



G L E A N I N G S

FROM THE HEART OF THE CORNBELT

The McLean County Genealogical Society
Bloomington, Illinois



A Heartland of Horticultural History!



Benjaminville



Treasures



Hall-Barnard

The McLean County Genealogical Society

**Welcomes you to the Stevenson-Ives Library & Archives
Located on the second floor of**



McLean County
MUSEUM of HISTORY
200 North Main Street • Bloomington, IL 61701 • 309-827-0428 • www.mchistory.org

What's in the Library?

Internet-based Databases (Free access)

- Ancestry.com
- FamilySearch.org
Family Search affiliate !!
- Illinois State Archives databases
- Pantagraph negative photo collection
- Library book catalog

Books (16,000+)

- McLean County history and genealogy
- genealogical publications (around U.S.)
- family histories & ethnic groups
- local authors
- Illinois history
- Midwestern social life/culture
- agriculture and agribusiness
- education and teacher training
- transportation
- Illinois and McLean County politics
- city directories & school yearbooks
- and much more

Often a genealogy volunteer is in the library to assist you!

Bring your laptop – free WIFI !!

Microfilm

- 1862-63 Illinois Civil War military census
- pre-1900 McLean County birth & death records
- pre-1900 Illinois marriage index (incomplete)
- grantor/grantee index to McLean County deeds 1831-1967
- McLean County Circuit Clerk records 1831-1907
- Archival Land Records Illinois Township Plats
- papers of Jesse Fell
- misc Central Illinois newspapers
- Letitia Green Stevenson Chapter NSDAR scrapbook

**Please sign the guest register. Large bags or purses must remain in the reading room.
Please use a pencil for note-taking. Please call ahead with questions.**

GLEANINGS FROM THE HEART OF THE CORNBELT

A Publication of The McLean County Genealogical Society

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P.O. Box 488, Normal, IL 61761-0488

The Society’s Library Location: The McLean County Museum of History
Courthouse Square, 202-210 North Main Street
Bloomington, IL 61701

Email: mcgs.directors@gmail.com Website: https://www.tmcgs.org

Hours: 9 AM to 5 PM Monday and Wednesday through Saturday, and 9 AM to 8 PM Tuesday (Free),
10 AM to 2 PM Sunday (May-September)

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We invite suggestions and submissions relevant to McLean County, Illinois history and genealogy. Submitted materials may be in the form of articles, transcriptions, photographs, queries, etc. For questions, or submissions, please email Rand Veerman, Editor: mailto:mcgs.journal@gmail.com

COVER: Front: Drawn From Nature: The Botanical Art of Joseph Prestele and His Sons, cover image; Van Ravenswaay, Charles, 1984. Benjaminville, Rand Veerman photo; Hall-Barnard and Treasures, Cheryl Budde photos.

Back: McLean County Museum of History. William P. LaBounty photo.

The McLean County Genealogical Society

What's New On Our Website tmcgs.org

NEW BENEFIT FOR MEMBERS! Beginning January 1, 2024

FREE access to all TMC GS publications!!

Beginning January 1, 2024, TMC GS members will have access through our website to all TMC GS publications – our cemetery publications, our census publications – EVERYTHING.

Post COVID, many people are still reluctant to conduct research in person. The TMC GS Board voted to allow members the same access to publications via our website as they would have when visiting our library in the McLean County Museum of History in downtown Bloomington.

For those who want to search our publications onsite, our library is open to everyone. Members get free access to the Museum every day with their membership card and everyone gets free access on Tuesdays.

Editor's Notes

The McLean County Genealogical Society has generated the *Gleanings* journal since 1967. Indexes are available to everyone, and digital issues are available online to members through our website. *Gleanings* goes out to our members and to several libraries that hold it for future generations to discover.



Please tell me what you would like to see in future publications. Email me direct at tmcgs.president@gmail.com.

With this issue, I would like to thank Susie Pope for her invaluable help in producing this and past issues of *Gleanings*. Thanks also to Cheryl Budde and Ruth Wilkerson for their articles, proofing, and ideas. Going forward, we ask for your contributions to future issues and/or help with layout and design.

Rand Veerman



Let's have a conversation...

**MCGS NEEDS A FEW PEOPLE TO PITCH IN
SHORT-TERM OR
WITH MORE EXTENDED PROJECTS.**

**And maybe you need to be
more engaged!**

What are your talents?

