

OHT # 108

INDIANA
COLLECTION

NAFC
Library

DEC 14 1994

Greenville

Mrs. Shields asked me to talk about the history of Greenville but it is very difficult to talk about Greenville without bringing in some of the surrounding areas. So I will be talking about Greenville and Greenville Township .

Greenville was platted in May of 1816. A little more than a month before Indiana became a state. So Greenville is actually older than the state of Indiana. Greenville at one time was part of Clark county. Today we are in Floyd County, but we will talk more about that later.

Before we delve into the history of Greenville let's take a brief look into the history prior to 1816.

We passed thru the Revolutionary War period and following it the American Indian versus the American people, (the whites). Relationships grew worse and worse and more difficult after the Revolutionary War. This was partly because the British were antagonizing Indians to scout the Americans. Partially because the Americans were infringing upon the hunting grounds of the Indians.

In 1795 General Wayne encountered the Indians at the battle of Fallen Timber. That was in the neighborhood of Fort Wayne, IN. You might say, what effect would that have upon the Greenville area here. Actually General Wayne defeated the Indians with a tremendous thrashing at that particular battle. As a result the Indians deeded a goodly portion of the state of Ohio and Southern Indiana to the white people. This opened up the opportunity for General Harrison, who later became Governor of the Northwest Territory into gaining the opportunity to make a treaty with Indians which was called the Groseland Treaty. This was the treaty of 1805. As a result of that treaty there was a line to be drawn north of the old buffalo trail. Not to be any closer to the buffalo trail by a quarter of a mile. Now the buffalo trail was just south of Greenville. Mr. Leo Haug owns the large brick house on Greenville road and that is the southern edge of the farm where the buffalo trail came thru across Mr. Hartfield's just north of the large barn on the Hartfield place. (Not there now).

Now most towns and cities were developed in a particular place because of some mode of transportation. It may have been on the river because the excessive ability of riverboat traffic. It might have been on a railroad. It may have been in this particular case that it was close to the old buffalo trail.

William Rector(?) surveyed the Grossland Treaty land that I referred to a while ago. In 1805. That same year a man by the name of Robert Boston and his brothers and their families settled near the buffalo trace. Southwest to the town of Greenville. What we now think of as the Bradford Road. The Bostons were the first permanent white settlers in what is now Greenville Township. Some of you may remember Mrs. Olive Miller who was a cook here a few

years ago. Her sister is Mrs. Evans. They were descendents of the Bostons. Their great grandfather was one of the two Boston brothers that settled there.

Most of the early settlers came from the Carolinas and Tenn., Ky. and Virginia. A few from Penn. and New Jersey, a few from the New England states. In 1806 Andrew Mendal homesteaded 160 acres at what is now the west end of Greenville. That same year Ron and William Brown settled down in what is now known as Buttontown Road. That was just beyond the Featheringill Road which intersects the Buttontown Road. I have a little side story for that.

My mother bought a dresser at a sale on the Brown property when I was a boy four years old for 25 cents. We still have that dresser. We have had it refinished and it is a beautiful piece of antique. We are very proud of it.

I have some friends that are descendants of the Browns who live in New Albany. Martha Wilton, Alma Tindal are great granddaughters of Mr. Brown that settled there.

John Clark also came in 1806 and settled in Clarks Park of Indian creek. Charles Vernia Jr. is an insurance man in New Albany. A great great grandson has the original sheepskin deed that John Clark had gotten from the government for that piece of land he had homesteaded there. When I was a boy like about the size of you girls and boys I knew grandsons of John Clark, two grandsons, John and Ed Clark. To me they were my ideal. I thought if I could ever accomplish those things that those two Clark brothers did, that I would really be something. I could become as prominent and wealthy as some of them were. So I'm sure you boys and girls have ideals that you would like to live up to. That was my ideal back when I was a boy.

