

## CHAPTER IV.

*Settlers Increase—River Claims Preferred—First Census Taken—Partial List of Pioneers—Trappers Who Departed When Permanent Settlers Came—Stories of the Early Residents—How They Came and Where They Located—Wynkoop's Deer Park.*

The spring of 1835 brought many land hunters, and the close of the year saw much progress in the settlement of this region. The first claims taken up were almost entirely along the Des Plaines River. The early settlers signed agreements that when the land was surveyed and sold they would deed to each other any that might be within the lines staked out as "claims." These agreements were usually carried out, although some litigation resulted. The river claims were quickly taken and those bordering the lakes or small streams, especially when it happened that there was a grove located near, were usually the next ones to be secured. Those living along the river suffered most with chills and fever—those banes of pioneer life—and the prairie settlers found some compensation for being compelled to at once dig wells because of at least partial exemption from the ague. The agreements to deed back and forth any land embraced in a claim, regardless of section lines, accounts for the irregular shape of many farms in various parts of the county, and explains the long, narrow subdivisions so common along the Des Plaines.

It is not easy at this late day to make a complete and accurate list of all who came in 1835, to separate them from those who came a year or two later, or to state just the localities where they settled. A few remained but a short time, although a majority made this their permanent home. The following list probably embraces most of those who came in 1835:

In Vernon there were James Chambers, Clark Knights, Alonzo Cook, Moody Rowd, Henry Walton, Jonathan Rice, William Easton, B. F. Washburn, J. M. Washburn, Mathias Mason, Asahel Talcott, Roswell Rose, Andrew S. Wells, Henry Wells, William Whigam, John Gridley and his sons, Elisha, George and John T. Gridley, William Easton and his sons, Robert and John Easton, John A. Mills, Erastus Bailey, Matthew Hoffman and Moses Putney.

In Libertyville there were Richard Steele, Ransom Steele, Davis C. Steele, Henry B. Steele,

Tobias Wynkoop, John Herrick, William Rumsey, Robert, Christopher and William Irwin, Sol-orion Norton, Mr. Morse, a blacksmith, Mr. Vardin, whose name was given to the grove, Elkanah Tingley, James Lloyd, William Lloyd, Samuel Weyman, Enos Covok and Joshua Pelton.

In Warren, Willard Jones, Phineas Sherman, Thomas McClure, Amos Bennett, Samuel Brooks, George A. Drury, Leonard Gage, George Gage, Ezekial Boyland.

In Fremont, Daniel Marsh, Charles Fletcher, Oliver Booth, William Fenwick, Paschal P. Houghton, Lewis G. Schanck, Hiram Clark and Elisha Clark.

In Deerfield, Michael Meehan.

In Newport, Jacob Miller, James Emery, Lemuel Short, Daniel H. Harmon.

In Benton, Nelson Landon, Jeremiah Stowell, Hanson Minsky, Robert D. Minsky, Henry I. Paddock, Jeremiah Porter.

In Avon, Churchill Edwards, William Gray, Noer Potter and his sons, Ira and Tingley T. Potter, and a Mr. Taylor.

In or near Waukegan, Edward and Thomas Jenkins, Elmsley Sunderlin, Joseph DeHart, Samuel Pillifant, Thomas Tiernan, John Flood, Henry Wood, Burleigh Hunt.

In Ela, George Ela, Abraham Vanderwerker, A. Russell.

In Shields, John Strong, Thomas McLaughlin, Otis Hinckley.

From 1835 forward there was a constant influx of homeseekers. At the Presidential election in 1840, 548 votes were cast. The Federal census taken June 1, 1840, gave a population of 2,634. An enumeration taken by authority of the County Commissioners' Court September 1, 1840, gave 2,905 as the population.

The real pioneers at Waukegan—those who came to make permanent homes for themselves and families—found two white men engaged in trapping and leading the strange life of those who pass beyond the verge of civilization and become adventurous hermits. These men remained but a short time. One, known as "English John," had a cabin\* near a ravine and a little north of the center of what is now described as Block 10, Tiffany's First Addition to the North Side. It stood not far from the family residence of the late F. E. Clarke. The other, known as "Dutch John," had a tenement upon the bluff and near the ravine which passes through the present homestead of William E.

Sunderlin. No other names are remembered for them. "Dutch John" stated that he had come down from Hudson's Bay, and "English John" claimed to have drifted in from the East. How long they had lived here, or whither they went after selling their cabins is not remembered.