**Finance / Publicity / Creative Writing
Indexing / Editing / Digitizing / Other**

**Email us if you can contribute some time—lots or a little—
and tell us what you like to do.**

We'll have some ideas for you.

IT'S YOUR CALL—HOW CAN YOU HELP?

mccgs.directors@gmail.com

A HEARTLAND OF HORTICULTURE HISTORY

By Don Meyer

Don Meyer is a Farmland Broker/Auctioneer with The Loranda Group, Inc. and a local ag history volunteer. He authors the column, "Our Farming Roots" published in The Normalite, Normal, Illinois. Reprint courtesy The Normalite. Email the author at donemeyer@gmail.com

Besides its strong agricultural reputation, McLean County has a rich history in horticulture. In 1871, 10-20 local plant nurseries encompassed 1,000 acres, now mostly covered by streets and homes. Some specialized in fruit, while others provided a wider selection. The 3 large nurseries shipped 25 railcars in spring 1892 destined for all US states, Canada and Australia. Bloomington-Normal was a "major" US nursery center thanks to its rail network. Below is much of the rundown of horticulture in the Twin Cities....

JESSE FELL NURSERY - Jesse Fell has many local history ties from attracting Illinois State Normal University (ISNU), to his law and real estate career, to publishing Bloomington's first newspaper, and founding Normal, Clinton, Towanda, Dwight, and Pontiac. But his horticulture passions were demonstrated with 200,000 trees he is credited for planting throughout Bloomington-Normal and by founding a tree nursery. He insisted the ISNU campus would have thousands of trees and since 1995, the Illinois State University 490-acre campus is recognized by the International Society of Arboriculture as the "Fell Arboretum." Family members continued Fell nursery for several years, even after Jesse focused on other projects. Jesse Fell's 5-acre nursery began in 1838, located between Washington and Monroe Streets in Bloomington strategically between the Illinois Central Railroad (ICRR) tracks (now Constitution Trail) and Clinton Street. Jesse's brother, Robert, continued the nursery after Jesse's founding, until sold.

NELSON BUCK - While Jesse Fell is credited with tree planting activities in early years, his nursery wasn't the first. Nelson Buck opened a nursery in 1835, located on what is described as 2 acres between Bloomington's Jefferson Street and the "North Slough," likely just northeast of today's Lafayette apartments and the former Bloomington High School.

F.K. PHOENIX - Probably the best-known local tree nursery began after Fell urged Franklin Kelsey Phoenix to move here in 1852 from his family's Wisconsin (founded in 1842) nursery and buy the Fell nursery to expand the business. With access to railroads extending in all directions from Bloomington-Normal, the opportunity for shipping plant materials was opportune.

After Phoenix's arrival in 1852, his "Bloomington Nursery" business blossomed. According to "Country Gentleman" magazine, the nursery encompassed 600 acres with 13 greenhouses, a bulb house for 150,000 tulips, and 300 workers toiled each spring and fall. Annual sales were estimated at \$200,000 (over \$6 million today) and production included 250 acres of apple trees, 100 acres of grapes, pears, peaches, and plums, 20 acres of evergreens, and 60 acres of hedge trees and small fruits. F. K. Phoenix returned to the family Wisconsin business in 1878. Bloomington Nursery continued growth to become one of the largest US nurseries. Phoenix advertisements were sent to every English-speaking nation, with a company motto of "trees for

profit, trees for pleasure, and trees for future generations.” By 1885, additional investors (Sidney Tuttle, W. E. Rosney, and George Foster) were involved and with its new name, “Phoenix Nursery” had daily rail shipments, primarily to Great Plains states. The headquarters were just east of Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) with acreage extending east from IWU to Towanda Avenue and north along either side of Linden Street to downtown Normal. By 1915, the business ended in receivership with 65 acres near downtown Normal auctioned. Local street names from the nursery era are Bloomington’s Phoenix Avenue extending east from IWU, Kelsey Street north of IWU, Rosney Street from Emerson to Empire, Phoenix Avenue near uptown Normal, and others.



W.H. PRESTELE -- A legacy remaining from Phoenix Nursery days is the Prestele collection of botanical drawings, republished in a 1984 “Drawn from Nature” book. William Heinrich (W.H.) Prestele and family moved to Bloomington in 1867 after Heinrich was hired by Phoenix to draw color visuals to market plant products. W.H. was the son of Joseph Prestele, a European artist and painter, who drew plant lithographs and W.H. continued his legacy. Heinrich left Phoenix in 1871 to work at USDA to sketch botany. The reproduced color drawings are available for framing and known for botanical correctness and beauty.

