanding the hardships encountered, for as I have said the first marriage license was issued to James Cannon in 1850 and marriage continues to be the practice ever since that time. Those first settlers, wanting to make life as pleasant as possible, could do so much easier with a companion to cheer them on the way and encourage them to endure those obstacles that so often loom up before the face of man in an unknown land.

The following gives the dates and names of some of the old settlers' marriages and where they located soon after; some locating in Knox and some in the country, but all with that one aim in view, to live the best life that it was possible to do under all the circumstances confronting them. Many old citizens of the pioneer days could sit and talk over the old days for hours, telling of the hardships they endured when first locating in Starke County. With no roads, no bridges and but very little of the land in cultivation, it was an awful trying time. Many of our early citizens would, when going a few miles away from their little cabins, blaze the trees to designate their route on their return home, many time encountering a wild wolf or some other wild animal before arriving at their own cabin door.

Jesse Fletcher, now living here in Knox, with his parents was among the first settlers of Washington Township, locating there in 1844.

There were Stephen Lark and the Coffin families, the Daums, the Van Notes, the Deens, Tilla Page and the Pecks, the Swartzells, the Poormans, the Goons, the Bakers, the Van Arsdolls, the Walkers, the Andersons, and many more that settled in Starke County about the time of the organization of the county and some before that time. Some yet living can tell of the hardship, the privations and the suffering of those pioneer days in a new country. The same is true of all the townships in the county. Horace Stow located in Center Township in 1848 and often he has told of his experience in this county, with no roads, no schools, no



INTERIOR VIEW OF EARLY HOME

churches and in fact no neighbors. It was a desolate and an uncomfortable experience to him and his family. Soon among them came the Laramores, the Hatters, the Shorts, and the Tibbits and many more that settled in Center Township ere the county seat was located, but by their long suffering they endured to the end and lived and prospered in a new land.

Oregon Township, like those just spoken of, has some of the old citizens still living. The Koontz, the Awalds, the Gopperts, the Uncaphers, the Sults, and many more who located in that township about the time that the county was organized, still live to tell of the early days that they experienced just after locating here. Many privations and

hard spent days they passed before they could accumulate enough of this world's goods to place them upon easy living, but those same citizens can look back to the cold bleak days of perpetual hardship upon those broad plains and can now acknowledge the pleasure of living upon the same land where was then a hard struggle for life, a place that many of us would surrender and give up in despair if we were placed in the same conditions as were those people when the county was so new.

We could take up each township separately but it would be sufficient to say that from what can be learned of them that about the same conditions prevailed in all parts of the county at that time. James Cannon, who married Nancy Lane the year that Starke County was organized, and Abraham Welsh one year later, who married Elizabeth Collins of California Township, and Samuel Tinkey, who married Catharine Kibler of Oregon Township, and James Evans, who married Mary J. Graham of Washington Township, and David L. Wood, who married Frances Cunningham of North Bend Township, all in the year of 1851, if they were living today could give you an interesting history of their pioneer days in this county when living here several years after their first location in this county. William Osborn, now living in Culver, Indiana, about three miles from the farm he located in the '40s, made a speech at the old settlers' meeting here a year ago that was very interesting to those that had the pleasure of hearing him. In it he spoke briefly of his pioneer days in this county. Mr. Osborn is in the enjoyment of fairly good health and is widely known by most of the citizens of Starke County, having been one among the first to locate here about the year 1848.

Then there was Andrew W. Porter, who was afterwards the clerk of the Starke Circuit Court, whose wife was Rebecca Mahan, whom he married in 1852; and Solon O. Whitson, who married Mrs. Sarah Case in 1852 and located in section 5 in North Bend Township; and Charles Humphrey, who as I have already said was the first practicing physician in Starke County, who married Miss Marsha Abbot in the year of 1852. Jacob Bozarth, who was the first county recorder of Starke County, married Charlotte Short in the year 1852. Adam Lambert married Rachel Tillman (given elsewhere in this volume as Rachel Tillman Lambert), she being the first white woman to locate in Starke County, as has been mentioned elsewhere in this history, having married the said Adam Tillman in the year 1852, and took up their residence in Knox and remained here until their death. The first marriage license issued in Starke County after the writer came to the county when a mere boy, was issued to John W. Osborn of North Bend Township to marry Sarah Mishler on the 11th of November, 1853. Mr. Osborn died a few years ago. He was a brother of William Osborn, who lives in Culver, Indiana.

