

The Blackford-Wells Tracer

A Newsletter of the Blackford-Wells Genealogy Society

Volume 2

November 1997

Number 2

President's Corner

It has been suggested by some members that we try meeting more frequently. Please help us to reach the right decision for our group by filling out the questionnaire enclosed in this newsletter. Vote for one: Meetings remaining the same, or 4 x per year; meeting every-other-month, or 6 x per year; or meeting every month, or 12 times per year. Sign and return the completed ballot at the January meeting or mail to: Blackford-Wells Genealogy Society, P.O. Box 54, Bluffton, IN. **If you voted at the October meeting, you do not need to do so again.**

Dues for 1998 are now due: \$10.00 for single memberships or \$15.00 for couples. Dues may be paid at the January 17th meeting or mail them to our post office box. A gift membership might be a good Christmas gift idea!

Thank you for the help and cooperation you have given me over the past two years. I am looking forward to another busy and rewarding year as your president.

Lynn Elliott, President

Minutes from our October Meeting

The Blackford-Wells Genealogy Society met at the Wells County Public Library in Bluffton on October 18, 1997. President Lynn Elliott called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. She led members in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Minutes of the April and July, 1997, meetings were read and approved. Lucille Reidy read the Treasurer's report in the absence of Ken Manning.

The following committee reports were given:

By-laws - Lucille Reidy reported she will retype the by-laws with corrections and make copies so they can be acted upon at the next meeting.

Nominating Committee - Virginia Wittwer reported that Jim Foster had recommended the same officers be retained for another year for continuity.

Ways and Means Committee - Lynn extended thanks to Sara Gartin handling the raffle for the book, "Starr: The Quakers from Ireland." We still have the book since no one signed up for it. (Continued p.48)

The Life and Times of Dr. James Sawyer

Great-grandfather of Lillie Alberson Harris, Dr. James Sawyer, was born 12 Nov 1815, in Beragh Post Office, Tyrone County, Ireland, the son of Archibald Sawyer & Mary Donagy.

He received an excellent education in his native country; in higher mathematics few persons excelled him. After receiving his education he left his native land and sailed for the United States on the ship Scotia 20 Aug 1842 at the age of 27. He settled in Monroe County, Ohio, where he began the study of medicine under Dr. William Schooley, of Somerton, Belmont County, OH. After finishing his medical studies he opened an office in a small town in Monroe County, OH. He embraced the principles of the Society of Friends (Quakers.) On 20 Oct 1846 he married Elizabeth Ann Fraime of Monroe County, in accordance with the established usages of the Society.

Soon after his marriage he came to Jay County, IN. After remaining there for a short time he returned to Ohio to prepare to move his family to Jay County. He made the entire trip on horseback. In the fall of 1847 he loaded his effects into a wagon and began the journey west with his wife and young son George to Indiana. After two weeks they arrived at the farm of Enos Lewis, near West Grove, Jay County, IN. (Continued page 48)

What you'll find in this issue...

President's Corner

October Meeting Minutes

Feature Article: The Life & Times of Dr. James Sawyer

Matamoras: "Inviting Place to Visit"

Homestead Land Records of Nottingham Township

What to Know When Buying a PC

QUERIES

(Continued from page 46)

A few years later he gave up the practice of medicine as he regarded it as largely a myth. He devoted a portion of his time to teaching school, both in Indiana and Ohio. He was a successful teacher and was the first teacher of the Scott School in Southern Wells County, IN.

As time went on he built a cabin on a 160 acre tract of land (owned by his wife) in Wells County, IN. She died on 5 May 1852. They had three children: George J., Thomas, and Mary Ann. He lived a widower for about five years, keeping his children with him.

On 6 July 1855 he married Ruth G. Haines. Sometime after their marriage he built a frame house close to Winona (near what is now known as Fiat in Northern Jay County, IN). He also built a cabin and started the first store there. To this union two girls and one boy was born.

Doctor Sawyer gave all of his children as good an education as circumstances and the County could offer. The Doctor was a kind and sympathetic man, strongly attached to his family. In his religious views he was a liberalist. He had little faith in the creeds and dogmas of the church. He accepted the fact of spirit return as the only well-defined evidence of a life beyond the confines of earth.