HERMAN SCHROEDER NURSERY – opened in Bloomington in 1852, specializing in wine-ready grapes and strawberries. Schroeder, a local physician, arrived in 1851, having been born in Prussia in 1821. His vineyard and nursery were located near Evergreen Cemetery. Besides selling low-alcohol wine, Schroeder sold vine stock to others and his 1890 price list included 67 varieties of grapevines. His annual production on 40-50 acres was 4000 pounds of grapes per acre and 250 gallons of wine per acre.

AUGUSTINE & CO. NURSERY – In 1867, Civil War Captain Henry Augustine moved from Livingston County to Normal to establish a 125-acre nursery near Illinois State Normal University (ISNU), prior to the Agriculture Department establishment. Augustine rented acreage west of Main Street (U-High and Hancock stadium today) and operated his nursery for decades. He was superintendent of the Illinois fruit exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Tragically he was killed by a train in front of his nursery headquarters in downtown Normal in 1913.

Henry’s son, Archie, continued the nursery after attending Normal schools and ISNU and working in Argentina at nurseries as well as in Michigan and Mississippi. Archie was the first

president of the National Nurseryman's Association, president of the Illinois Horticulture Society and led efforts for Congressional approval of plant patent protection. The nursery developed a columnar elm called the "Augustine Elm" or "Ascending Elm," marketed across the US. In 1956, 55,000 Augustine trees were still growing in the US. In 2018, 20 were still at the DC National Mall. They introduced Lincoln and Sudduth pears and had 50-60 national sales staff. Augustine & Co. declared bankruptcy in 1931.

GIBBS CENTRAL ILLINOIS NURSERY – W.H. Gibbs operated a nursery at 201 North Linden, Normal from 1915 until his 1926 death. Continuing into the 1930's, retail sales were added at Lincoln, Illinois.

HOME NURSERY – Officially called "Home Nursery and Fruit Growers Exchange," Civil War Captain John Boyer started it in 1867. With new partners and incorporation by 1889, 150 acres were involved, west of ISNU. With 100 sales representatives across the US, most sales were conducted through The Grange and other farm organizations. By 1894 it was in bank receivership. Part was sold to Tuttle and Rosney, Phoenix Nursery investors, and George Foster, associated with Phoenix, managed production. In 1895 it was headquartered on North Street, Normal, just west of the ICRR.

SADDLER BROTHERS – Charles Saddler purchased part of Home Nursery in 1901. By 1904 William and Sherman Saddler managed it, affiliated with the Phoenix partnership, who had purchased the other portion of Home Nursery. With legal problems developing with the Phoenix group, Saddlers sold in 1918 to Frank Glenn, with previous area nursery experience. When sold, the business was east of Bloomington on Oakland Avenue.

IMPERIAL NURSERY – was operated by William Springborn in the 1930's/1940's at 405 S. Grove, Normal.

CORN BELT NURSERY AND FORESTRY ASSOCIATION – frequently changed locations. In 1911, it was described as "south of ISNU." BJ Vandervoort was owner in 1916 operating from a Normal Avenue location and marketed it as "Central Illinois Largest Nursery." By 1924 headquarters were in Bloomington's Corn Belt Bank Building, with a packing shed at 107 S. Linden, Normal. By 1930, their store was at East and Monroe Streets, Bloomington with a packing shed at 201 N Linden, Normal. In 1931, it was advertised as "Central IL Oldest Nursery." Later it was 424 N. Main and by 1938, it was 109 East Front, Bloomington. In 1939, it shifted to its final location at 2020 S. Main, south of State Farm Park, until a 1965 sale.



CUSTER BROS. NURSERY – Frank and Charles Custer began in 1890 east of ICRR on Vernon Avenue, Normal. By 1896, they shipped fruit trees by rail from Indiana to the Dakotas. In 1918, Frank's son, Hank, joined after WW1 service and added landscape trees sales. After Frank's 1933 death, Hank and wife Marcia moved forward, adding evergreens, flowering shrubs, and shade trees. In 1965, Marcia continued it, after Hank's passing, with Paul Engdahl (landscaping experience since age 13) assisting her. Engdahl bought it in 1976 after Marcia's passing, continuing until 2006. The site is now Carle Cancer Center.