Two Frenchmen also had cabins in little clearings about directly west from the present harbor and not far from the line which separates the townships of Warren and Waukegan. Pioneers purchased the cabins and claims for fifty dollars each, the Frenchmen going elsewhere. It is not recalled that they ever stated how long they had been in this locality nor is it known where they went. A tradition exists that the two Johns and the two Frenchmen came to this region in 1833, but it may have been earlier. They were doubtless trappers and adventurers, and drifted northward or westward in advance of the on-coming tide of civilization.

One of the first men to establish a home in what is now Benton township was Nelson Landon. After wrestling with the fever and ague in Michigan and Indiana for a year or two, early in 1835, in company with Jeremiah Stowell, he set out to look for a healthier region, having Green Bay in view. Reaching Chicago they headed northward. Between them they owned a pony. Their plan was to "ride and tie;" that is, one would gallop on ahead for a mile or two, dismount, tie the animal, and start along on foot, and the other, walking until he came up to the horse, would mount and ride until he overtook his companion. In this way they made a considerable distance without undue fatigue. As Mr. Landon and Mr. Stowell neared the State line and from an elevation saw Lake Michigan to the eastward and a beautiful prairie to the westward, both were pleased, and the former declared the location "good enough." But Mr. Stowell insisted that they carry out their plan to look over the country in Wisconsin Territory. This they did, but soon returned, erected a log cabin twelve feet square, and gathered some hay and wood. Mr. Landon then returned to Michigan for his wife, and in October reached

\*NOTE.—Thomas Jenkins, who came to Waukegan as a lad in 1835, is of the opinion that "English John" did not have a cabin, but lived, or at least slept, in a dug-out, or hole dug in the side of the bluff near the present Sheridan Road bridge. He remembers him well and recalls that he was a great snake hunter, and that he delighted in telling the boys that a snake's heart was the choicest food ever tasted.

the new home. From Chicago they came with an ox-team, sleeping two nights in or under the wagon. During all of the long winter of 1835-6 Mrs. Landon saw no other white woman. In this log cabin, July 27, 1836, her first child was born. A little later a larger log house was built and the Landon home became well-known to the numerous land hunters, the floor being often covered with tired travelers. For years a light burned nightly in the cabin window to guide belated travelers, and a kettle of water hung above the fire night and day so that a meal, or at least a cup of tea or coffee, could be served with little delay. Mr. Landon died in 1884.

Mr. Stowell located a claim near by, but when Little Fort was founded removed to Waukegan, erected the old Waukegan House and other buildings and made the county seat his permanent home.

One of the very early settlers in what is now the township of Warren was Amos Bennett, a colored man. He located a claim in 1835 and was accustomed to facetiously remark that he was the first "white" man to plant corn in the county. He went south, bought and married a colored woman, and brought her back to his farm. Eventually he moved to Wisconsin.

Willard Jones was another of the very early pioneers. He bore away from the river and erected a log house beside an Indian trail almost at the southwest corner of the township of Warren, in 1835, with no neighbors for miles around. His home was a landmark of early days and was said to have been the last one north and west of Libertyville until Burlington, Wisconsin, was reached. June 27, 1836, a daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Jones, the second white child born in the county. Here Mr. Jones resided until his death in 1872.

William Fenwick, Samuel Weyman and Enos Covolt took up claims and built houses at Diamond Lake in the spring of 1835. The Indians were about them in considerable numbers at times, camping at the lake and spearing fish.

Noer Potter and his sons, Ira and Tingley, made claims a little south of Deep Lake, in 1835, and spent the winter there, returning to Pennsylvania in 1836. In 1837 Mr. Potter and Tingley came west again, driving all of the way with teams, and being five weeks on the road. They had expected to cross the Des Plaines at Joliet, but finding the river too high, they followed its east bank to William Cooley's, near Libertyville, where they crossed in a boat, leav-

ing their team to be cared for by Mr. Cooley. Procuring an ox-team, which the pioneer had west of the river, they completed their journey. Ira Potter and Christopher Manzer walked practically all of the way from Pennsylvania, working at different points for a few days at a time, but reaching Avon in the year 1837. Mr. Manzer lost his life in a terrible storm in 1845, freezing to death within a half mile of his own home while returning from a trip to the county seat, whither he had gone to borrow money for a neighbor who was in trouble.