The writer was personally acquainted with nearly all of those mentioned and of course was acquainted with many more mentioned in the list taken from the tract book in the early days of Starke County to the present time. The Wyants and Van Blarions were residents of Wash-

ington Township in 1853. Hiram Jones, who married Elizabeth Van Note, was a resident of Washington Township when they were married in 1853. Alfred Humphrey, who was a brother to Dr. Charles Humphrey, lived in Knox until he died and left quite a family. Some of them are residents of Knox at this time.

The Fletchers took up their abode in Washington Township in 1844 and some of the younger people of that family are citizens of Knox, living on South Main Street, among whom is James C. Fletcher, who served this county as clerk of the Starke Circuit Court for eight years, having gone out of that office sixteen years ago.

Alfred B. Wiley, who married Jennebeck Prettyman on the 24th of October, 1855, was known to the older citizens, and so far as the Prettymans are concerned there are several of that family living in Knox, among them being Joshua B. Prettyman, who married Mary Boots in Knox on the 17th of March, 1857, and are both living in Knox on the corner of Bower and Washington streets.

Then there is Conrad Groshans, now living in Walkerton, Indiana, who is enjoying good health; he married Liza Jane Demasters, June 4, 1856. Mr. Groshans after getting married began housekeeping on their farm in section 6 in Washington Township, but a few years ago he moved to Walkerton with his second wife, who was a sister to George and Aires W. Swartzell of Knox, his first wife dying while he still lived on the farm.

John Collins, who married Ellen Reed on the 26th of November, 1857, lived in this county until recently, when he took up his residence in Kewanna, Ind., where he and his wife are enjoying fairly good health. Cornelius Stevenson, who died a few years ago, was married in Knox on the 21st of April, 1858, to Chloe Crites and his children live in Knox at this time.

Samuel Koontz of Oregon Township, who built the first grist mill in Starke County on the west bank of Koontz Lake, formerly called Woodsworth's Lake, in Oregon Township, procured license to marry Sarah Sult on July 22, 1858. He was the owner and operator of that mill and when he died the mill fell into the hands of his son, Samuel Koontz, Jr., who operates it up to this time.

Joseph Austin was known as the fiddler of the Kankakee neighborhood. He was married to Delila Dial on the 7th of October, 1858, and moved to Knox some time afterwards and opened up a small grocery store on Main Street. He was known by all the citizens of Knox on account of his musical talent.

John McGill or Megill, who married Mary Miller on the 26th of January, 1859, was engaged in the mercantile business on North Main Street for several years, and was the owner of the farm which he afterwards sold to the county for a "poor farm," as is shown elsewhere in this history. He conducted a general store during the Civil war, and well do some of us remember paying him \$14 and \$16 per barrel for flour, which was very high during that war.

Matthias T. Hepner was married to Lovisa Spoor on the 2d of January, 1861, and he and his wife live on the corner of Shields and Lake streets in Knox in first rate health. Mr. Hepner served this county as sheriff and for eight years he was clerk of the court after the war,



PIONEERS WEAVING CARPET

and having been one of the pioneer citizens of Starke County he can tell of some of the adventures of an early resident, years ago when the people experienced what it was to live in a new country.

Francis Yeager, living on Heaton Street in Knox, married Matilda Koontz on April 10, 1861. Mr. Yeager is well acquainted over the

county, having been the county drainage commissioner for several years, having just recently given up that occupation on account of failing health. Mr. Yeager was an old resident of Oregon Township, having lived for a number of years on his farm one-half mile north of Grovertown, where he commenced keeping house after getting married.