By 1809 Mortica Collins, William Wells, James and John Taylor settled in the area. That same year Benjamin Haines acquired a section of land joining Mundell's land. That was the 160 acres that was on the west end of town. He bought 160 acres at the east end of which Greenville was a part. There is not that much land but some of the land is adjacent to Greenville. Of Haines property.

By this time the rumblings of the war of 1812 were being heard which slowed down migration. The Indians still had a few villages in the area until after the massacre of Pigeon Roost. Pigeon Roost is over in Scott county, but never the less news traveled in those days slower than it does today. But the news got here about having been 24 people killed up there by the Indians. Then the white people became so riled up about that that the Indians realized they were going to be after them. They disappeared and there were no more Indians in this particular area after 1812. This happened during the war of 1812. After the Indians disappeared, supposedly in fear of retaliation by the

whites. There were other migrants at this time that we don't know about. Such a man by the name of Sullivan who was the only white man known to have been killed in Greenville. Greenville Township that is. He was hunting deer at a small salt lick that is down here along Indian Creek sitting there watching, when an Indian was watching him. As Sullivan shot the deer the Indians shot Sullivan. That was the only white man that we know of that was actually killed in Greenville Township by the Indians. After the Indians left, this country was open south of the Groseland Treaty line which ran just south edge of town. Incidentally I have a map in my box of notes over here that I will show it to you after a bit that shows where the Groseland Treaty line was and where the old Buffalo Trace was.

From 1814 to 1819 it was called the great migration. Hundreds of people were moving to the west during this particular period of time. There were thousands of people waiting on the Ky. side of the river for this treaty to be made so they could come over to Southern Indiana. After the treaty was passed they came on over. It was a tremendous migration at that particular time. It was during this time of this great migration that Andrew Mundal and Benjamin Haines decided that the time was right to lay out a new town. Each had cleared a few small patches of ground. But generally speaking it was still a wilderness. Wondering if you could just stop and think for a moment what this looked like when they came here. There was timber here. Trees that were 3 feet in diameter. Panthers and all sorts of wild animals were here. I have read in my research that prior to that time it wasn't safe for the white man to be here because of wild animals as well of the Indians.

The town was laid out in the form of a parallelogram. The three streets east to west being much longer than those running from north to south. The center street runs east and west being the main street or hopefully a part of the new highway from New Albany to St. Louis which had been rumored for some time. But incidently this road was not surveyed until 1836. The town was laid out in 1816. So there was a 20 year period there that the main street of town was just a mud road. Trees having been cut down and the stumps were left there and the wagons would drive over them. You could have imagined a pretty rough road couldn't you? That is where the original town was.

The other streets running parallel from Main street were named Clark and Harrison Streets. Now we don't know exactly whether these two streets were named after General Clark or General Harrison. They were both prominent men of that time. Clark county was named after General Clark and Harrison county was named after Harrison. The buffalo trace was the line between Clark and Harrison counties. It is entirely possible that these streets were named after the counties adjacent to us rather than the men. But that is not known.

In the center of the town, the square was provided in the

anticipation of the new adventure of the coming of the county seat. The county seat is the town in any county, city or it might be in any county where the court house sets and where it would be the business of the county would be taken .

For some unknown reason there was a small area on both sides of Main street about 3 blocks to the east. It is not part of the original plan but it has recently been annexed to the town of Greenville.

No one seems to know for sure how Greenville got its name. None of the early settlers or the founders of Greenville went by the name of Green. The soil around this area was extremely fertile and it is still one of the most fertile areas in Floyd County. It is taught by some that it is named because of the dark green color of the foliage of the trees and the crops that were growing here.

According to the Floyd County Commissioners records Feb. 8, 1819 the commissioners created the Greenville township as one of three townships in Floyd County. The other two being New Albany and Franklin. Greenville township consisted of all the land north of the Buffalo Trace and west of the top of the Knobs. Sometime later Lafayette township was carved out of Greenville Township and the boundary lines were section and half sections lines instead of the top of the knobs. The boundary lines have been changed a number of times we think.

