

AUGUSTUS COUNTY HISTORY

Bell February

Brief Sketch of Sevastopol By GEORGE A. NYE, 1939.

Many years ago people had to live a life which was much more encompassed by physical limitations than they do now and so many times communities sprang up here and there over Kosciusko county. These centers served as an outlet for homely and social desires until the land was cleared and better roads caused the circles of activity to be widened. Such a community center was the village of Sevastopol which was founded in 1856 by George W. White, John Tucker and John Mollenhour who were proprietors of the ground. Sevastopol was a thriving village for perhaps 30 years at the cross-roads three miles south of Palestine and four miles west. Sevastopol and Beaver Dam were two villages of Franklin township which is considered now one of the richest townships of the county. It is quite likely that the glory of Sevastopol began to wane about the time that the Nickel Plate railroad was constructed in 1882 and the new town of Mentone was laid out. In the hey-day of its history Sevastopol perhaps was the home of 200 people. It was large enough that in September, 1863, a large meeting was held there to arouse the war spirit. It is recorded that 600 people were in attendance. Here were speeches by J. J. Coopers, Governor "Billy" Williams and Captain Atkinson. This is only one of many large meetings held in the village. We have record too of a large and cotillion party held there during Civil War days at \$1.50 a couple. Sevastopol was the home of several lodges and they held events which brought many visiting lodges to the village.

Town's Drug Store.

diately after the war. In the issue of the Northern Indianian for July 1, 1869, we are told that Main and Market streets are both being graded, that the town then contained two general stores, one eating saloon, one grocery, two doctors, one lawyer, two wagon makers, one blacksmith, one gristmill, one sawmill, and one milliner and dress maker. Judging from this we would infer that it was a lively place during Grant's administration. It also says that so far that summer three new buildings have been erected. A postoffice was located at Sevastopol under Buchanan in 1858. William Dunlap was the first postmaster. Under Lincoln A. J. Whittenberger was in charge and had the office at his store. Mr. Whittenberger came from Pennsylvania to Indiana in 1836. His life was typical of many men of his day. His parents were natives of Pennsylvania and Virginia. They reared a family of ten sons and one daughter. A. J. was born in 1831. In 1852 along with some other men he went west to "the diggings" in California. He went overland from Kansas City perhaps under the guidance of Buffalo Bill or Kit Carson who took charge of wagon trains bound for the coast. A. J. came back via the Isthmus of Panama. On the road home the steamer caught fire and he afterwards had many a laugh in recounting experiences of people during the fire. He had to walk about half way across the isthmus before he came to the railroad. The writer's grandfather, Sylvester Murdock Huff, had the same experience. In 1854 A. J. and his brother came to this county from Fulton county. They started a store at Sevastopol. After 1865 he was in business at Larwill and later at Claypool where he served as postmaster for ten years from

Early Families.

Among the prominent men in and around Sevastopol in 1879 were the following: George W. Rickle, who was trustee, E. Stoner, George W. Smith, John C. Smith, W. W. Warren, Jacob Weirick, Cyrus Pierce, John I. Cox, William H. Eiler, John D. Heighway, Pierce Jeffries, Milton Hire, Washington Bybee, David Little, and Horace and Albert Tucker. Most of these men were farmers and growers or stock raisers. Cox had a sawmill and a planing mill. In his earlier life Weirick had been a school teacher. Warren was a carpenter. Carpenters in those days carried their own tools. There were many large barns to build. Substantial houses were made of native timber. Washington Bybee was one of the county commissioners when the county built the new court house in 1882 to 84. He had come to the county forty years before that time and an account in the old papers tells us that he stayed in 1884 over night with Hiram Idings at Warsaw in the same old hotel building that he had stayed in forty years before. Idings lived where the present Christian Science church is now. He was the contractor for the new court house. The writer's mother, Belle Huff, then a girl in her late twenties, worked for Idings and no doubt prepared Mr. Bybee's meals during his stay with the captain. She worked at Idings in 1882 while the court house was being built and she always spoke very highly of the family. Other prominent people of Sevastopol in 1879 were H. C. Riner, a groceryman; David L. Lewis, a hardware merchant; C. E. Newhouse, a druggist; Mott & Mollenhour, undertakers and furniture dealers; George Kern, a blacksmith; Richard Doremire, a shoe cobbler; Towl & Keesecker, millers; and H. B. Ernberger, a doctor. T. M. Pashall and

was running a hotel at the old home-stand. There was also a cider mill at Tucker's home. The land around the village was then owned by Hires to the southeast, George Rickle and William Dunlap to the southwest, John Tucker, John Vandermark and Pierce Jeffries to the northwest, and Milton Hire, William A. Mollenhour, E. C. Jordan and Amos M. Towl to the northeast. Isaac Creakbaum and Fred Hire, who are living today in the county, were boys around Sevastopol when it was an important trading center.

