

Ball  
Library

In the year 1880, there began to be talk of a railroad to be built through this territory. No doubt surveying had been done before this time, but the general public was not aware of what was going on. In a short time actual surveying and probable locations were the talk of the community. At one time, the railroad was to come through Sevastopool, then another time about half way between there and the present location. However the present location was definitely decided and work was begun. At this time, there was no settlement in the present location of Mentone. There was a school house and a church located at the intersection of the present intersection of Roads 25 and 19. The school house stood on the lot now occupied by The Pack Rat Palace (American Legion Building). The church, known as the Lees Chapel was just west of the place where J & J Marathon (Utter's Service Station) now stands. With the building of the Railroad, it was necessary to move the church to a new location. This was done by securing the land where the United Methodist Church now stands. The members decided to build a new church. This church was so badly damaged by a tornado in the early 1890's that it was torn down and rebuilt about 1891 or '92.

At the time of the coming of the Railroad, there were a number of small settlements near. Sevastapool on the south, Palestine on the East, Bloomingsburg on the West, Tippecanoe Town on the river one mile west of the present Tippecanoe, Big Foot Southwest. Post offices were located in various places. One mile east, where Abe Whetstone lived was Oak Ridge, one mile west, where Truman Long now lives was Yellow Creek. This was quite a little settlement, with a store on the corner on the Truman Long place belonging to Allen Blue. Directly west across the road was a church called the Methodist Protestant. A drug store was operated by a Dr. Chandler in a house now occupied by Fred Swick. Mahlon Mentzer's father, Sam, had a sawmill on the ground east of Truman Long's place. William Hyers had a blacksmith shop just west of the Fred Swick house and Mr. Garrison did shoe repairing in a little shop where

Eugene Sarber's house is now. The post office was in Allen Blue's store until Mentone was made a regular post office. The mail was carried from Warsaw to Palestine and from there to the small post offices as Oak Ridge, Sevastapool, Beaver Dam and Yellow Creek.

Mentone was platted and lots made available to purchasers by James and Albert Tucker. Later Mr. Tucker bought into partnership with him Carl Myers and Mr. Hackerdom plotted the portion north of the Baptist Church. This is known as the Myers Hackerdom Addition.

From the start, Mentone was an up and coming town. The men who were interested in making it go and grow were young men filled with get up and go. New homes were built very fast and before you knew it a new home or business was going up and Mentone was on its way.

There is disagreement about where the business district on Main Street would be located. Allen Blue put his store on wheels and the building was moved on the lot where Kenneth Riner now lives. Later it was moved on the lot west of the Methodist parsonage and occupied as the David Lewis store. The post office was moved onto the lot where Mrs. Yocum now lives. This building also contained a drug store. The railroad built its depot at the present site so that pulled the weight of the business east and the main business section was settled in this way.

The Methodist Protestant Church followed by moving their building onto the lot now owned by Mrs. Ray Rush. This building was later bought by L. P. Jefferies and moved onto the lot where Raymond Lewis now occupies.

Mahlon Mentzer's father, Sam, after sawing out the timber and switch ties for the railroad decided that as the timber was almost gone (they didn't use anything but the best in those days) entered into partnership with Art Manwaring. He moved his engine and boiler to Mentone and they built the

first grist mil in miles of this place. There were a number of water-powered burr mills. This mill ran day and night for several years and people came for miles to get the more refined flour. Later Albert Tucker became a partner and they shipped flour and feed over the new railroad as far east as Cleveland, Ohio.

George Jeffries had a saw mill and novelty works just south of the grist mill. The finishing touches were just being completed in 1884 when Jeffries' mill caught on fire and burned. It happened at threshing time. A number of outfits were working near and by hauling water from the creek with their tanks they saved the grist mill.

After it was definitely decided that the business section would be where it now is, a rush was made to get on the band wagon. A hotel was built on the southwest corner, a two story frame building with a dining room, office and a number of sleeping rooms, a wood stove in the hall heated the bedrooms. you can imagine how cozy it was on a zero night of which it seemed there were plenty. However, people were more rugged then and a little cold did not bother them.

Art and Loren Manwaring built a store building on the northwest corner of the square. This was the first store building built uptown. J. W. Sellers built a building next to the Manwarings. This was used as a drug store.

Mack Forest had a store in Sevastapool. He thought that Mentone would be an up and coming town so he built the building now occupied by the drug store and davern. Arrangements were made with the town authorities that no building in this block should be built that was not fire proof. This was known as the Banner Block. All the other buildings on Main Street were of wood construction and were a fire hazard with no fire protection.

The Opera House was built by William Mollenhour. This was a place for

meetings where the community interests were discussed and everyone turned out to find out what was going on. Today we have to call people and plead with them to come to a meeting that is of interest to all.

Mentone was named for a very beautiful resort town in France. Mentone was organized in 1872, but was not incorporated until about 1886. In the meantime, new industries were coming to town, new homes being built. Our streets were gravel and side walks were oak plank. The boards in these walks would get loose and many falls resulted from flipping of a plank--not always accidental.

When they were building the railroad it was quite a sight for children who knew no other means of travel except to walk or horse-drawn vehicles. When the work train finally arrived near the school house, you may imagine how excited the children were.