Shortly after Floyd County was established it was necessary for the county commissioners to pick a county seat. At that time New Albany and Greenville were about the same size. Both towns were contenders for the county seat. Now that was a kind of a plum for the business men in each of the towns. Looking forward to the fact that it would bring business. It would bring the farmfolk in to pay their taxes and to do different things and it would be good for business to have a county seat. The county commissioners told the two towns that the one that came up with the largest subscription, in other words who raised the most money toward the building of the court house that would be the town that would become the county seat of the new Floyd County which was established. It so happens they both came up with just about the same amount of money. A business man of New Albany said that he would provide enough money to put a cupola on the top of the court house building. That turned the tie toward New Albany. That is how New Albany got the prize of the county seat of Floyd County. Greenville lost it for the want of a bell.

In 1824 a young lad by the name of J. B Ford was a bound boy over in Ky. A bound boy was one that was from poor parents and they couldn't give him an education. Schools were few and far between then. Ordinarily they would turn this boy over to some wealthy man who could afford to educate the boy. They thought that they were doing the boy a great favor. In this particular case the man who had promised to teach J. B. Ford to read and

write failed to do so. So the boy ran away.

He was living down in Ky. and made his way to Louisville. The only possession he had left on him rather than the clothes he had on was a deck of cards. He had to get transportation across the river and there was a ferry running back and forth across the river and they had pens on there for the cattle and hogs and sheep that they transported, and there were better conditions for the people to ride on. So the boy told the the operator of the ferry that the only thing he had was this deck of cards so the operator ordered him to get into one of the pig pens in exchange for that deck of cards. So he made his way to the Indiana side. He was free of his bound master when he got to Indiana. But he was afraid he would be captured and turned over to Kentucky. So he made his way out thru the wilderness with the briars and the brambles. When he got to Greenville his clothes were pretty well torn up by the briars.

A man by the name of Benjamin Boyer(?) a saddle maker here in Greenville took the boy in and taught him to become a saddle maker. This fella eventually bought out Mr. Boyer's saddle shop. He began saving his money. He got to trading in real estate. He made money by that. He bought the saddle shop and he built several homes in town. One of them is the house in which Mr. Dale Schamel(?) and his family live in on Clark Street. Between here and beyond the Greenville mills warehouse. Next house beyond that on the right hand side.

Mr. Schamel was telling me a few years ago that when he remodeled the house that he found straw and corn stalks in the walls of that house. They took some of the plaster off to replaster it and that goes to show that this J. B. Ford was quite an enterprising man. He was farsighted. He built the mill over here. The building where the antique shop is. That is the mill he had built. A firing mill. He owned a tannery to tan hides of cattle or wildlife and what not. He manufactured tin pie safes. They are quite a prize today if you could find one of his pie safes. They are antiques now. They are really wanted by everybody. He had thirty wagons out thru the country side selling these pie safes to the farm folks. He also had a brick yard over here South of Kiesler's hardware store. Well it is near where the Lambs live. In fact he has a ten acre pasture field beside Lamb's house. There was a brick yard in there that Mr. Ford owned where chunks of glass were. That field is where he experimented with making glass.

There is sand north of Greenville. A deposit of it is where Mr. Hartfield has a sand business now in that area. He secured some of the sand there. It was good quality sand to make glass. He was experimenting with glass and in 1854 thirty years after he came to Greenville he sold his business. All of his enterprises he had here in town. He moved to New Albany and started the glass works. One on the banks of the Ohio river. They hauled the sand from the area in the neighborhood of Mr. Hartfield's farm out to

Borden, put it on box cars and shipped it into New Albany. He made the first plate glass that was made in the United States. It was installed in one of the stores on Pearl Street. The store was in the neighborhood of where John Mitchell's store was until they sold out. He made millions there. He was a millionaire after he was 65 years old. I'll have more to say about Mr. Ford later on in the talk.

