

## JESSE AND REV. HOOPER CREWS.

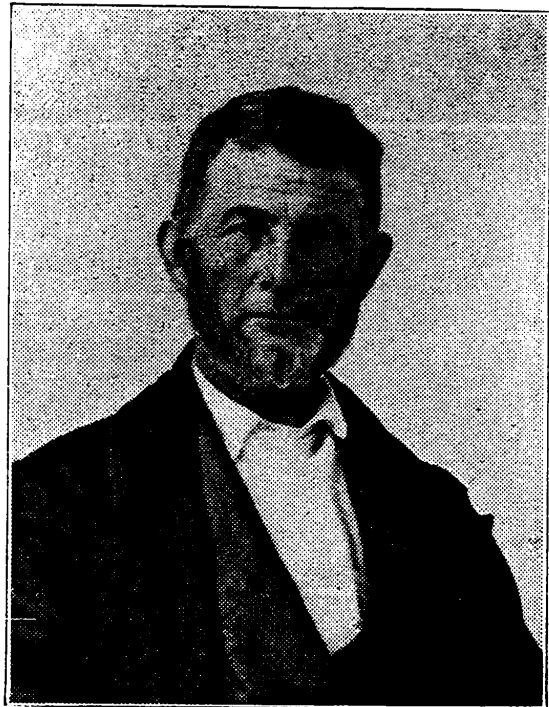
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**I**N the year 1773, three years before Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, two brothers, John Crews and Richard Crews bade goodbye to their old friends and neighbors in England, and embarked in a small vessel for the American Colonies. These brothers did not long remain together; John Crews settled in Virginia where he prospered after the manner of English immigrants, and his descendants drifted to the south where they may be found in the states of Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

Richard Crews settled in Kentucky and became the father of five sons:



REV. HOOPER CREWS.



JESSE CREWS.

Peter Crews, Richard Crews, John Crews, Joseph Crews and William Crews. The eldest of these five, Peter Crews, was the grandfather of the subjects of this sketch. To Peter Crews were born three sons: Andrew Crews, James Crews and Jesse Crews. The second son, James Crews, was the father of two sons: Hooper Crews and Jesse Crews and one daughter named Millie, who married D. W. Wright.

Hooper Crews was born in Barren county, Kentucky, near Pruett's Knob, on April 17th, 1807. Of his early life nothing can here be recorded. Dr. George B. Crews, a great nephew of Hooper Crews, sent the writer the address of Mrs. Walter P. Miller, 2160 S. Columbine Street, University Park, Denver Colorado, a daughter of Hooper Crews. To this lady a letter was sent, asking for information concerning her father, explaining it was to be used in the preparation of this sketch. As the letter was not returned the presumption is, that it reached its destination, but nothing ever came of it. The writer has sent many other such missives during the progress of the writing of this series of sketches and not a few have met the fate of this Denver communication. If one is so illiterate that he cannot write a letter fit to be seen, he should be excused upon that ground; if he is so ignorant, as to have no appreciation of the common courtesies of life he should be forgiven. If this lady received the letter addressed to her and contemptuously refused to answer it, she is certainly very unlike her distinguished father. Rev. E. K. Crews of the Illinois conference, also a great-nephew of Hooper Crews, promptly responded to my inquiries and kindly furnished me nearly all the information I have been able to gather concerning his relative.

When but a lad of 17 years of age he was converted, joined the Methodist church; was licensed to preach when 21 years old and the next year became a travelling preacher of the Kentucky Methodist conference.