OWEN NURSERY – has multi-generation family ties to nurseries. James Wesley Owen managed Corn Belt Nursery in 1921. Owen, a descendant of the Augustine Nursery founder, opened Owen Nursery in 1932 in downtown Bloomington. The second location was at 2200 East Oakland (now Oakland Commons) in 1941. Mail orders

began in 1954, growing to 500,000 orders annually. Richard Owen joined in 1961 and continued it for decades. With Oakland Avenue developments, it moved to South Morrissey Avenue in 1988. With top 5 US mail order ranking in dollar volume, they sold under catalog brands including: Farmer Seed & Nursery, Burgess, Interstate Nurseries, Owen Nursery, Four Seasons Nursery, Kelly Nurseries, House of Wesley, and Crown Galleries.

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY

Please send items below: PREPAID COD

HOW MANY	CAT. NO.	NAME	COST
	273	Lemon Tree	
	413	Glass Garden	
	681	Prayer Plant	
	705	Queen's Tears	
	460	Hyacinth Bulbs 15¢ Bonus	
	550	Min. Rose 25¢ Bonus	
TOTAL			

Note: Any two \$1.35 plants for \$2.50.

**HOUSE OF WESLEY,
NURSERY DIVISION**
R.R. #1 Dept. 3996-105
Bloomington, Ill. 61701

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

WENDELL NIEPAGEN GREENHOUSES & GARDEN CENTER – began operations on what is now Beich Road in 1910 after German immigrant, Charles F. Niepagen (and wife Dora), began a truck farming business to sell vegetables. Soon the first greenhouse (pre-Bloomington sprawl) was built on what is now Beich Road. By 1915, additional greenhouses were added on Cabintown Road. Eventually Charles’s son, Walter, took over the Beich Road location and son Carl managed Cabintown Road greenhouses. In the 1940’s Walter continued vegetable retail sales and supplied local grocers with wholesale fresh produce. After Carl’s passing in 1963, Wendell took over the Cabintown operation and added Beich location responsibility in 1967 when his father retired. Through the years the business involved multiple family members as well as 12 employees providing much needed seasonal labor. Eventually the family business involved 15 greenhouses for sales as well as 2 more for plant production. Fourth generation family member (Lee) succeeded Wendell and Niepagen cousins operated local retail flower sales at “Original Niepagen” and Niepagen Family Florist and Greenhouse,” both in the Twin Cities. Today, Lee and Ann Niepagen continue retail and wholesale flower and vegetable business at the Fox Creek Road (formerly Cabintown Road) location.

Photo Credits:

- Augustine, Custer, & Owen Ads – *Pantagraph* Archives
- Prestele Drawing - Kelsey Peach (named for F. Kelsey Phoenix) <https://burchfieldpenney.org>

LOOK IN THE TOP AND THE BOTTOM DRAWERS

By Cheryl Budde

It's never too early to ask. But sometimes it's too late. How many times during the course of your life have these two statements been true?



Recently my mother died at the age of 88. She had been through a rough few years with health issues, but until the very end had a very sharp mind. She could have identified photographs, remembered when her family moved to Mahomet, and how to contact that elusive cousin who lives in Oregon. In the two months in which I have been going through her letters, photographs, family tree materials, etc. I have found that I missed several golden opportunities to have photographs identified, to have a move to South Downs explained (was she already out of the house or did she also attend school there?). Her younger brothers and my father's younger sisters attended school there. I have the photos to prove it! Why didn't I ask more questions?

Mom and I talked about dozens of current events and current family moves, births and deaths, but not once did we go through the box of black and white photos from her youth. The same would be true for my father's photographs and scrapbooks. His were kept in an antique black trunk with "Merry Christmas" stenciled on the top. The trunk had been a gift from his mother. Why paint the trunk black and then paint a bright red "Merry Christmas" on it? Until his death in 2003, I never once peered into his personal treasury of memories. His military records and photos from his time in postwar Japan were in that trunk. So were all of the mementos of my sister's short life: birth announcements and congratulatory cards, which were followed by sympathy cards sent just eight months after her birth when she died unexpectedly. Very few photos exist of her, but her sweet, crocheted caps and receiving blankets had been stored for well over 50 years. After my father died, Mom asked me to check the trunk for dampness, insects, etc. I did, but never went any further as I thought it would be upsetting to her.