While he lived here he lost three children and his mother. They were buried in the old Shrader's cemetery that is on the back end of the Hayes farm. Very close to the Featheringill Road up at the hill there. About somewhere between 10 and 15 years ago a granddaughter of Mr. Ford's came back to Greenville and offered the Floyd County Historical Society a substantial sum of money to find the exact site where the Ford children and Ford's mother was. So they could put a monument there. But the headstones were destroyed by some vandals at some time in the past and they couldn't find the exact gravesite.

He also was in the coopershop business here. A coopershop was a place where they made wooden barrels. At that particular time we didn't have burlap bags to bag up the sugar or potatoes or apples or what have you. So most of the things were put in wooden barrels. I imagine the A and P stores back in the 20's and 30's still received potatoes at that particular time in wooden barrels. I unloaded a many of barrel of potatoes in the back of a truck.

In 1840 the new highway was eventually built thru the main street of Greenville. In 1845 a telegraph line was built in town. Greenville was incorporated as a town in 1866. Fifty years after it had been laid out. But it was not incorporated until that time. But Greenville continued to prosper.

It was about a days drive with a horse and buggy from the falls of the Ohio in Louisville. So the drummers in that day, the salesmen of that day were called drummers, were out drumming up business. As a result this having been a days journey out of the city with a horse and buggy, there was need for hotels here. Sleeping quarters. These hotels were as high as seven times here in this town. We wasn't like the Galt house, but they were buildings with 15 or 20 rooms in them. They provided food for the travelers especially for the drummers.

There was a good farm business around Greenville. There were prosperous farmers here. It was because as I mentioned before of the good land and the land still being good.

In 1900 and 1908 that was a hay day of Greenville. Most prosperous time that the town ever experienced. This is a list of some of the business establishments that were in Greenville until this particular time. Some of the other things that were here in the way of entertainment etc. Greenville had a brass band. It had an orchestra. It had a music teacher. A theatrical club. Here is

a list of some of the stores that were here.

They had a drygoods store sold primarily for the ladies to make dresses, skirts and the like. A millinery store. A millinery store was one that sold ladies hats. They manufactured hats. A featherbed cleaning establishment. In those days they didn't have mattresses. They would take the feathers from the geese and ducks and make what they called the featherbed. They would become dirty and they would have to be cleaned occasionally. They had a business that would clean featherbeds. It had a photograph shop. Cigar factory which made Bluejays cigars and Heathbrand cigars. Two toll roads. Naturally there were two toll roads at that time. There was a toll house at each end of the town. It had a huckster wagon establishment.

There was a huckster wagon which was like a rolling grocery store. They would have all these supplies of groceries in it you know. Sugar and coffee and tea, spices and what not. They would hitch a team of horses and even put as many as four horses because they had real large covered wagons. They would drive out thru the countryside and they would take in butter and eggs or cream or something of that nature in exchange for the groceries. I can remember the hucksters wagon when I was a boy.

They had seven grocery stores here. One creamery, three butcher shops. Vernie's monument establishment that is in New Albany now. It was here in Greenville at that particular time. Three doctors here. A bakery shop. An ice cream parlor. A barber shop. Two cooper shops. They were making these barrels I told you about. One flour mill. One undertaking establishment. two livery stables that was a place where the drummers would put the horses up at night where they could be stabled and cared for until the next morning. A shoe shop. A harness shop. A sawmill. A tannery. Farm machinery sales agency similar to where they sold horse drawn equipment rather than tractor drawn as with today. Fertilizer and farm supply store. A mail order house like Sears and Roebuck. Only on a much smaller scale in what Sears and Roebuck is today. A box factory. I will tell you more later what happened to these establishments.

