PERSONAL SKETCHES

OF SOME OF THE PROMINENT MEN AND PIONEERS OF MIAMI COUNTY.

JOHN AMBROSE GRAHAM

was born in Baltimore, Maryland, January 8, 1817. His parents were natives of Ireland, and came to this country in 1815. They landed in Baltimore in that year, after a stormy passage of four months, their vessel being nearly wrecked, and her passengers undergoing great hardships during their prolonged voyage.

In 1826, the family moved to Pittsburgh; in 1827, to Wheeling; and in 1828, back to Baltimore. In 1830, they moved to Harper's Ferry, and in 1832, to Indiana, the subject of this sketch remaining at Harper's Ferry, clerking in a store, until 1835. In May of that year, at the age of eighteen, he started for Indiana, which, at that day, was considered pretty far west. At Wheeling, he took passage on a steamboat for the month of the Wabash, where he was landed at midnight by the yawl, the boat only rounding head up steam to put her solitary passenger for that point ashore. The country for miles around was under water, and the surroundings of his first foothold on Hoosier soil, so far as they could be taken in by the eye through fitful glimpses of moonlight, were not of a character to inspire favorable first impressions.

The mouth of the Wabash, of the youthful pioneer's mental picturing, was a town of houses and people; the place in reality was without either. It presented nothing to the eye, at that time, but a dreary waste of turbid water, and to the ear no sound but the cry of some wild bird and the crash and crunch of the drifting timber. Not a living creature or sign of habitation was in sight—no 'bus to convey him to any part of the city, and no loquacious runner presenting the superior advantages of the hotel in whom interest he was employed. On the contrary, the young traveler was permitted to enjoy the sweets of solitude, which he did sitting upon his baggage barely out of the water, where it had been placed by the early boatmen, until near daylight, when, to vary the monotony, he ventured up on top of the bank above him. Here something like a building was outlined in the obscurity of the morning fog, and the faint but welcome sound of human voices struck upon his ear from a point farther up the river. Advancing cautiously in the direction of the sound to a point about half a mile above where he had been landed, he found a steamboat bound up the Wabash as far as Clinton, and he took passage for that point. Here, after several days' detention by high water, he took the stage for Lafayette. At Lafayette, the hotels were full of people, all seemingly having the same business—land-hunting for homes. Finding the seats in the stage for Logansport taken for several days in advance, and that to secure one he would have to pay his passage and await his turn, he remembered that he might walk. In due time he performed the pedestrian task, and reached Peru, his place of destination, weary and footsore.

At Peru, he entered the service of Alexander Wilson, to clerk in a store that he and a brother were going to start at Logansport. He remained at the latter place in charge of the store until the Spring of 1838, when the business was closed up, and he returned to Peru, in accordance with the original agreement. At Peru, he clerked for A. Wilson until the Fall of 1839, when, as had been previously agreed upon, he became the partner of Mr. Wilson, the firm being A. Wilson & Co. The first pork ever packed in Peru for sale is another of the subject of this sketch was elected Sheriff of the County, to which office he was re-elected in 1843, and which he filled until the expiration of his term, in 1845. In February, 1846, S. Fisher, then Superintendent of the Wabash & Erie Canal, appointed him clerk in the Canal Land Office, which he held until the Summer of 1847, when, under the act adjusting the State debt, known as the "Butler Bill," the office was removed to Logansport.

Being out of business after the removal of the Land Office, he bought the printing office, which was lying idle, because several efforts to establish a newspaper in the place had failed.

After a renovation of the office, he presented to the people, on the 26th of June, 1848, the first number of the *Miami County Sentinel*, which he conducted as editor and proprietor until the Summer of 1861, a period of over thirteen years. The paper succeeded in a business point of view, and was one of the leading Democratic papers of the State. It is still published, although it has passed through several hands since his connection with it ceased.

In 1850, the subject of this sketch was elected Representative Delegate to the Indiana Constitutional Convention. In 1860, he was elected Clerk of the Court. He has been a Member of the Town and City Councils at different times; County Agent; United States Special Agent, to pay the Miamis of Indiana their annuities in 1858, 1859 and 1860; and has held other positions of responsibility, in all of which he has evinced capacity and integrity.

At the age of twelve years, he commenced doing business in a store; and as a consequence, all the education he ever received in school was of an elementary character, and before that time.