Lewis G. Schanck, the first School Commissioner and the second County Treasurer and Assessor, was accustomed to say that he was the first to make a wagon track west of the river, admitting, however, that others had previously driven ox-teams through the country. But as most of the vehicles drawn by oxen were carts, while he had a pair of good horses and a four-wheeled wagon, his claim ought not to be barred. Mr. Schanck had for some time been teaming from Detroit to Chicago. In the winter of 1833-4 he was employed, with others, to take some soldiers and supplies from Chicago to Green Bay. The trip was made with sleighs. Although the ground was covered with snow he was impressed with the beauty of the prairies west of the river. Returning in the spring his favorable impressions were confirmed and he determined that this was just the country he would like to settle in, and in 1835 he carried out his plan. His first log cabin was near what came to be known as Millard's Grove, in the west part of the present township of Fremont. In a few months he sold this claim and built a new log house about one mile west of Libertyville. In 1836 or 1837 he was employed by an agent of the government to assist in removing the Indians westward, and drove his team from Half Half to Council Bluffs and return, taking a wagon load of women, children and Indian equipments to their new home. He reported the red men very anxious while crossing Iowa, being fearful of attack from other tribes. Mr. Schanck remained an honored citizen of this county until his death.

J. W. Sprague, then an unmarried man of twenty-three, came to Vernon in 1836, after a year in DuPage County. Building a log house a few rods east of where the Prairie View railroad station now stands, he brought his mother and two sisters to the new prairie home, and began the making of a farm with a single pair

of steers as his only team. At the time this history is written Mr. Sprague is still living on the farm which has been his home for almost sixty-six years.

Ira Harden drove all of the way from New York with a team in 1837, and settled near Ivanhoe. Shortly following his arrival both of his horses were killed by lightning.

John Gridley, with his wife, three sons and three daughters, came from Onondaga County, New York, in the early summer of 1835. Their route was by canal to Buffalo and by steamer to Chicago. There was then no pier or harbor, and lighters brought them to the shore. Joseph Chambers told them of the land along the Des Plaines River, and Asahel Talcott brought them out with his team and wagon. For a few weeks, and until a log house could be erected, the family remained in the house of Joseph Chambers, which was a log building covered with bark procured at the Indian village. November 19, 1835, found the family safely installed in a new log house, which was their first home in Illinois. The Indians were their near neighbors for a year or two, but gave them no serious trouble. Mr. George Gridley, who was a lad of thirteen at the time, still owns and occupies a portion of the "claim" made by his father in 1835. He remembers well the scanty clothing of the Indians, even in cold weather, and of how extremely poor their ponies became during the long winter when compelled to browse in the timber or paw the snow for a meager amount of dry prairie grass.

Justus Bangs and his nephew, Elihu Hubbard, came to Wauconda June 1, 1836, built a log cabin and "kept bach" on the bank of Bangs' Lake. October 28, of the same year, Daniel Hubbard, father of Elihu Hubbard, arrived with his family. They were the first settlers in the immediate vicinity of the lake. Mr. Bangs returned to Vermont and brought his family west the following year. Elihu Hubbard, now about eighty-eight years of age, resides at Nunda, McHenry County. Justus Bangs spent a long and active life in the neighborhood of which he was a pioneer.

Thomas H. Payne settled in the western part of Fremont and throughout a long and active life was a prominent and public spirited citizen. He early engaged in the nursery business, and for many years was a factor in the county agricultural and horticultural gatherings. In 1839 he was County Commissioner and ever after

took much interest in all matters of a public or political nature.

John G. Ragan was also a pioneer in Fremont, coming in 1836. He was one of the early commissioners and afterward Sheriff of the county. Always a patriotic, public-spirited citizen, to him, more than to any other single individual, is credit due for the erection of the Lake County Soldier's monument. Mr. Ragan died in 1887.

Solomon Norton, one of the first board of Commisisoners, located in the township of Libertyville in 1835. His oldest child, James P. Norton, was born in Lake County, July 9, 1836, and is believed to have been the third white child born in the county.

Seth Washburn settled near Half Day in 1835, was the first postmaster appointed in the county and the first County Recorder, serving later as a County Commissioner. At his house the voters held their first election for officers of McHenry County. Removing to Minnesota he gave two sons to the nation and died in April, 1865.