After the ascension of his second wife he fixed up his affairs, and went to live with his son George, a banker who resided in Friend, Nebraska. Doctor Sawyer died 6 August 1898. His remains were taken to West Grove Cemetery, Jay County, IN, where his two wives were buried. The funeral services were free from formal ceremonies. There were a few appropriate hymns sung by the (church) choir and a brief outline of his life was read by William Gray, his long-time friend.



DR. JAMES SAWYER RUTH G. HAINES SAWYER



DR. JAMES SAWYER RUTH G. HAINES
EVA CARTER
SAWYER HOUSE - 1ST HOUSE EAST
OF FIAT, IND. ON ST. ROAD # 18

Submitted by Lillie Harris

A GENEALOGIST'S PRAYER

Oh darling ancestor; wherever you are,
Tell me what I need to know.
From whence you came and who I am,
Things the records seem not to show.

Just who we were, I yearn to learn,
We had to come from somewhere.
There are no records about your life,
But of you line, I'm heir.

'T would seem to me that you were born,
But there's no certificate of birth.
You must have had a mom and dad,
They had to be there first.

Unless our line is illegitimate,
You took a bride yourself.
Yet someone lost the book of marriage,
There are not records on the shelf.

I tried for deeds to learn your land,
Your house or farm you owned.
There's nothing there, to my chagrin,
A loss that I bemoaned.

You must have died, for people do,
but your death is not recorded.
Your grave is lost and overgrown,
A fact that I find sordid.

So who were you, and who am I?
We both have our biology.
Pray help me, friend, I've got to know,
To complete my genealogy.

by Alger Coddard Johnson, Jr.

Slate of officers for 1998

President Lynn Elliott
V. President Lucille Reidy
Treasurer Jack Wilson
Secretary Barbara Elliott

Voting for these officers will
take place during the January
meeting. Please plan to at-
tend.

The OH State Dept. of Health,
Bureau of Vital Statistics, now
has death records from January
1945-present. Older records
have been transferred to the OH
Historical Society. To obtain in-
formation from the Dept. of
Health write to: P.O. Box 15098,
Columbus, OH 43215-0098.
The address for the Historical So-
ciety is: Archives-Library Div.,
1982 Velma Avenue, Columbus,
OH 43211-2497.

October Meeting Minutes

(Continued from page 46)

Old Business: Ballots were dis-
tributed to receive input regarding
the frequency of meetings.

New Business: The format for the
newsletter will be changed to gener-
ate more interest by members; and it
is to be issued in a more timely man-
ner. Lillie Harris will accept the re-
sponsibility of the newsletter for the
coming term. Lynn Elliott will be
able to print the newsletter at the
Southern Wells School more eco-
nomically than having it commer-
cially printed.

Lucille Reidy pointed out that the
nominating report had not been ac-
cepted and that Ken Manning had
written a letter respectfully but firmly
declining the nomination. Sara
Gartin moved acceptance of the
nominating committee report as fol-
lows: **President-Lynn Elliott; Vice
President-Lucille Reidy; and Sec-
retary-Barbara Elliott.** The motion
carried.

Program: Bill Horan, Wells
county Extension Agent, presented
a program on using computer soft-
ware to keep genealogy records. He
noted that computers do not make
you faster, but more efficient when
managing information, reorganizing
information, and generating reports.
He discussed Personal Ancestry File,
which does not require a Windows
operating system and uses little space
on the hard drive. It is easy to use
and generates a number of reports.
After the meeting, Sara Gartin dem-
onstrated how the Internet can be
used for genealogical searching.

President Elliott announced the
next meeting will be **January 17,
1998, at the Brass Latch in Mont-
pelier.**

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Elliott, Secretary

OLD COUNTY RECORDS REQUESTED

Old county records might make an interesting feature in our newsletter. Anyone from Blackford or Wells County is invited to submit items that you think may be of interest to our members or anyone else who reads our newsletter. Old cemetery records, land records, interesting notes of births and deaths could make interesting reading while you are snowbound this winter, as well as being good research material.

Dig out those dusty old books from their resting place in the attic or basement and submit an article for a future newsletter!!!

