

ANNALS OF IOWA.



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INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF MILLS COUNTY.

BY A. R. FULTON.

MILLS COUNTY was so named in honor of Frederick Mills, a brave young officer from Burlington, Iowa, who was killed in the Mexican war. His body was never recovered by his comrades, and the Legislature of the State very properly determined to perpetuate his memory by naming a county for him. This was originally included as a part of Pottawattamie county, but a separate organization was perfected by the election of county officers at the general election of 1851.

At that election William Smith was elected County Judge; W. W. Noyes, Clerk of the District Court; and James Hardy, Sheriff.

The first term of the District Court was held at what was then called Coonville, being on the site of the present thriving little city of Glenwood, in October, 1851. The eccentric James Sloan was the Judge who presided.

The first white settlers of Mills county were about thirty disciples of Joseph Smith, who in August, 1846, pitched their tents on the Missouri river bottom on the east side of Keg Creek, about four miles north of the present south line of the county. With others of their faith, after the death of their prophet, they had set out on their journey to the "promised land," but the season being late, preparations for winter became necessary. The abundance of timber along the Missouri at this point afforded them material for log cabins, while food for their stock was readily obtained from the luxuriant growth of wild grass. Before winter came on they had erected at that place quite a number of cabins, presenting something of a village-like appearance. They gave it the name of Rushville. A number of the original settlers of this village remained as permanent citizens of the county after the others left for Salt Lake. Among them was William Brittain and his family. Before the Mormon settlement, however, other white men had traversed the soil of Mills county. Henry Alice, who recently resided on the Missouri river bottom, near where the now extinct village of St. Mary used to be, in the fall of 1834 landed on the Nebraska side of the river where Bellevue is now located, where he acted as an assistant missionary to the Pawnee Indians, having been appointed by the American Board of Foreign Missions. He came up the river in one of the American Fur Company's boats. He did not locate on the Iowa side of the river in Mills county until in 1853, so that Mr Brittain and others who came with the Mormons have precedence as the first permanent settlers.

As early as 1836, Col. Peter A. Sarpy, who was for some time a citizen of Mills county, traded with the Indians on

both sides of the Missouri. At an early day (in 1855) he laid out a town on the Missouri river bottom below the mouth of Mosquito Creek, some five or six miles from where the present town, Pacific City, is located. In 1858 the writer visited Col. Sarpy's town, where he spent an evening with the venerable proprietor and was entertained with many reminiscences of his pioneer days among the Indians on the Missouri. He was a Frenchman, and the name of his town is due to the fact that he and his followers were devoted Catholics. In 1858 St. Mary was a promising village, with a hotel and several business houses, but a change in the channel of the Missouri long since obliterated it, and the site of St. Mary is now in the river. Col. Sarpy too, has passed away. He died at Plattsmouth, Nebraska, in January, 1865. The State of Nebraska has named a county in his honor.

So, with the exception of traders and missionaries among the Indians, the Rushville settlement of Mormons may be considered as the first in Mills county. Many of the citizens of to-day are scarcely aware that the place ever existed, but in 1868, when the writer visited the place the ruins of Rushville were still visible. The burying ground is near by, and a rudely carved gravestone attracts the attention of the visitor. It is fashioned from native limestone, and a smooth surface of about one foot square, presents the following inscription: "J. Eastman, died April 10th, 1847, aged 60 years." This is all that is known of perhaps the first white man who died in Mills county. The first white child born in the county was Andrew J. Stewart, in the fall of 1846. His parents, taking with them the "first born," soon after this event removed to Salt Lake. Caroline L. Brittain was born January 12th, 1847, and was perhaps the next white child who may claim Mills as her native county.

Among the settlers at Rushville was Libeus T. Coon, who became the proprietor of the town of Coonville, which was located on the site of the present city of Glenwood. Mr. Coon removed to Harrison county, Iowa, many years ago. Among his associates in the settlement of Coonville, were Silas Hillman, William Brittain, G. N. Clark, Ira Hillman,

J. Everett and others, who erected the first cabins there in the spring of 1848. The first cabin built was destroyed by fire. The first school taught in Glenwood was in one of these primitive cabins, and D. H. Solomon, afterward a prominent lawyer of the "slope," was the teacher. The first child born in the place was William Coolidge, in December, 1849. The first death was that of the wife of Silas Hillman, in the summer of 1849. The first flouring mill in the county was erected by J. W. Coolidge during the summer of the same year.

Glenwood being some six miles west of the center of the county, once had a rival for county-seat honors in a place located near the center, then called London. For a time the latter place was a promising village, but nearly all its buildings were removed many years ago. The place was afterward known by the name of Mt. Olive. It was on the prairie "divide" between Silver and Keg Creeks, and near the head of Wauboncey Creek.

THE PIONEERS OF CLEAR LAKE.

BY A. R. FULTON.

PREVIOUS to 1851, a few adventurous hunters had penetrated Northern Iowa westward as far as Clear Lake and the upper branches of the Des Moines River. They carried back to the sparse settlements in the eastern counties reports of the fertility of the soil, the beautiful lakes filled with fishes, and the abundance of buffalo, elk, deer, and fur-bearing animals which were to be found in that magnificent region now constituting Northern Iowa. Among others whom these reports reached were Joseph Hewitt and James Dickirson, then residing at Strawberry Point, Clayton county. They were especially delighted with the accounts which they heard of a beautiful lake which shone as a gem in the prairie, and to which had

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