Tobias Wynkoop built a log house on the creek north of Libertyville and made claim to a vast tract of land from the Des Plaines River west. He had come west with some means and large ideas. Making his plans to put in a full hundred acres of wheat he succeeded in plowing but ninety acres and, therefore, did no seeding whatever that year, it being too late when the remaining ten acres had been broken. Studying the habits of the deer, Mr. Wynkoop discovered that they traveled a beaten track in a single and that they could not jump a 16-rail fence. This learned, he planted a patch of turnips, enclosed about ninety acres of land along the river with a high rail fence in which was a single opening, constructed a gate, attached a long cord by which it could be closed, and plowed a wide furrow along the usual runway of the deer clear up to the turnip patch, which was fenced off within the main enclosure. The park thus enclosed was on sections 4 and 9 in Libertyville. A house in an oak tree, reached by a ladder, served as a lookout and secreted the hunter and his dog. The cord from the gate to the deer park reached this hiding place. The scheme, which had cost so much time and labor, was a well devised one, and actually worked so well that in a short time he had about thirty deer within the enclosure. But he declared that he

would not kill any until he had a hundred secured. The animals all broke out one night, apparently having rushed in a body against the fence, as several lengths were found toppled over next morning. This ended the deer park scheme.

## CHAPTER V.

*Early Politics—Part of Cook County—First Public Highway—the Compact of 1836—Part of McHenry County—Work of the County Commissioners' Court—Precincts Established—Early Officials—First Circuit Court—McHenry County Divided—Lake County Created.*

From the organization of the county until the adoption of the township system in 1850 the duties now devolving upon the Board of Supervisors were discharged by three commissioners, who fixed the rate of taxation, granted licenses, established rates of toll and entertainment, formed road districts and election precincts, appointed county and municipal officers and exercised a general supervision over all county matters.

As a part of Cook County the population of what afterward became Lake County was too small and the methods of travel too primitive to allow it to wield much influence or obtain much consideration. At the September term, 1835, of the County Commissioners' Court most of the territory north of Chicago was designated as Lake Precinct and a polling place established at the home of Dexter Hapgood, about six miles south of Wheeling. At a special election held October 17, Hiram Kennicott, then residing near Half Day, was elected a Justice of the Peace. Only thirty-two votes were cast in the precinct.

The records show that in September, 1835, the Commissioners named Richard Steele, Thomas McClure and Mark Noble as Viewers, to lay out a road from Chicago northward to the State line. This they did in December, 1835. This highway, the first to traverse this county, followed the old military road, crossing the Des Plaines near Wheeling, Cook County, and again on Section 23 in Warren, Lake County, a few hundred feet south of the present Gurnee bridge. Through some parts of its course, and especially in the township of Warren, it was nearer the west bank of the DesPlaines than is

the present highway. At the Gurnee crossing, partly around the bend from the present bridge, the route was northeasterly. From this point it continued northeasterly to the old York House, and then northerly to the Wisconsin line. This highway became the principal stage route northward from Chicago in June, 1836, and was known as the Milwaukee Road. Milwaukee Avenue in the city of Chicago takes its name from this highway.

At the Congressional election in August, 1836, only 87 votes were cast in Lake precinct. It is believed that fully one-half of the voters were from the region now embraced in Lake County. Only 702 votes were cast in Cook County in November, 1836, of which William Henry Harrison had a majority of eight. In Lake precinct Martin VanBuren had a majority of ten.

In 1836 steps were taken to divide Cook County, and during the following winter the Legislature passed an act providing for the organization of the northern portion as McHenry County.

December 2, 1836, a public meeting was held at Libertyville and a compact or agreement of considerable length drawn up, adopted and signed. Its purpose was, ostensibly, to bring the settlers together and secure co-operation in case of trouble with new comers who might attempt to occupy claims already taken up. The county was divided into three districts, three commissioners named in each, and the settlers obligated to abide by their decision in all matters in dispute regarding claims and boundary lines. A few differences were referred to these commissioners, but many who were not at the meeting refused to sign the compact or to recognize its authority. Samuel Brooks presided at the meeting at which this agreement was adopted; George Kimball acted as its secretary and Nelson Landon, Samuel Brooks and Willard Jones comprised the Committee on Resolutions and Regulations. Several subsequent meetings were held, but in time the courts became the sole arbiters of differences.