In retrospect, I should have asked. And, if you are in a similar position, is it possible for you to ask questions now? My maternal grandfather was a carpenter with six children during the Great Depression. I know that the family moved several times during the first 10 years or so of my mother's life. Was her father able to earn a living from carpentry or did he supplement with hired hand work to make ends meet? Who is that with Aunt Lois? Did you go to Starved Rock with another couple? Did you go more than once? My questions won't necessarily be yours, but do you have some for your parents, aunts, and uncles, even cousins?

The irony of my situation is that my mother researched her family tree endlessly. I remember the first money I earned coming from finding a grave with both the given and surname for which she was looking – a quarter for each find! A quarter! Over the years, we spent time in a number of cemeteries in McLean County and well beyond. We've purchased tombstones for an aunt who worked for the Chuckles candy factory in Danville, Illinois and for a great grandmother whose husband was a Civil War veteran and had a fairly good-sized stone, yet she had none. When

ancestry.com came out, I printed reams of material for my mother to peruse and add to her own database (handwritten and hand typed). When findagrave.com came to fruition, it was the same exciting new road for us.

But, in drawers and on closet shelves were box after box of photos, mementos and letters that need identification. My fault. I never “snooped”. I didn’t ask. I simply didn’t know that these things existed. I have told people that if Mom asked me to get in the middle drawer of the mahogany dresser in the green bedroom for a tablecloth, that’s what I did. I didn’t look in the top or the bottom drawers. I didn’t look on the closet shelves or in the bottom of the roll top desk.

For many years, for my birthday or Christmas, Mom would give me a piece of jewelry, a military medallion or other memento along with the history of each item. One time it was a Parian statue that I had admired. Another, it was a cut glass compote from a family friend with the same surname, but who was no relation. (I did know that Sybil wasn’t related, though each of us would have been thrilled to call her cousin or aunt!) I had asked for those kinds of gifts instead of a new sweater or something less meaningful (or less long lasting). I treasure those cards with the backstory of a meaningful item from her jewelry box, her vanity or secretary. Those gifts have provided a history for a dozen or so items from my mother’s possessions. If only I’d asked for more stories!

My lament is that I didn’t look in the top or bottom drawers for more stories, for more history and for more memories.

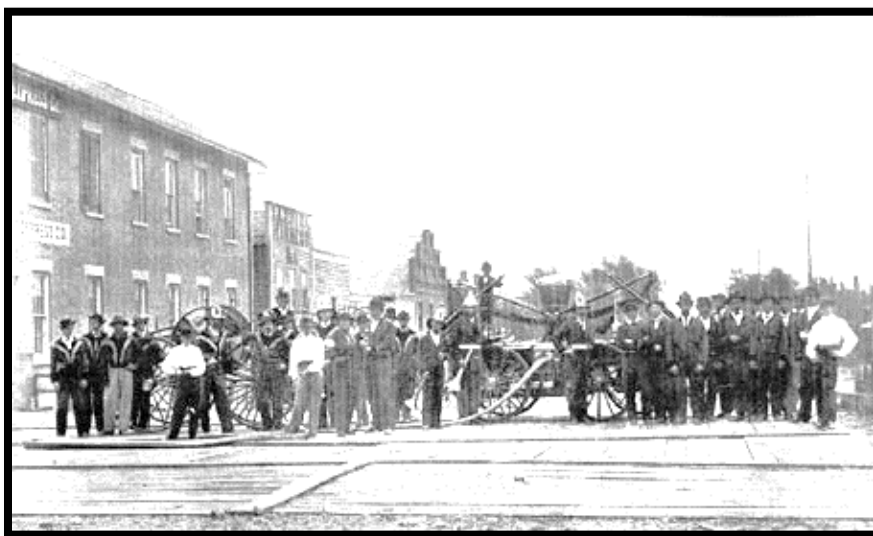


Photos by Cheryl Budde

MARION X. CHUSE
BLOOMINGTON'S FIRST PAID FIRE CHIEF
By Rand Veerman

Marion X. Chuse holds a significant place in the history of firefighting in Bloomington, Illinois. He was born February 19, 1831 in Switzerland at St. Gall. In 1850, at age 19, he and his parents moved to Bloomington from St. Louis. While in St. Louis, Marion had been very active in firefighting from age 14 working with Washington Fire Company 2 and Liberty Company 6.