John Tucker Names Town.

Thirteen years later in 1879 the lands to the southeast of Sevastopol were owned by Hires and Warrens; to the southwest by George W. Rickle, J. M. Warren, William Kreighbaum, and Albert Tucker. Mr. Tucker owned about two sections of land at that time just west of the village. To the northeast lay the farms of Milton E. Hire, Peter A. Blue, and Jacob Weirick. Northwest of town the land was owned by members of the Vandermark family and of the Jeffries family. John Tucker came to the township in 1853 when he was 62 years of age. He settled on the present site of Sevastopol and the town was surveyed and named by him. He was a native of New Hampshire. He was a man of good education. He taught school in Ohio for sixty-five terms before coming to Indiana. His wife was Mary Ward who was also a native of the New England state. In 1877 his good wife passed away and two years later he died. His grave is at Palestine. They were the parents of Horace, Aurelius, Albert, Serena, Regulus and

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complete without reference to Dr. nos M. Towl, who came there out the time the village was laid out. He had a drug store on the southwest corner of the cross-roads. Thirty years he was one of the leading physicians of that community. For many years he acted as trustee and had the office in one corner of his store. He was agent for the Northern Indian. At one time he acted as trustee for Franklin township. In 1879 he was proprietor of a hotel known as the Union Grove hotel. Doctoring in those days was of course, much different from now and getting about very cumbersome compared to today of good roads and automobiles. Dr. Towl had to ride horseback and carry saddle bags when roads were bad. He introduced compound oxygen as a cure for certain diseases. We perhaps know it by its ozone. His day was the day of fever and ague and much malaria. The former was partly found in the swamps which were low swampy places that were vet drained. Dr. Towl was born in Exeter, Maine, in 1819. He read medicine in a doctor's office in New York, and began to practice in 1852 he came to Palestine, Indiana, and four years later moved down to Sevastopol. He was father of seven children, but in only one was living. Luagrada who married Alfred Keececker, Sevastopol, Towl and Bybee had a son in Warsaw at one time. The son died very suddenly and his death was a shock to the community. There he was greatly missed and in 1886. A diary kept by a young doctor such as Dr. Towl, would indeed be valuable to any one who would undertake to write a full complete history of Franklin township.

In Civil War Times.

Franklin prospered during the war and most of the uptown houses were built during that time. It continued to grow numer-

1875 to 1885. Sevastopol was on a star route out of Warsaw. A hack made a trip daily to Palestine, Beaver Dam and Sevastopol.

W. Dunlap First Postmaster.

William Dunlap, the first postmaster, lived to be an old man and was still in business at an advanced age. He was postmaster under Cleveland and was in charge of the office in 1878. For fifteen years he was justice of the peace and for twelve he was a notary public. He and Thomas P. Burns had a general store at Sevastopol. It is said that the Baptist church in the village was built in 1860. There was an Odd Fellows hall built in 1876 on the southwest corner of the cross-roads. The first mill in the township was built at Sevastopol in 1848 or 1849 by Edwin C. Gordon. It was a steam sawmill to which he later attached a set of burrs. Afterwards he erected a steam flouring mill near the sawmill. In 1866 sawmills were to be found scattered all over the county. Roads were bad and the sawing had to be done near the woods. Thomas B. Sarber had one of the first sawmills at Palestine and here was sawed out the timbers for the court house built in Warsaw in 1848. Other early mills were those of Isham Summy at Palestine, William Magner in Seward township, Hall & Paulus at Silver Lake, and H. B. Funk in Lake township. Every village had its blacksmith's shop. On lot 15 was such a place, Robert J. Lambert was the smithy at one time. This and the grocery store was the favorite loading place. It was always interesting to watch the smithy shoe the horses or repair a wagon. Some horses would show a bad attitude toward being shod and for these the smith had a twitch to fasten on the horse's nose. All the great problems of Lincoln's and Grant's day were discussed by the villagers of Sevastopol under the shade trees in the summer and around the stove at the village store

