

Old Residents Review Early History of Centerville

"DARK LYCEUM" GIVES FRIGHT TO CENTERVILLE

Old Residents Delight Crowd With Stories of George W. Julian's Connection With Old Society.

Later Congressmen and Legislators Reflect Spirit of Secret Society in Speeches and Addresses.

CENTERVILLE, Ind., July 5.—The movement to have the government nationalize the old National road brought out many reminiscences at today's Fourth of July celebration. Old residents and descendants of men and women who came to Wayne county over the old National road, brought out clippings narrating old incidents and recalling old times. A friend of the late George W. Julian brought out this speech, which he made at an old settlers' picnic here in 1897. Mr. Julian's references to the "Dark Lyceum" proved highly interesting to the audience. It follows:

Let me talk to you five or ten minutes about Centerville. I was born within a mile from the place more than eighty years ago, and have known it almost from infancy. But I shall only speak of the town as it appeared to me in the spring of 1843, when it became my residence. Centerville was then in its prime. It was notable for its interest in the work of education, its intelligence, its charming social life, and the exceptional morality of its people.

The principal lawyers of the town at that time were John S. Newman, James Rariden, Martin M. Ray and Charles H. Test. Mr. Newman was then perhaps the strongest lawyer of the Whitewater bar. Mr. Rariden, who had represented the district in congress, was a man of force, but not a student. He was fond of quoting the saying, that "the more a man reads the less he knows." He claimed to have acquired his legal knowledge by intuition, or, as he used to say, by "inspiration." His estimate of himself was very satisfying, and he used to boast that he was "the truck wheels of Wayne county."

Leading Doctors.

The principal physicians of the town were Dr. Pritchett, Dr. Swain and Dr. Dennis. The former, I think, began the practice of medicine in Centerville in 1826 or 1827, and he must have continued that practice for more than sixty years. His memory will always be cherished by the people who knew him.

The chief merchants of the town were Myers Seaton, James Forkner, Adams & Synder, Samuel Hannah and Israel Abrahams.

The tavern keepers of the town were Henry Rowen and Daniel Lashley, and their fame was extended through eastern Indiana. The lawyers from other counties who attended the Centerville courts. I think Thomas G. Noble was then county clerk, and David Gentry sheriff.

In politics Centerville was intensely Whig. Democrats were called "Locofocos," and were decidedly below par in religious matters the town was divided as it is now. Methodism was then a sort of institution of the town, and it was more aggressive and demonstrative than the more conservative Methodism of today. I remember an old gentleman named John Jimison, whose shouting during seasons of revivals made him famous. It had an explosive force, and some of the profane people of the town used to say that John Jimison kept the cholera away from Centerville just as did the lightning. Methodism was in earnest, and it took the lead in the cause of temperance and other good works.

"Dark Lyceum."

Centerville had some other societies which may be mentioned. One of these was the "Dark Lyceum," of which I was the founder. I do not mention this fact to glorify myself, but simply to show what oddities were invented at that time. The society at first only contained four members. They were modest young men who desired to cultivate the art of debate and improve themselves in public speaking, and before proceeding to business the lights were blown out and the discussions carried on in the dark. Their blouses were then unseen. One of the members wrote a hymn which was regularly sung at the opening of each meeting, to the tune of "Bruce's Adren." I give a few specimens which will show that the love of fun was mingled with the work of self-improvement:

"Here choice and kindred spirits meet to mingle in communion sweet; Here truth and friendship guide our feet.

And cheer us on our way.

"No base and hollow-hearted knave, No dastard soul, to vice a slave. Shall join the virtuous men and brave, The band of honest men.

"We worship at the sacred shrine Of Knowledge and of light divine, And powers of darkness cannot shine. Where our pure brightness reigns."

Debating Club.

Very thorough preparation was made for the debates of the lyceum, and the discussions were sometimes most creditable. New members were admitted from time to time, including such men as Robert N. Hudson, Jesse P. Siddall and Oliver P. Morton. The society flourished until the year 1843, when dissensions caused by the slavery question paved the way for disbandment, but its influence was valuable and enduring. Long years afterward I found a flavor in certain speeches in congress, both in the senate and house of representatives, which I thought I could trace to the training of the "Dark Lyceum" of Centerville.

About the time of which I speak there was a very respectable scientific

Early Poet Sings of National Road

The first Wayne county poet to see a subject for a poem in the construction of the old National road in 1844 was Isaac H. Julian.

The subject of the following poem was Henry H. Bruce, who, during the construction period of the National road through Wayne county, and for some years later, had his shop at the crossing of that great thoroughfare and the road leading from the village of Greensfork down the valley towards Milton. The poem was composed May, 1844, and a copy of the first draft appeared in the Richmond Palladium, but with only an obscure intimation of the name of the smith, in the quotation from Burns. The author was then quite a youth, but as will be seen, wrote in the character of an aged man, which has now become strikingly appropriate. The poem was recognized as embodying a graphic picture in various points of view.