But let's talk about the history of schools in Greenville. These schools in the area were subscription schools. Anyone who felt qualified to go from house to house and get subscribers to go to school which might be held in a vacant room or cabin. The teacher usually built the fires and paid the rent and acted as janitor and charged a semester fee. I'm sure that Mrs. Shields wouldn't like those conditions to teach school again. But that is the way it was back in those days.

Greenville boasted of having a subscription school before it was founded as a town. After statehood every sixteenth section in the congressional township was reserved for a school fund. It was entirely inadequate but it was a step forward since the children had to walk to school. Only those that lived in clusters or

villages had the opportunity to go to school. Log cabins were scattered all over the townships in order to accommodate as many as possible with the limited funds that they had.

The original state constitution provided accumulation of funds by the counties in a seminary. A seminary was a cross between a high school and a junior college. All payments or exemptions were military service. Back in those days you could buy your way out of going into the Army. Instead of being drafted as we know of. But anyhow they would pay the county a fee and some other individual a sum of money to take his place. What they would have to pay the county was put into this particular corner. And any fines or misdemeanors or somebody got drunk or got in a fight were fined \$10 for that. It would go into this seminary fund.

In 1839 Floyd county decided to start establishing such a fund. In 1849 they had accumulated \$2000. The merchants of Greenville was prosperous enough and they wanted this school here so they raised \$800 to add to that \$2000 and they got the seminary built here in Greenville. It cost \$2800 to build a two story brick building that was 30x50 feet. It sat where the middle building now sits. That was the location of the seminary. J. B. Ford, the man that I talked about awhile ago was appointed as one of the three trustees to oversee that school.

Norman Coleman was appointed principal of that school. He had graduated a short time before in a similar school in his native New York. He came to Louisville to school. While teaching in Louisville he also studied law at the University of Louisville. January 1, 1850 the school was opened. But the project was short lived. In 1852 the Indiana legislature passed a law establishing the public schools system as we know it today. This school system that we are in now is 128 years old. As a result of this establishment of this new system the seminary system went by the wayside. So the building was sold at auction. A man by the name of Brown bought it and sold it back to the township then and it was made into a public school. Coleman who was principal of the school did not continue on as teacher.

But instead he joined forces with a young lawyer in New Albany by the name of Michael Kerr. Kerr and Coleman were both democrats and Kerr eventually became speaker of the house of representatives in Washington D.C. Coleman was elected prosecuting attorney of the court of common pleas in New Albany. But he had a burning desire in the time he was a boy to establish or write for a farm newspaper. So he went to work for a paper firm over in St. Louis and along with his new bride which was one of his students in Greenville seminaries. While Kerr went to St. Louis into law business and then he went into publishing business shortly before the civil war.

When the civil war broke out Coleman joined the Unionist Army 85th Missouri Militia as a lieutenant Colonel. As soon as

the war was over he was back at St. Louis as owner of the Valley Farm. He changed the name of that paper to Coleman's View of the World. To make a long story short he was elected Lieutenant Governor of Missouri. The Department of agriculture and the common land grant colleges such as Purdue University and the University of Kentucky came in and he was commissioner of agriculture. He made that a cabinet post in the United States government. He became the first secretary of agriculture in the United States. He was principal of the school here for a long time.

The two story brick building evidently was taken down or else the top story was taken off of it because when the fire struck in 1908 it was just a one story building. He retired the time they bought this building here. The school was across the street from the Post Office on that well kept lot across Harrison Street from the Methodist Church.

I will tell you a little bit about the churches of Greenville. Greenville Christain Church was organized in 1833. The first building was built in 1840 and 1845. A new structure was built in 1954 the one that is standing now. There was a Presbyterian church here at one time on Harrison Street about a block and a half to the west of the intersection. Incidentally the bell of that old church is still on a church at Martinsburg. It was a beautiful bell.