He was married in Peru, Indiana, on the 28th of June, 1842, to Caroline A. Avaline, and a family of six girls and three boys blessed their home. The hand of Death has wrapped their once joyous household in mourning, by taking hence, a few years ago, two of his sons, and within the past year, his only son and beloved wife. He lives in a comfortable home in Peru, surrounded by his remaining children, and occupies his time in superintending his farm near town, and managing his other business.

WM. L. BUTLER, PERRY TOWNSHIP.

was a son of Hiram and Nancy Butler, and grandson of Wm. and Elizabeth Butler.

Hiram Butler, the father, was born Dec. 21, 1808, in Warren County, State of Georgia. During boyhood, was brought by his parents to Indiana. Here they first settled in Wayne County, then in Henry County, and finally in La Porte County. There he wedded Nancy Crumpacker, Nov. 22, 1838. She was the daughter of Joel and Elizabeth Crumpacker, born June 14, 1809, in Bedford County, Virginia. She emigrated with her parents to La Porte County, in 1835.

In 1839, Hiram Butler and young wife moved to Perry Township, Miami County, where eventually he became the owner of a large estate. He soon grew to have the confidence of the people of his new county, and in the years 1849 and 1852 respectively was elected County Commissioner, serving as such two full terms, or six years. In 1870, his name was announced for the same office again, but before the convention was held—May 4, 1870—he was kicked and killed by a horse. He was buried with Masonic honors, in the cemetery at Gilead; and it is said his funeral was attended by the largest concourse of people ever witnessed in the north end of Miami County.

His widowed wife still lives on the old homestead, in Perry Township, with their only son, Wm. L. Butler, to whom this is dedicated.

He was born at this homestead, January 27, 1841. Growing to manhood, Feb. 7, 1867, he married Miss Catharine Trifle, daughter of Jacob and Sarah Trifle, of Kosciusko County, Indiana. She had come to Indiana with her parents in infancy, from Miami County, Ohio, where she was born, October 27, 1840.

A sketch of that old homestead, with portraits of Hiram Butler and wife, and Wm. L. Butler and wife, can be seen occupying a full page in this volume. Wm. L. Butler is now in the prime of life. He is surrounded with comfort and plenty, and may a happy future await him!

GEORGE WILKINSON, LINCOLN, ALLEN TOWNSHIP.

This worthy citizen of Miami County is a native of Ross County, Ohio. His father, John Wilkinson, emigrated to that county, at an early day, from North Carolina—the State which had given birth to both the father and the mother.

Tracing farther back his origin, his grandfather Wilkinson was born in Ireland, while his mother had descended from German ancestry. George had been born February 16, 1817. During the Fall of his twentieth year (1836), his father's family, including himself, took their leave of the State of Ohio, and emigrated to the Hoosier State. Of course, at that time, there was no other medium but the overland. A double or team was employed, and twenty-five days were required to make the journey of three hundred miles.

They spent their first Winter in the then hamlet of Mexico, this county, changing, the following Spring, to the spot where now stands the village of Lincoln, and there established a permanent settlement.

At that time the terrifying yell of the Pottawattomies still rang through the forests of Miami County.

The Wilkinsons were the fourth family to settle in the present limits of Allen Township—those of John, Horton, George and William Neese only having preceded them.

During those pioneer days, bilious diseases were very prevalent. The atmosphere, of course, must have been tainted more with malarious poisons than since the dense timber began to disappear, since the glorious sun could penetrate to shed its golden, healthful rays, and since skill and industry have instituted channels for drainage. The exposures were too severe for the endurance of the father. He died December 24, 1838. The mother marvelously survived him thirty-two years. She followed him to the Golden Shores in 1870, aged 94 years.

Upon the death of his father, George—then 21 years of age—took upon himself the care of his widowed and aged mother and the management of the homestead. At 35 years, or in 1852, he wedded Miss Sarah J. Powell, with whom life has since been happily spent. He is at this time, and has been for some years, local preacher in the M. E. Church; he identified himself with that church in September, 1843, and has since been a consistent member, holding successively in the same the offices of Class Leader, Steward and Trustee.

At the general election held in 1854, he was elected, for a term of four years, Recorder of Miami County, serving his full term creditably to himself and efficiently as a servant for the public. In 1860, he, with others, petitioned the Board of County Commissioners for a division of (then) Union Township. The petition was granted, and thus, from the north half of Union was constructed the Township of Allen, as now appears.