MORE MEMBERS IN 1998

Lets all work hard in 1998 to get our membership to grow. Ask a friend, relative, or neighbor to attend a meeting with you...share your newsletter with someone...talk about our Society to folks you attend other clubs or church with!

Working together jointly to produce an interesting and informative newsletter, having exciting programs at our meetings, and sharing the camaraderie of others interested in "finding their roots" are all good reasons to be proud of our Society and proud to ask others to join us!

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

As the Thanksgiving Holiday approaches and thoughts of Christmas and the New Year begin to creep in (actually race in, as I hear from my granddaughter that there are "only 47 more shopping days left until Christmas") I began to give thought to the responsibility I have accepted in agreeing to become the editor of this newsletter.

As I have lived in the Blackford-Wells County area all my life, I have developed and enjoyed several enduring friendships; many of these going back to school days, others beginning in later years, and even others relatively new, several being made through contacts made doing genealogical research. One of these friends, Virginia Wittwer, has spent many hours to help in many ways, but particularly in pulling information together to include in this issue of the newsletter as we were asked to get it out as quickly as possible.

I also think of my daughter, Ann Wheeler, who really "isn't into all this genealogy stuff" but has given several hours of typing and layout ability to help in this effort. And she admits that it is rather interesting after you get into it!

I am sure that any newsletter isn't produced by a solitary effort and in this case it has definitely been through the efforts of many people. It is through the joint effort of our members who have submitted articles or ideas for articles that this issue has become a reality.

Many of you no doubt have ideas or suggestions for what you would like to see published in 1998. Please send any printed material or ideas to Lillie Harris, 1286 E 1000 South, Keystone, IN 46759. If you would like pictures or written material returned to you, please enclose a SASE.

I look forward to serving as your Editor in the year to come and also to receiving lots of articles and suggestions for articles from our members in Blackford and Wells Counties.

Lillie Harris

THANKSGIVING DAY

By Annette Wynne

Brave and high-souled Pilgrims, you who knew no fears,
How your words of thankfulness go ringing down the years;
May we follow after; like you, work and pray,
and with hearts of thankfulness keep Thanksgiving Day.

FEATURE ARTICLES REQUESTED...

It is the hope of the editorial staff to feature a short story or item about an ancestor of someone in our Society each month (as the one on Page 46 featuring Dr. James Sawyer.) Please send your story or item to our Editor, Lillie Harris at 1286 E 1000S, Keystone, IN 46759. Deadline for articles for the January newsletter is December 12th.

THE REGISTER OF MATAMORAS SCHOOL, HARRISON TOWNSHIP, BLACKFORD COUNTY, INDIANA, SEPTEMBER 14, 1903 TO APRIL 21, 1905, IS A RECORD TAKEN BY TEACHERS GERTRUDE BLOUNT AND LOLA KELLEY. FINLEY GEIGER WAS SERVING AS COUNTY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT THEN. SOME OF THE FAMILIES WHOSE CHILDREN ATTENDED MATAMORAS SCHOOL DURING THAT TIME PERIOD WERE: JOSIAH TWIBELL, AMY WILKINSON, MARY GRAY, MARY E. MARTIN, ADA MARTIN, OLLIE COULTER, JOSEPH M. RAINS, ALVIRA GALE, PATIE CHAPMAN, MRS. L. M. JACKSON, MRS. A. L. NIKEL, S. M. GLOVER, LINNIE GLOVER, MRS. LILLIE STRAUB, ANN E. LACEY, GEORGE LYONS, MAY PATTERSON, HATTIE TURNER, MAY BROCK, CLARA SNYDER, ED KINDLESPARGER, E. M. TWIBELL, MARY COOK, ROY BEDWELL, LEVI HAWK, A. S. SIMONTON, W.D.D. COOK, ITHAMER RAINS, GEORGE RAINS, GEORGE BROTHERTON, CHARLES KAENBIG, JOSEPH MADDOX, J. D. MCFANN, P. S. MONTGOMERY, ALICE COLEMAN, W. A. NEAL, VIOLA NESTEBROOK, D. C. URICH, AND MARY E. MADDOX.