The Methodist church was organized about 1830. A building erected about 1838. In 1899 the first building was torn down and a new one erected at around \$3000.00. Altho J. B. Ford was the man I was referring to that had been a bound boy. He no longer lived here and hadn't lived here until 1854. But he was still alive when this building down here now was built. He paid the \$3000.00 it cost to build the building. One stipulation was that the name be changed to Simpson Memorial Methodist church in memory of the great Bishop Simpson of the Methodist church. Another interesting item of that church in 1915 a large pipe organ was installed. Half of the cost of the organ was raised by local subscriptions and the other half was donated by another millionaire, Andrew Carnegie.

It had a post office here in Greenville since 1819. That is 161 years they had a post office here. I see our time is running short and I need to condense this as much as I can.

I made mention a while ago about the fire. Greenville didn't have a Mrs. O'Leary that the cow kicked over the lantern and started the great fire in Chicago stock yards but they had their Coly Wood(?) who overheated her kitchen stove on the morning of March 26, 1908. She was doing her weekly ironing. Back in those days the iron was heated and it had a handle on it and she sat it on the stove and it was a real hot fire on the stove and she would put that iron on the stove. About two or three of these irons on the stove. She was ironing with one and there would be a

couple more of them heating up. She got too hot a fire and started the chimney on fire. The chimney caught fire and threw live embers on to the roof which was tender dry shingles. Back in those days you had wood shingles instead of the present day type. Within a matter of minutes 24 buildings including 16 dwellings and a number of stores and the Post Office and the school were on fire. The wind was so brisk that fire started several miles to the North. As far north was this as to the top of the knobs were burning.

There was a tremendous loss by the people of Greenville. Very little insurance. The people of New Albany helped to pick up the money to relieve some of the guys. People were homeless. I imagine there were about 20 families that were homeless. A lot of the business establishments were destroyed. As a result the town died at that time.

Just shortly before the town could get back on its feet the automobiles came in and we were in proximity to the city of New Albany and Louisville. People were going there buying their supplies and as a result the businesses were not here any more and it was to justify their establishments. But it is a funny thing. Here we are 72 years later and things are turning back the other way. We are running short on energy and businesses are becoming established again because the price of gasoline. You can't predict today what is here 50 years ago.

I have another article but I think time is running short and it is a little before 2:30. I would like to take time for any questions I would like to answer.

Q. Did anybody die in the fire?

A. Nobody died in the fire. Everybody seems to have gotten out.

Q. How did they put out the fire?

A. By carrying water with buckets. A brigade. It burned itself out actually. It burned the south part. Holly Woods house was right over close to where the barber shop is. And naturally the fire came this way because the wind was out of the south. It just burned itself out. The school was entirely destroyed and 24 buildings. Nobel Miller. Mr. Miller who runs the Massey-Ferguson agency down here. His father has the pictures of it. One of his sisters has those pictures today.

Mr. Goss who lives out here, his father took a team of horses all pulled some buildings out of the way to keep them from setting other things on fire. They had no fire department. It was just brute strength is how they saved what they did.

Q. What kind of chimneys did they have at that time?

A. They had brick chimneys at that time. The soot from the wood

accumulated on the inside of the chimneys. Something that we are coming back to now. There again many people are coming back to burning wood. We will have that hazard again. The chimneys burning out the sap in the wood creates a black coat inside the chimneys and it is the creosote that accumulates there and that causes fire. It is very flammable. It catches on fire. I have seen a lot of chimneys burn in my time.

Q. Does it need to be cleaned?

A. Yes. Periodicaly it needs to be cleaned.

A. Is that right. It is a dangerous thing.

Alright I hadn't a question out of you.

A. By the wind. It would blow embers from burning wood shingles on to other buildings. It would immediately get on fire and go from one building to another.

What is your question Hon?

A. To build it back? It is not all built back yet. There are a lot of those buildings that are not built back. Those buildings right over here across the road where they built the new town hall. They were burnt down and they were never built back.

Q. What is your question?

A. Is that right. Well Good.

Q. What is your question?

A. It was a wood stove. A cook stove. They cooked on wood stoves in those days.