Linus Barton was proprietor of a shingle mill at Oak Ridge north of Sevastopol on the township line road. This name has long disappeared from the map but the map of 1879 shows this place to be in the southwest corner of section 36 in Harrison township on the south end of J. F. Johnson's 40 acres. There was a postoffice here. The town of Mentone had not yet been founded. School No. 13 and a Methodist church were the only public buildings standing on the present site of Mentone in 1866. Oak Ridge was one mile east of the present site of Mentone. Adam Teel was a bricklayer at Sevastopol. Brick in those days were made at various clay banks about the county. The earliest map we have of Sevastopol is one of 1866. This map of the village shows store buildings on all corners of the cross-roads except the southwest. It shows the schoolhouse a quarter of a mile west of the village on the northeast corner of Dunlap's 80-acre farm. North of town Letter & Mollenhour's sawmill is shown and another run by Gordon & Co. The Baptist church was at the south end of the village on the west side of the street. The wagon shop is shown at the north end of the village on lot 7 on the west side of Main street. For a long time John Vendemark had a hotel just north of the village on the John Tucker farm. He married Letitia, the daughter of John Tucker. In 1871 he

Old Shingle Mill.

of the northeast corner of the cross-roads in a building Mrs. Mollenhour owned. He stayed at the Mollenhour home Fridays and Saturdays. Daniel M. Secor, who is now a hardware merchant at Akron, used to court his sweetheart at Sevastopol. She was the daughter of David Little. Catherine Little became his wife in 1888.

Livonia. The Tucker family has been one of the outstanding families of Kosciusko county. Horace and Albert Tucker no doubt were the leading farmers and stock buyers of their day in the southwest part of the county. They paid taxes on as much land as anyone in the county ever owned. Albert Tucker was the founder of the town of Mentone which was laid out by Amos Kist and Caleb Hughes in May, 1882, as Reub. Williams says, "half way between Warsaw and Rochester." Tucker built the first elevator there and made loans of money to people to finish their houses in the new town.

J. Weirick's 1,092 Acres.

The life history of Jacob Weirick who owned much land around Sevastopol is quite interesting and gives one a good idea of the life of the pioneers. He was born in Union county, Pennsylvania, in 1811. His own parents were born in 1773 and 1780 so they were children during the Revolutionary war. Jacob was one of seven children. After his mother died in 1816 the father married again and to this union were born twelve children. The father died in 1838 but the mother lived until 1883. Jacob remained in Pennsylvania until 1843 and then moved to Ohio and lived there until 1854 when he came on to Indiana. He located in Franklin township and bought 520 acres of land of Washington Bybee. By 1887 he had increased this to 1,092 acres. In 1861 he built the second brick residence in Franklin township. From 1834 to 1884 he taught school along with his farming. He married Margaret Smith in Union county, Pa., in 1841 and reared a family of eight children, five girls born in Ohio, and three girls born in Indiana. Calendar Ford married Susannah and after her death he married her sister, Mary. Harriet married Daniel Ford, Isabelle married Madison Murdock and Emeline became the wife of Oscar Harding. It has been the writer's pleasure to teach one of the great-grandchildren of Jacob Weirick.

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Villages N

Years ago a village miles was a necessity be were very poor. With a buggy a person could go miles then as quick as it it was almost impossible place except on horseback of the mud. Riding in a sleigh on bob-sleds in the winter was to say the least and a drive of three miles or so was about as far as any one cared to go. Then too it was not profitable to haul lumber very far so that every village had its lumber yard and sawmill. This mills were essential in every community. The village with its mill and stores and wagon shops and horseshoeing shops filled a real need during the years when this county was being settled. But with the coming of railroads some of the villages shifted their positions so as to be on the railroad. The Nickel Plate road caused Burket and Mentone and Claypool and Sidney to spring up in 1882 at the expense of Kinsey, Palestine, Dodgertown, Beaver Dam and Sevastopol, all of which had been lively trading places for a long time. Now with the coming of the automobile and good roads even some of these towns beginning to doubt if they will be much larger than they are. But with all it is interesting to know that years ago when the pioneers of this county began to move in from Ohio and Pennsylvania there were such places as Sevastopol and that they were busy trading centers and counted for a great deal in the lives of those who came west to settle up the country. Someday somebody may write a complete history of the settlement named Sevastopol by John Tucker and when they do it will be a very interesting ac-