Peter Cartwright was 22 years older than Hooper Crews, and had left the Kentucky conference and come to Illinois and very soon after Mr. Crews, in 1834, was transferred to the Illinois conference which was as large as the state, and was appointed to preach at Springfield, now the state capital, he then being but 27 years of age. His subsequent appointments were as follows:

Presiding elder of the Danville district:

Presiding elder of the Galena district:

Pastor of a church in city of Chicago:

Presiding elder of the Chicago district:

Presiding elder of the Mount Morris district:

Presiding elder of the Chicago district:

Agent for the Rock River Seminary of the M. E. church:

Pastor of the M. E. church at Galena:

Pastor of the Clark street church in city of Chicago:

Pastor of the First M. E. church at Rockford:

Presiding elder of the Rockford district:

Pastor of the church of Joliet:

Presiding elder of the Chicago district:

Pastor of the Indiana Avenue church of Chicago:

Pastor of the Embury church at Freeport:

Pastor of the church at Batavia:

Pastor of the First church at Rockford:

Pastor of the M. E. church at Oregon, Illinois, where he ended his long and useful life on the 21st day of December, 1881, aged 74 years, 8 months and 4 days.

In addition to the immense amount of valuable service he rendered the church of his choice in the stations above described he was a delegate to the general conference of the M. E. church four times, and was chaplain of the

100th regiment of Illinois volunteers.

The writer first saw Hooper Crews, when he was in charge of a church in the city of Chicago in the year 1854, and afterwards heard him preach, while visiting his only brother, Jesse, in this county. He was a man of unusual ability; had he turned his attention to the law, he would have made an admirable judge; he was dignified in his bearing, courteous in his manners, a strong and eloquent preacher. He was a man of great influence in his church.

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Jesse Crews was born in Barren county, Kentucky, on August 23, 1809. Of his early history very little is known by his descendants; he was a very modest, unassuming man, and was never known to boast of anything personal to himself. His wife was Susan A. E. Sneed, who was born on the western border of the state of Virginia on April 3, 1812. Her father died when she was a very young child and she remembered nothing of him; her mother married a blacksmith, and Mrs. Crews used to tell her children of her step-father making shackles in his shop for slave owners and slave drivers who used them to fasten together their "property," that they might not foolishly escape from their dear friends and protectors. Her son, Jesse Crews, of this county has in his possession, a fire shovel, made by this old-time blacksmith which he gave to his step-daughter Susan as a wedding present, when she was married to Jesse Crews on December 30th, 1830. The following day, the last day of 1830, this young married couple made a honeymoon trip of thirty miles on horseback.

The name and fame of Illinois were well known to the Kentucky people, and the young men of that state, of that day were greatly tempted to leave the old home and fireside and seek their fortunes by settling along the streams of the land of the Illini. Jesse Crews' sister Millie had married a young man, D. W. Wright, and these two young married couples, in 1832, left old "Kentuck" and made their way to Sangamon county, where they unharnessed their horses, and unloaded their wagons near the present town of Pleasant Plains on the border of Rock Creek. Mr. Wright did not long remain here, but, in 1842, turning his face to the north, travelled on into Minnesota, and there bought a farm; on his return he was taken sick and died among strangers; his widow and family removed to the Minnesota farm, where they made a permanent home.

Jesse Crews settled very near the home of Peter Cartwright, and the two men became fast friends: both were loyal Methodists, Kentuckians, and early Illinois settlers, but differed in politics, Cartwright being a democrat, and Crews a whig. In 1846, Jesse Crews then being a resident of Cass county, voted for Cartwright, a candidate for congress, against A. Lincoln, his whig opponent. Crews' regard for his old neighbor, and brother Methodist being stronger than his political affiliations.

In 1837, Jesse Crews purchased of John H. Plunkett a tract of land described as located on Richland Creek, but from the imperfect description, one cannot, at this day exactly locate it. In August, 1841, he purchased another tract of William Crow executor of Dallas Scott in Sec 34 T 17 R 7 Sangamon county. In May, 1842, of John Dickey he bought 160 acres of land in Sec 1 T 16 R 8 and in December, 1842, he bought of David Wright 40 acres in Sec 30 T 17 R 8.