On page 1, Record "A," of the McHenry County Commissioners' Court is the following:

"At an election held at the house of Hiram Kennicott, in McHenry County, and State of Illinois, on the first day of June, A. D. one thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven, which was ordered by the State Legislature for the organization of said County of McHenry, the following

named persons were duly elected for the following described offices, to-wit: Charles H. Bartlett, Matthias Mason and Solomon Norton for County Commissioners; Henry B. Steele for Sheriff; Michael C. McGuire for Coroner; Seth Washburn for Recorder and Charles E. Moore for Surveyor."

Only 138 votes were cast in the entire county at this election.

The Commisisoners met June 5, 1837, and appointed Hamilton Dennison, Clerk, who gave bond with Seth Washburn and Henry B. Steele as sureties. Andrew S. Wells was named as County Treasurer and presented Starr Titus and Seth Washburn as bondsmen. These officers were to serve until an election could be held. All of what is now McHenry County and a portion of the western part of Lake County was formed into "Fox Precinct and Magistrate District." Christy G. Wheeler, Wm. L. Way and John V. McLean were named as judges of elections, and the house of C. G. Wheeler designated as the polling place.

The court adjourned to meet the following Saturday at the house of Charles H. Bartlett, who then resided near the DesPlaines River, a little south of Libertyville. At this adjourned meeting, held June 10, 1837, further divisions of the county were made. A tract embracing about what now comprises Shields, Deerfield and West Deerfield was designated "Oak Precinct and Magistrate District." Arthur Patterson, Benjamin Marks and Isaac Heacox were appointed judges, and the house of William Dwyer named as the polling place.

"Lake Precinct" embraced what now comprises Waukegan and Benton, with a strip of Warren and Newport. Edward Jenkins, Jeremiah Porter and Elmsley Sunderlin were appointed judges, and the house of Samuel P. Ransom named as the polling place.

"Indian Creek Precinct," embraced what now comprises the townships of Vernon, Ela, Fremont and Libertyville, and portions of Cuba and Wauconda. Richard Steele, Andrew S. Wells and John G. Ragan were named as judges, and the house of Seth Washburn designated as the polling place.

"Abingdon Precinct" embraced the greater part of the present townships of Warren, Avon, Grant, Antioch and Newport. Samuel Brooks, Jared Gage and Willard Jones were named as judges, and the house of Thomas McClure designated as the polling place.

An election was ordered for July 3, 1837, two Justices of the Peace and two Constables to be chosen in each Precinct.

Eight road districts were created and their boundaries defined. The persons named as Road Supervisors were: A. C. Ellis, Thomas W. Nichols, Samuel Sherman, Seth Washburn, Ransom Steele, Phineas Sherman, David P. Foot and John Chandler. All of these Supervisors were within the present boundaries of Lake County, except Mr. Chandler.

An entry at this meeting of the Court reads as follows: "Ordered by the Court that the following descriptions of property be taxable one per cent on the dollar for this year, viz.: On slaves or indentured or registered negro or mulatto servants, on pleasure carriages, on distilleries, on stock in trade, on all horses, mares, mules, asses and neat cattle above three years of age, on swine, on lumber and one horse wagons, on clocks and on watches with their appendages."

As there were never any slaves or indentured servants in this part of Illinois, it is probable that the Clerk merely followed the language of some old Kentucky statute in entering the order.

At a meeting held September, 4, 1837, the report of Peter Cohen and M. L. Covell, as Commissioners to establish the seat of justice, was accepted. These Commissioners designated McHenry village as the county seat. Andrew Cornish, upon payment of a license fee of five dollars, was authorized to keep a ferry on Fox River for one year.

Provision was made for a surveyor, acting in conjunction with a like officer from Cook County, to definitely fix the boundary line between the two Counties.

At the meeting of September, 9, 1837, Mr. Bartlett resigned as Commissioner and Mr. Dennison as Clerk. At an election held October 9, Samuel Sherman was elected to succeed Mr. Bartlett, and Joseph Wood was chosen Clerk.

In December the Court fixed the fees landlords might charge their guests. For a night's lodging 12½ cents was the lawful price; for team of horses, stabling and hay, 25 cents; meals, 37½ cents; half pint of beer or whiskey, 6¼ cents; one pint 12½ cents; brandy, gin and rum, half pint 12½ cents; pint 25 cents; wine, half pint 18¾ cents; pint 37½ cents.

The first term of the Circuit Court held at McHenry in the spring of 1838, in what was then McHenry County, was quite an event. There were sixty-two cases on the docket and nearly