After they had built a mile or two they took the teacher and all the children for a ride, which was perhaps the most exciting time in their lives. This school house was used a short time, but the town was growing so fast and so many new people were bring more children to town that it was necessary to build a larger building. The ground where the library, Reed's home and Dr. Wilson's office now are was provided by Mr. Tucker as a gift and a two-story frame building was erected. Later a partition was made in each room so it made four rooms. Eventually there was a two-year high school and the first class graduated in 1892. C. M. Sloan was principal. In the year 1893, there was a necessity for a larger building and a new six room building was built on this site. This was of brick construction and was a very nice school with a three-year high school, but on account of the lack of high school students it was 1896 before the first class was graduated. O. H. Bowman was principal of the school at this time. Mr. Bowman was a fine teacher and a good organizer. He made the students feel like this was

their school and any infraction of rules reflected on them. He had this feeling so well instilled in the students that he could leave the room for hours at a time and there would be perfect order. It took about two years of very hard work and instruction before this was possible. The school was made a four-year high school about this time.. In the years following, it soon became apparent that our school had outgrown the building again, and it became necessary to rent a vacant store building downtown to take care of some of the classes and a temporary building was built on the north side of the original. The children called this The Sheep Shed, but it took care of the situation at that time.

As the town continued to grow, it soon became apparent that it would be necessary to incorporate in 1886. Then the election of officers was held. Results were as follows: Councilman of the First Ward, John Yantis; second ward, R. E. Railsback; third ward, Solomon Arnsberger; Clerk, S. A. Boggess; Marshall, Solomon Zentz; Treasurer, Loren Manwaring. The election judges were John D. Heighway, C. E. Dewane and John F. Johnson. Mentone was now in business.

On March 23, 1886, the board being aware of fire danger, passed a hook and ladder ordinance, and organized our first fire fighting company. They also saw a need for keeping law and order and ordered a calaboose built on Lot 226 -- size 10 X 14 X 9 to be completed on or before the tenth day of April. (This building was later used by George Craft in perfecting Craft's Distemper Cure, which is still on the market.)

February 7, 1887, the board passed an ordinance prohibiting trains from running through the incorporated town of Mentone faster than 15 miles per hour.

May 6, 1887, the new board met and organized as follows: S. S. Mentzer, President; O. J. McGee, Clerk. A resolution was made to build a structure

20 X 30 X 10 feet to house the fire equipment.

June 16, 1887, the following taxes were levied. Corporation 75¢ on each \$100 valuation, 25¢ street and 25¢ poll. The marshall's salary was \$60.00 per year, and if he should resign before the end of his term, he was to receive only half of his salary. On July 5, 1888, the board met and agreed to all go to Warsaw and inspect a fire engine they wished to sell and have it tested. During this time the board had built fire cisterns at different points over town.

October 2, 1888, an ordinance was passed for the issuing of bonds in the amount of \$1,000 bearing 7% interest. The proceeds to be used for the purpose of fire apparatus.

January 1, 1889, the board ordered the marshall to place a bell on the fire house so that citizens could be notified in case of fire. The fire engine was one of those old type pumpers operated by man power. A number of men on each side would work the pumps. It was a satisfactory price of equipment and saved several buildings in the time it was used. Water was supplied by the large tanks placed at places where it was most likely they would be needed.

July 3, 1889, the board passed the cow ordinance. This had to do with cows running at large. Most of the citizens had a cow allowed to run at large as there were a number of vacant lots and this was one way to keep the weeds down, but they were supposed to keep them up at night or they would be placed in the stock yards and locked up. It would take a dollar to get the cow back. A very amusing thing happened one night. There were several cows and one calf taken by the marshall and locked up. Early the next morning a man by the name of Bill Hertz came after his cow. He asked the marshall if he might take his cow home and milk her and said when he

came after the calf he would pay for both. He took his cow and left the calf, which belonged to another man. A lot of fun was had by kidding the marshall.

A small village (Yellow Creek) uprooted itself in 1882, and moved about one mile east to the present location of Mentone in order to be near the New York Central Railroad. The inhabitants of Yellow Creek, more commonly known as Little Chicago, carted entire buildings including a Dry Goods Store which until recently housed a coin laundry.

They were welcomed by Albert Tucker who owned the land and had surveyed the plot in 1882.

The area occupying parts of Franklin and Harrison townships was very good farm land. Tucker, who later operated a grain elevator in Mentone, was the founder of the village and deeded  $\frac{1}{2}$  interest to both George W. Myers and William E. Hackerdom, both of Ohio. It was Myers who suggested that the community be named after Mentone, France. In a four-year period, 1882-1886, Mentone grew from a population of four to a booming 700.

Farmers attracted to the Mentone region were not disappointed. More stock of all kinds has been shipped from the Mentone Railroad station than any other station in Kosciusko County.

In the autumn of 1882 William Kintzel became the first pioneer to erect a house in the new town plot. His home, which was finished November 5, 1882, housed his family. Two days later the Artemus Manwaring family moved in with the Kintzel family until their business house was completed. This two-story building was stocked by Manwaring with a large assortment of general merchandise.