The early death of his brother-in-law and the removal of his sister and her children from his neighborhood, were events that served to cause Jesse Crews to become discontented, and late in 1842 he sold a part of his land in Sangamon county and moved across the Illinois river into Schuyler county, as a sort of experiment, where he remained a year. Not being satisfied in Schuyler he partly retraced his steps, came into Cass county and finding in the Garner neighborhood seven miles east of the town of Virginia a Methodist log church with a good sprinkling of members of that body nearby, he concluded to settle among them, and not then having sold his land in Sangamon county he rented a tract of Keeling Berry in nw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 3 T 17 R 9 and also 80 acres of Josiah Parrott adjoining, and after a few years being satisfied with his surroundings in February, 1848, he purchased of Parrott the nw $\frac{1}{4}$  of nw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 3 T 18 R 9 and the sw $\frac{1}{4}$  of sw $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec 34 T 18 R 9 on which latter tract he erected a house, comfortable for those days to which he removed his wife and growing family to which he gradually added thereto by the following purchases: In 1853, he purchased of John R. Dutch ne $\frac{1}{4}$  of se $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 34 T 18 R 9; in 1859, he bought of Wm. Crews ne $\frac{1}{4}$  of sw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 34; he purchased of his brother the se $\frac{1}{4}$  of nw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 34; he entered 80 acres in nw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 34.

His neighbors soon learned his ability and integrity and he was often chosen for jury service; elected to the office of justice and for many years was the postmaster of the neighborhood.

This farm is now owned by Flavius C. Fox and then was and still is a good one.

About the year 1854, Jesse Crews and his oldest son, William, embarked in speculation which proved a disastrous failure. At that time there was no Ashland; Philadelphia was a mere hamlet, Chandlerville contained less than two dozen houses and Virginia was a poor straggling village. Mr. Crews thought a country store would give his son employment and wealth; he therefore purchased a stock of general merchandise of S. C. Davis & Co. of Saint Louis, moved it into a small building in his dooryard, which was afterwards removed a few rods to the northeast and began his career as a merchant. As the vicinity was infested with the usual proportion of dead beats who "buy" all they can be allowed to carry away and never pay a cent if it can possibly be avoided, and as the older member of the firm never had the heart to refuse a neighbor anything he had, it does not require the wisdom of a Solomon to foretell the result of the mercantile venture. More and yet more goods were sent for; Jesse Crews sold out his interest to David Monroe, but too late, alas, to save his property. In 1860, his farm was mortgaged to Davis & Co., the store building was dragged across the prairies to the young town of Ashland, but Jesse Crews was a ruined man. He managed to save from the wreck forty acres of hazel brush and young timber, the ne $\frac{1}{4}$  of the nw $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec 34; here he built a shelter and in the early spring of 1864, he removed his few articles of personal property, with his wife and their three younger boys to the new place. The writer of this sketch assisted in this removal and grubbed up the first black jack at the new home. As they drove away from their comfortable old home, the good wife looked sadly behind her, with the tears in her eyes, but good "Uncle Jesse" exhibited no sign of grief, but maintained his usual composure and good temper and was never heard to utter a word of complaint. Had Jesse Crews been a sharp and shrewd finan-

cier, after he found the merchandising business going wrong, with war times and high prices for farm products coming on, with the help he had about him, and with a kind-hearted creditor, Samuel C. Davis, who would have willingly leased him the farm at a moderate price he might have re-couped his fortunes and saved his farm for himself and family. But Jesse Crews was not a money-maker, his heart was not set upon scraping together earthly possessions, he was a consistent follower of the Master who taught his disciples to take no thought for the morrow; to set their affections on things above: he often read and pondered over the text, "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." He would quit his farm work any time to attend camp meetings or other means of grace. His business was not to raise corn and hogs for the market, but to serve God, and to do all the good he could.