During the Fall, also, of that year (1859), he and his brother James erected a building for a store at what is now the southwest corner of the town of Lincoln, purchased a small stock of goods and opened up trade. Soon after, he (George) bought his brother's interest in both the building and stock. Thus, pursuing about three years, and finding the business not yielding satisfactory returns, Mr. Wilkinson closed out his stock in trade and retired again to farming. Wilkinson closed out his stock in trade and retired again to farming.

At the time of entering the mercantile business, Mr. Wilkinson laid out twenty lots and called it Lincoln, selling some of the lots at ten dollars each.

The L., P. & C. R. R. was completed in 1869. During that year, Mr. W., jointly with Mr. James M. Powell, laid out what is known as Wilkinson & Powell's Addition to the Town of Lincoln. Also, during said year (1869), Mr. W. erected the building for a railroad depot at Lincoln; then selling it, erected the grain warehouse at the same town. Since then up to the present year (1877), he has been connected with the grain and warehouse business; but he has now retired. He says for many years after their settlement in what is now Allen Township, he knew, by name and countenance, nearly every voter in the north half of Miami County. But at this time he is unacquainted with many of the voters of his own township, and he is unacquainted with many of the voters of his own township, and feels that he has become largely a stranger in his own land.

He is now in his 61st year, and says that, in taking a review of his life, he sees in it many defects, "but is thankful to the All-wise Being for His goodness and mercy wherewith he has been blessed; so that, in the language of one of old time, he exclaims, 'Goodness and mercy hath followed me all the days of my life.'"

May his enjoyments and deeds of usefulness yet be many.

JOHN AKRIGHT, GILEAD, PERRY TOWNSHIP.

This most worthy citizen of Miami County is by descent a combination of English and German. His grandfather, Abraham Akright, born in England, crossed the Atlantic to America alone at the age of 13 years. At the breaking out of the Revolution, he took sides with his adopted country, and, patriot-like, fought throughout the long and bloody struggle. He was in the battles of Brandywine, Monmouth, Trenton and many others. Was a soldier, brave and true! but as if shielded, escaped through all, unharmed! He lived to a good old age, and died about 1828.

Wm. Akright, the father of John, and a native of the Keystone State, was born in 1788. Arriving at the age of young manhood, he came westward, as far as Wayne County, Ohio, where, eventually (about 1818), he married, and there fixed his residence for a number of years. For his companion, he chose Miss Sarah Mowrey, daughter of John Mowrey, who had been a pioneer of Wayne County. Mr. Mowrey's vocation was shoemaking. His ancestors were German. After marriage, and while residing in Wayne County, Wm. Akright pursued the vocation of farming.

Accumulating a small property, he resolved, in 1831, to seek a home still farther westward. During that year, he reached Logansport, Ind., moving by team, accompanied by his family, and having upon his arrival, cash assets $193 in silver. With $160 of this amount he directly purchased 80 acres, four miles to the northeast of the then hamlet or small village of Logansport.

Making slight improvements, he sold the same before the end of that year for a small advance, and rented a farm in the vicinity, partly under cultivation. This done, he paid a visit to the then unorganized County of Miami. Sailing himself, he bought 120 acres on the east line of what is now Perry Township. The second year thereafter (1833), he moved his family to this new claim.

The telling blows of industry now fast inaugurated comfortable surroundings. But a few years, in fact, and they enjoyed a home—*desirable* and sumptuously provided. Neighbors settled in, and they were no longer in a wilderness, gloomy, solitary and unbroken! The family of Wm. Akright, all told, consisted of ten children. Seven were born in the Buckeye State; one in Cass County, and the two youngest in Perry Township. John, of whom we write, was the fourth child, born Wayne County Ohio, Aug. 8, 1824. Of this large family, James, Elizabeth and himself are the only children yet living. James resides in Kosciusko County, this State, and Elizabeth (wife of Israel Shoemaker), in Perry Township, this county. John was an industrious lad; as obedient, dutiful son. To help his father through financial embarrassments, he continued at home, toiling without compensation, until 24 years of age. His opportunities at school had, of necessity, been limited. Three months—and that very badly disconnected—would aggregate the sum total of his school privileges; and yet he passed the threshold of practical life, liberally equipped for the struggle before him. Self-prompted desire, with self-willed application, had been his resource. Entering the race for self-interest and under self-control, he made it profitable for himself and useful to his community; teaching a few terms of school. In the pursuit of manual labor, he leased the farm of his father. Years sped on! Time wrought changes! But John Akright, the while has paddled safely and successfully his own canoe. May 20, 1867, his mother died. Succeeding this bereavement, his father was unsettled up to the Spring