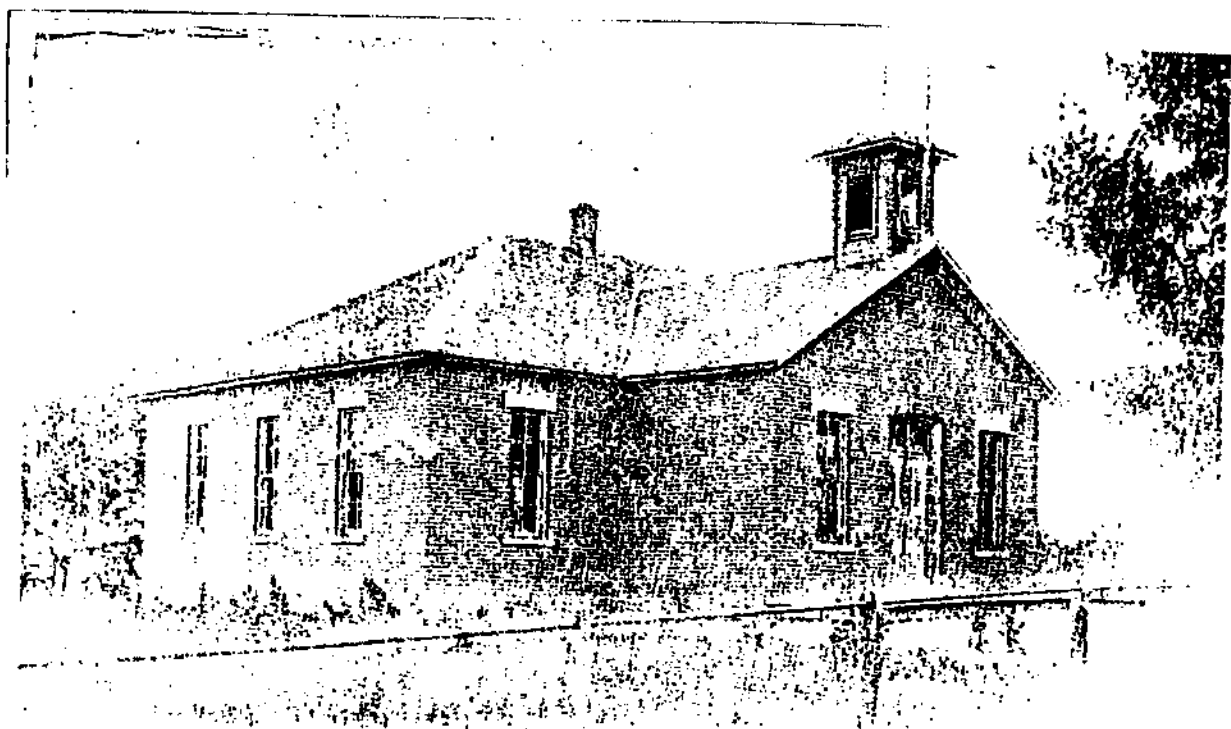


Photo courtesy of Cecil Benson

Matamoras School at the turn of the century

(PICTURE FURNISHED BY REBA OVERMEYER, MONTPELIER, IND.)

Once thriving Matamoras 'inviting' place to visit

Blackford County community was a 'lively, going' place

By MICHAEL MCBRIDE
The Star Press

MATAMORAS — Matamoras, Mexico, looks back at Brownsville, Texas, from across the Rio Grande.

What's left of Matamoras, Ind., is nestled into the high-banked side of the big bend in the Salamonie River just upstream from Montpelier.

Residents of the Hoosier community say it was named for the 1847 Battle of Matamoras after a handful of local residents fought in the Mexican War.

It, like Montpelier about a mile to the west, is split by Ind. 18. The community was platted in 1848, and now only one of the lots north of the highway still has a house on it. The last of the older buildings, it was last used for an antique shop by Carrie Garton.

Garton sold the lot to Donna Davis. The owner of Frosty's Drive-in in Montpelier, Davis plans to build a home on the riverside lot.

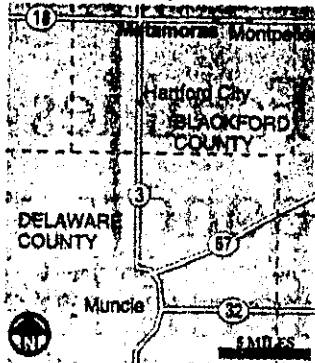
Tom McGeath remembers when Charles Snow used to wave at folks along the highway from the old house's wide front porch. McGeath's great-grandparents were married in Matamoras. His great-grandmother taught for 25 cents a week at the Matamoras School, one of nine Harrison Township schools.