Cornelius Tanner, living at Bass Lake, moved to Starke County with his parents in an early day and is familiar with the conditions and the ways of living in the pioneer days of the county. He married Cordelia Corey in April, 1866, and has been and is now a citizen of Starke County and lives on a part of the old homestead at Bass Lake. His parents were among the first settlers of that neighborhood, having located in section 18 in North Bend Township in the early '50s. The list of the early entries of the land by those old citizens is given in the list taken from the tract book, which is contained in the history. Many of those old citizens lived through those early days whose experience can only be told by themselves who had that experience so wonderfully seen and felt by them. Many more have gone, to be seen or known no more, never to tell of the hardship of their early days soon after the organization of Starke County.

We could mention the Windfries that located on section 29 in Oregon Township in 1852. A small cabin of rude construction housed that destitute family, who made their living principally by digging gentian roots upon the little island upon which they lived and some they procured from the surrounding highlands.

Edward Welch, the Triplets, the Rockwells, the Dailys and Mulvains, the McLaughlins and Eikens located in Railroad Township about the '50s and were all highly respected citizens of that neighborhood, where the wild deer and other animals inhabited the swamps so common in the vicinity of San Pierre and the Kankakee Valley. Nathan M. Gerrard was married to Nancy Bright February 5, 1853.

James McCormick, who was living in Bedford County, Virginia, about the year of 1852 conceived the idea that he could find cheaper lands than he was able to procure in the East, and in the spring of 1852 turned his face westward and purchased the west half of section 6 in Washington Township in 1853. Here he made a fair living for his family, although he met with many trials in that wild country. His neighbors took part and parcel in those trying times. The women folks would help with the farm work. It would be no uncommon thing to see the farmer and his good wife and perchance a daughter, if he had one, all working side by side in the hay fields or even plowing corn if necessary. This the women could not do so well, as almost everyone used oxen in those days.

When Paschal Ferguson got married in the spring of 1852 and located on a piece of land four miles northeast of Knox, Mrs. Ferguson said she believed that it was her duty to help Mr. Ferguson with his farm work until he got a start, and many days she would be seen working in the fields with her husband. It would be an unusual sight to see the

women working in the fields at this time. In fact it is not expected of them to do so in this enlightened land, that day having passed beyond.

George Anderson located in section 32 in Oregon Township in that same year. South of him was what was called Jager Lake, which has long since disappeared and the same spot of ground once covered by that body of water is now fine farm land. The Kellers came to Starke County in the '50s and opened up what might be called the first mercantile establishment in North Judson about the time of the building of the Pan Handle Railroad.

John Daum, living with his parents in section 7 in Washington Township, who located there in 1848, was married to Eliza Smith of Oregon Township, August 28, 1858. This marriage took place at Philander Coffin's, the couple remained seated in their buggy while " 'Squire' " Coffin performed the marriage ceremony, and then they drove away, those present bidding them a happy future.

Then there was Isaac Reed, who owned the northeast quarter of section 5, in North Bend Township, who married Mrs. Susannah Guernsey for his second wife (both having been previously married) on the 18th of October, 1866.

Joseph F. Chapman, who was raised on a farm in section 15, township 32 north, range 1 west, married Emaline Turner on the 16th of March, 1867. John Cogle married Sarah Coats of Davis Township the same year, and many others that might be mentioned if they could be brought into remembrance, but all of those mentioned were among the early settlers. Some of them are dead and some living, enjoying life since rising above those dark clouds of long ago.

William A. Turnbull was married to Eliza Osborn on the 27th of September, 1853, and located on a farm in North Bend Township, where he died several years ago, but his widow still lives on the farm enjoying good health, she being the oldest living female citizen in Starke County. David McCumber, who married Caroline Coffin five years after the county was organized, the 10th of April, 1855, died several years ago, but his widow still lives in Knox.