Here, on the little farm of 40 acres, Jesse Crews with his old mother, his wife and younger boys spent the remainder of his days. Ever cheerful and happy, he was "a light set upon a hill that could not be hid." If even a respectable majority of the church members of to-day possessed the sincerity of Jesse Crews the preachers would not be heard complaining that less than forty per cent of the young men of Illinois are ever seen within church walls except on funeral occasions. He was not like the worldly church member who sits in the social meeting while the preacher and the women sing of the "number of stars in their crown," with his thoughts upon the number of steers in his feed lots, and who would gladly exchange all knowledge and interest he has in the "plan of salvation" for a reliable cure for hog cholera.

Jesse Crews was a broad minded man; his good old mother, Nancy Crews, born Feb. 17, 1783, who died Sept. 13, 1874, was a kind-hearted Kentucky woman, but as much of a Puritan as though she had been reared in the shadow of Plymouth Rock, On one occasion in 1864, this writer went with him to a grove meeting, where the Oregon chapel now is, to hear Peter Cartwright preach an afternoon sermon in the shade of the oak trees. In the course of his talk, the old Methodist war-horse bitterly denounced colleges declaring that "they turned out infidels." On the way home, Jesse Crews in commenting on this language, remarked that he did not believe the Doctor was right, and then added that if it were true it was a strong argument against the Christian religion. Mr. Crews had a keen appreciation of the humorous; which is always an indication of brightness of intellect. In conversation he was hesitating in his manner of speech: his voice was low and it required an effort to catch all he said. Physically he was about five feet, ten inches in height and his weight about one hundred and seventy pounds. His wife was a very small woman in size, and in later years much bent with age. She, like her good husband, was very modest and unassuming: she was the kindest of mothers, and a true christian woman.

Mr. Charles W. Crews, of Pueblo, Col., grandson of Jesse Crews, writes: "My recollection of my grandfather is, that any Methodist republican, could have got anything he had." Very true, and he might have added "and even a needy, swearing democrat, would not have been turned away, empty-handed."

There were born to Jesse and Susan Crews ten children, as follows:

Martha H. Crews, born Dec. 5, 1831: married to Joseph Allison a farmer

of Oregon precinct Cass county, Illinois, and who died in giving birth to her first child, a son now living in Iowa.

William J. Crews, born March 27, 1833, and who died in the state of Arkansas, Dec. 15, 1871.

David Crews, born Aug. 5, 1835, still living in Brown county, Kansas.

Nancy Crews, born Oct. 14, 1837, the wife of Rev. Wm. S. Garner, and now living in Oregon precinct.

Thomas M. Crews, born July 31, 1840, now living in Oregon precinct.

Mary F. Crews, born March 12, 1842; died Sept. 25, 1847.

Elizabeth Crews, born April 9, 1845, died Feb. 18, 1849.

John W. Crews, born Nov. 30, 1847, now living in Oregon precinct.

George W. Crews, born July 7, 1849, died Aug. 12, 1869.

Jesse J. Crews, born Aug. 20, 1852, still living in Oregon precinct.

Jesse Crews departed this life on Sept. 6, 1879, aged 70 years and 13 days; his wife died Jan. 18, 1885, aged 72 years 10 months and 15 days.

Every man, whose life is worth living has some worthy object in view. With him, the providing of food, clothing and shelter for his natural body is merely incidental. A proper estimate of the life and character of Jesse Crews depends entirely upon one's point of view. He was a member of the department of agriculture in the industrial world. If he of that department is most worthy of emulation who expends his vital energies in buying more land, to raise more corn, to feed more hogs, to buy more land to raise more corn to feed more hogs, etc., etc., then Jesse Crews was a very insignificant personage, not even fit to have a place in these humble sketches; but if man has a mental and spiritual nature as well as a physical; if he is an immortal being, destined to live after the crisis of bodily death; if it is his duty to fear God, to work righteousness, and to love his neighbor as himself, then Jesse Crews was one of the noblest and most worthy characters who ever spent the mature years of his life within Cass county.