I saw a smith stand with his hammer thus.

The whilst the iron did on the anvil cool,

With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news.

—Shakespeare. Where are the muses fled that could produce

A drama worthy o' the name o' Bruce?

—Burns.

Twas near the border of that lovely stream.

Where rustic poets wander forth to dream,

Whose name, well known throughout its vale serene,

Recalls the memory of "Johnny Greene."

Arose the smithy of the country round,

And wearied echo with the sledge's sound.

It looked upon the famous "Roman way."

Which guides the chariot of the closing day

To those fair regions of the distant West?

Where milk sick reigns and ague makes her nest.

Delightful road, where the unweared gaze

Drinks boundless rapture from thy pleasant ways,

'Mid groves of shady beech it far extends,

Where the broad firmament with spicbrush blends;

The vehicles o' emigrating swains

In countless numbers dot the mucky plains;

Some moving slow as a triumphal band,

Some deep in mud in solemn silence stand.

Expansive swamps spread wide on either hand,

By a long line of buckeye bridges spanned.

The traveler hails each day with fresh delight—

Broad sheets of mud and water bound his sight,

And frogs their anthems raise the living long night.

As I walk through the cemetery of the own I see that all my old friends and neighbors are under the sod. Not a single old settler is left, and in the lines of Tennyson:

"I, the last, go forth companionless, And the days darker round me, and the years,

Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

PRAISE HAROLD FOR STARTING COUNTY WORK

The Fourth of July celebration at Centerville is the result of untiring and unselfish work on the part of Dr. I. S. Harold of Richmond, who sponsored the movement and saw the movement crowned with success. When existing organizations that might have carried out his ideas turned him down and offered no encouragement, Dr. Harold with a few men to whom he explained its purpose began the work of organizing the county.

As early as last January he came before the public with the statement that the National road ought to be taken over by the national government, made a national highway, as a perpetual monument to the pioneers who came along this old trail and carved out the great states of the middle west and commonwealths west of the Mississippi river.

His idea was that Wayne county take the lead in Indiana because of its location on the National road and because of the rich historical data it possesses. He pointed out the commanding position Wayne county took in the Civil war and the great men came from this part of the Hoosier state.

Soon a few men realized that Dr. Harold was advancing a cause that deserved support. They met with him, and under his guidance organized the Wayne Township Old Trails' Road association. The purpose of this organization was to advance the cause of good roads in general and of the National road in particular.

Rallying a few men to his support, Dr. Harold began the laborious task of organizing the whole county. The establishment of branch organization in each township is the work of Dr. Harold. He never missed an appointment and attended organization meetings in all parts of the county. As there is no financial reward attached to the work, the sacrifices of Dr. Harold to advance the work, deserve more than passing notice.

As soon as a few of the townships saw that this was an unselfish organization whose sole object was to advance the good of all Wayne county, they joined the movement with a vim. They realized that in this organization in which all parts of Wayne county are represented the county has a power which it can wield against vicious legislation. They see that the organization will enable the whole county with little notice to get behind a good movement and oppose a bad one.

The Fourth of July celebration was planned as a step in crystallizing sentiment in Wayne county for federal aid for the National road. The celebration was not the sole purpose of the organization, but only an incident in the general plan of the association.

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THOUSANDS PETITION CONGRESS TO BUILD OLD NATIONAL ROAD

was established as far west as the Mississippi river. For full forty years the government built and maintained the Cumberland road, thus adhering to the policy above indicated and adhering to the compact made with the states.

"We therefore, respectfully but earnestly memorialize your honorable body and pray that the policies and agreements above mentioned be faithfully and fully, in letter and spirit, carried out to that end, and we ask that an appropriation from the general revenues of the government be applied to the rebuilding and extension of said National road now known as the National Old Trails road from Washington on the east to Los Angeles on the west, and this your petitioners will ever pray."

CENTERVILLE

The junior girls and boys' class of the Friends' Sunday school taught by Miss Calie Trempy and Miss Mabel Simons, was delightfully entertained Wednesday afternoon at the country home of Miss Calie Trempy. Outdoor games afforded amusement and refreshments were served. Those present were Esther George, Eva Whistler, Everett Garrett, Mary Bie, Chelsea Simons, Ralph Clark, Glen Hildebrand, Osti Chambers, Frank Surface.

Mrs. Walter Terry went to Urbana Thursday to attend the funeral of her brother's wife, Mrs. Cooper.

John Jones of Indianapolis is here for a visit with his brother, Link Jones of town.

Mr. and Mrs. O. K. Logue of Rich-

mond spent yesterday with her brother, Walter Mathews.

French is the official language of the Channel islands.



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