Garton and husband Wayne transformed the remains of Cook's Quarry to a homeplace across the highway and the river from the old Snow place about 25 years ago. They have their own personal fishing and swimming hole for a front yard, but they have a price to pay: when the Salamonie leaves its banks, their driveway floods.

The river and quarries contributed heavily to the town's history, producing stone for many local

Matamoras

Matamoras is northeast of Muncie in Blackford County.



Population: 20 (more depending on the season and the fishing)
Local government: None, unincorporated
Largest local employer: Lake Blue Water Golf Course
Shelby Sepusek/The Star Press

Hometowns

foundations, including the 1895 Blackford County Courthouse. Irving Materials is still digging downstream just north of Montpelier.

Cook always cut enough ice from the pit in the winter to fill local ice boxes throughout the summer. During the winter, the enterprising entrepreneur also sold coal along his summer ice route.

Before a water race was dug and a grist mill was built, Matamoras was home to Native Americans. The Godfrey Reserve straddled the river about 2 miles upstream as the crow flies — one of the last official homes for Miamis in the state. After three streets and 28 lots were laid out, the town soon added a saw mill, tannery, general store and the school.

"It used to be a lively, going place," Garton said.

McGeath thinks part of the old gristmill wheel wound up near the mausoleum in Montpelier's IOOF Cemetery. Garton thinks other



NOT MUCH LEFT: The old gravel pit in the town of Matamoras.

Kyle Evens / The Star Press

parts of the grinding operation lie scattered about on her property.

Starting in 1895, the Baltes Stone Quarry used a narrow-gauge railroad to quarry stone from a hole north of the highway. E.R. (One Ear) Coleman earned his obvious affliction while dynamiting with another man who lost a hand. Hearing-impaired but blessed with nicknames, "Coley" went on to be the Montpelier marshal and a businessman.

Garton recently picked up a one-eared dog from the county animal shelter. The dog's new name: "Coley."

When water from sparkling springs got ahead of the pumps, Baltes Quarry filled up with sweet blue water. Inspired, businessmen bought up the site near the start of the Roaring '20s, built a dance pavilion and began selling off lots. Lake Blue Water, perhaps inspired by the first stones mined from the

nearby Blue Rock Farm, was born.

People did come and dance to "name" bands. And, they swam in a fenced-in, floored, "floating pool," which kept anyone from getting into deep water.

Carrie's brother, Carl Norton, knows the contraption was there for a fact, because he just dug out a hunk of it from water near his lake-front property to keep carp from nesting under it.

Locals, including Paul Wearly of the Montpelier monument company, also raced motorboats there.

In later years, folks rollerskated at the pavilion, but it burned in 1961. Today, Bill Fisher operates a nine-hole golf course next to the man-made lake. A lot of more-or-less permanent trailers and cottages ring the water.

On a winter day, perhaps two dozen people will be living in Matamoras and Lake Blue Water. On a nice summer weekend, that

number can double and triple in a hurry. By comparison, Matamoras had 12 homes in 1880.

The idyllic-sounding surroundings had a dark side though: at least four people drowned in the deep pits or in a riverbed cut full of holes throughout the years. During the 1913 flood, the Salamonie was said to be a mile wide next to Matamoras. It covered the highway and washed out an interurban bridge downstream.

Still, on a bright, sunny day with the grass greening and flowers blooming, it is inviting.

"If the police watched the traffic in and out of here in the summer, they would think I was a dope dealer," Garton said of a constant flow of friends and family. "They come out to drink coffee, they come out to fish, they come out to swim and — sometimes — they just come out and sit on the porch."

QUERIES

LOWRY/LOWREY, DUFFY/DUFFIE

Seeking info on ancestors/descendants of Ruth **LOWRY** (b about 1811) & husband Robert **DUFFY**. Ruth & Robert divorced. Ruth **LOWRY** last known residence with brother Joe **LOWRY** and sister-in-law Hannah **MORRIS LOWRY**, 1860 census, Chester Twop, Wells County, IN. When and where did Ruth die? Where is Ruth buried?