Samuel Dunkelbarger was an old citizen of the north part of Wayne Township, some of the Dunkelbargers locating in Jackson Township just over the township line from Samuel Dunkelbarger's. He was married to Sarah Bell on the 29th of December, 1852, when Starke County was in its infancy. Kendall L. Short married Martha Ann Elkins in 1857, of Wayne Township, and Henry C. Petro of Railroad Township was married to Sarah Jane Adair in the same year and began housekeeping in that township. So those people were scattered all over the county, all meeting their trials as best they could where they reared their families, many of them living among us, and many times talking over the history of the past as their parents gave it to them, a history that they will not forget as long as time with them shall last.

John P. Kelley, who located on the northeast quarter of section 1 in Center Township early in the spring of 1853, if he were living could

give an interesting account of this county as it appeared to him and his family at that time. Mr. Kelley shot and killed two deer at one shot about Christmas day in 1854. It was a common thing for a farmer to go out from his little log cabin, especially of an icy morning, and shoot a nice deer for breakfast, they being very plentiful in an early day. A good many of those pioneers made it a rule after getting married to go out and kill a nice fat deer so as to have some nice venison for an infair dinner. Dear citizen, would you not like to have a chance to sit down to a table spread with some of the fine deer meat and other wild game relished by those people long perhaps before you were born? Many were the varied experiences witnessed in our wild swamps and wide extended prairies by the early settlers who after getting married took up the struggles for life in a wilderness country.

James Evans married Mary J. Graham on the 28th day of May, 1851. Benjamin F. Wyant married Mary M. VanBlaricon on the 11th of April, 1853. Tilly Page secured license to marry Mary Crismore April 13, 1853, which was soon after the organization of the county. There are those living that recollect those people well, having grown up by them and helped to share the ups and downs and the trials so common among those at that time.

David Beebe, who married Mary Lain on the 22d of April, 1856, was a man well known by the old inhabitants of Starke County. He opened up a farm and commenced housekeeping about one-half mile east of what is known as Lena Park in Wayne Township and lived there until his death a short while ago. Then there lived in the county Ralph Williams, who married Jane Watkins on the 12th of October, 1857; and George Anderson, Jr., who married Cynthia J. Monroe July 22, 1858, known by everyone in the east part of the county. The Monroe families were numerous in their neighborhood before and even after the Civil war.

Aaron Morrow, who took up the occupation of farmer, located on the southeast quarter of section 15 in Oregon Township, where he lived for a number of years, marrying Elizabeth Koontz in February, 1860. Mr. Morrow was a man well posted in legislative affairs and could interest anyone talking upon the events of the day. He was well versed in the Bible and occupied his leisure time in posting himself upon the religious subjects as he could see and understand them.

The Van Derweele family located in Starke County in or about the year 1856. Albert VanDalen, whp was a brother to Mrs. Van Derweele, located on a tract of land about six miles east of Knox and remained there until his death. He lived a bachelor life until he married Mary Hacker of Ober, Indiana. The Van Derweeles and VanDalens were successful farmers and demonstrated that fact by turning the wild and unbroken land into farms and made them blossom as the rose.

Robert H. Bender, who located in Starke County in the early '50s with his parents, pitched tent in section 13, township 34 north, range 1 west, and lived there a few years, going to Knox from the farm, where

he married Elvin J. Morris on the first day of December, 1863. This was during the great and awful strife between the North and South, and eleven days thereafter Austin P. Dial married Miss Edna Beatty, stepsister of Mrs. Bender. John Raschka married Mary Ken February 5, 1864, and took up the duties of a farmer boy on the southeast quarter of section 9 in California Township. Jesse Roose married Julia Ann Anderson March 15, 1864, and located on a tract of land just south of where Hamlet is located. Mr. Roose met with a fatal accident by falling from the top of a freight train upon which he was braking soon after his marriage. Peter Dipert of Oregon Township married Florilla Cup March 26, 1863. Philip Awald married Lydia Koontz on the 22d day of March, 1864. William Ayres married Nancy Wood on the 16th of July, 1864. John H. Geller married Ruth Green October 20, 1863. George Jones to Felitha Fletcher October 27, 1863. James M. Scott to Sarah Swartz.