Respond to Pat Bennett McGuire, 2418 East 400 South, Hartford City, IN 47348

BENNETT, THARP, WOODARD/WOODWARD

Will exchange information on Alexander Grant **BENNETT** (1847-1911) and wife Sarah Elizabeth **THARP** (1852-1922) daughter of William **THARP** and Lucy **WOODARD/WOODWARD**. Resided Mercer Co., OH and Wells Co., IN.

Respond to Pat Bennett McGuire, 2418 East 400 South, Hartford City, IN 47348

GRAY, TEMPLE, BRUBAKER

Would like current information as to the whereabouts or information of direct descendants of a daughter of Michael **GRAY** & Clara May **TEMPLE**, Virgil **GRAY**, who married someone by the name of **BRUBAKER**. According to the "Ellingham Family" memoir of Mrs. George A. **SOUTHALL**, p. 5, 1963, Mrs. Virgil **BRUBAKER** was then living in Bluffton. I am especially interested in her because she was at the time in possession of the oldest known Ellingham document existing, an apprentice indenture for the father of the emigrant William **ELLINGHAM**, Johh, in England.

Respond to Lewis Ellingham, P.O. Box 426691, San Francisco, CA 94142.

ELLINGHAM, WATERHOUSE

Would like to locate any children of Lela Emily **ELLINGHAM** & W.H. **WATERHOUSE**. This was the mother's first marriage (23 Dec 1903) at Wells County; she married second, WM. F. **KIRBY** sometime between 1918-21. I have a reference to a daughter for the first marriage, given with no supporting information by "V. Tester" of the Bluffton Library in the very large research project he or she sent me for **ELLINGHAMS** last autum, Alice P. **WATERHOUSE** b 22 May 1909, Wells County, but since I know nothing else, I can't assume this birth to be a certainty unless supported by documentation. This and any other births for Lela Emily **ELLINGHAM** would be welcome news as well as knowledge of what developed for any of them.

Respond to Lewis Ellingham, P.O. Box 426691, San Francisco, CA 94142.

FULLER/GODFREY

Would like to know who the parents of John Shubert **FULLER** and his wife, Mary **GODFREY** were. John and Mary were married 22 Jan 1846 in Henry Co., IN. I need to know when and where John was born and died. Mary was born 18 March 1826 near Greenville, Darke, Co., OH, and died 34 Jan 1883 in Wells Co., IN.

Contact: Mary Uptgraft, 9491 S 600 East, Keystone, IN 46759.

JARRETT/TATE

Need the parents of Bently **JARRETT** and his wife, Emmaline **TATE**. Also need to know when and where they were married, born, and died.

Contact: Mary Uptgraft, 9491 S 600 East, Keystone, IN 46759.

AND YOU THOUGHT IT WAS JUST FOR THANKSGIVING DINNER!?

If Benjamin Franklin had had his way, the bald eagle would not be America's great national symbol.

In 1782 Congress was trying to select a symbol for the Great Seal of the United States. Several birds were considered before the eagle was chosen. But Franklin disagreed with the decision.

In a letter to his daughter he expressed the wish that the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country. His reasons? The bald eagle, Franklin wrote, "is a bird of bad moral character" and "does not get his living honestly." Franklin accused the eagle of liking to perch "on a dead tree, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the labor of the fishing hawk: and then steals the bird's catch."

What was Franklin's choice for the symbol of America? None other than the turkey?

During the Christmas holidays, President Lincoln and the First Family were presented with a fat, live turkey as a gift.

Lincoln's eight-year-old son, Tad, quickly became attached to the gobbler, who followed him around the White House lawn. When Tad learned the turkey was about to be beheaded for a holiday dinner he burst into tears. He had to save the bird.

Tad pleaded his case to his father. Lincoln was so moved that he interrupted a cabinet meeting just to issue a presidential pardon for the lucky bird.

The Lincolns then kept the turkey as a pet and named him Jack.

Taken from "The President Who Pardoned a Turkey and Other Wacky Tales of American History," Allan Zullo, Watermill Press.

ALL QUERIES ARE FREE OF CHARGE