The citizens of Bloomington organized their first volunteer fire company in 1854. This was a private enterprise manned by volunteers. The first company became known as the Prairie Birds and was headed by chief Ephime Platte. A large fire destroyed 8 buildings on the South side of the Courthouse on October 16, 1855. A new engine had been ordered, but was not yet in service, so the fire had to be fought with buckets, ladders, and hooks. The new engine arrived in 1858 and was named Prairie Bird No. 1. Eventually a second company of volunteers was formed and was known as the "McLean" company and later changed to "Young America." M.X. was the bell ringer and "1st Assistant Forman of the Hose".



Prairie Bird 1 with Hose Cart and Volunteers. Photo from City of Bloomington website.

In 1859, in partnership with A. F. Risser, the two opened their harness and saddler shop on Main Street. Together they established a reputation as one of the finest businesses in Bloomington. Working close to the courthouse allowed M.X. to be first to ring the bell alerting the volunteers of a fire. Keep in mind that horses were common about the Bloomington square.

In 1865, at the age of 34, M.X. Chuse was elected as the city's first paid fire chief, marking a transition from an earlier era of volunteer fire brigades to a more professionalized force. He held the post until 1886. In 1867 he travelled to Rhode Island to purchase the City's first "Steam Fire Engine" which required someone to be on duty 24/7 keeping the fires stoked making the engine ready for any fire.

In 1871, a message was received that the entire City of Chicago was on fire and help was needed. M.X. Chuse and six men loaded the steamer engine onto a C & A rail car and four hours later the special train arrived in Chicago. The heroes returned two days later with the truck still in operating condition and all men escaped injury. They would be referred to as the “Gallant Prairie Bird Firemen.”

Marion Xavier married Miss Sarah Shannon in Heyworth 5 Sep 1854. Together they had eight children: Kitty, Laura, Frank S., Arthur, Edward J. Marion Xavier Jr., Ella J., and Ferdmond Xavier. Sarah died at age 59 in 1895.

From 1871 until 1888 there were three regular men in each of the two fire stations, two drivers and an engineer. Each station had six more men on call should they be needed. Volunteers who served with Chief Chuse include George Hayes, A. T. Briscoe, T. B. Henghton, I. G. Cantrell, J.C. Lackey, Edwin Rounds, J. R. Haideman, M. D. Sprague, H. S. Herr, P. T. Broad, James Newell, G. A. Carlton, A. Houser, M. Chatfield, J. A. Sneed, C. M. Bolts, J. E. Thomas, N. Haideman, J. H. Stevens, W. Rector, E. L. Rounds, James Depew, E. A. Lucas, H. B. Swarnn, Edward Rounds, L. D. Rounds, A. Dawson, H. Marble, H. H. Keeran, Joseph Dennison, William B. French, W. T. Wilson, George Heritage, W. Anderson, J. S. Popple, William Beard, R. Frey, W. H. Rankin, C. Thompson, P. J. Rouie, Charlie Hays, John Londgorve, M. Swann, William Kitchell, L. M. Temple, David Smith, George Madden, Charles Porter, J. M. Evans, J. S. Ross, James O’Donald, Jesse Bishop, J. C. Bray, James Wilson, N. H. Pike, Charles Dunk, M. Brown, Willam Gory, Joseph Dobson, and Frank Ball.

M. X. retired as Bloomington chief in 1886 after 32 years of fighting fires. He moved from Bloomington to Peoria – opening a small harness and saddler shop there. In 1888 the City of Bloomington began paying the entire fire department, making the turn to a paid professional department.

M. X. Chuse Sr. died at age 80 on July 17, 1911 in Peoria at the home of his daughter. For the prior decade he had been in failing health and confined to the house his last six years. His son, Harry A. Chuse, a well-known traveling man, assisted in his father’s care the last three years. M. X. is interred in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery – Old City Section 8, just off the roadway.



Rand Veerman photo

M. X. Chuse's pioneering role as Bloomington's first paid chief deserves recognition. While volunteer firefighters protected the community admirably for years, Chuse steered the department into a new professional era. His leadership enabled the fire department to keep pace with Bloomington's development into a thriving city in the late 19th century. For many years, his name was held in high esteem as the best fire fighter Bloomington ever had.

Sources: *The Pantagraph*, 18 Jul 1911, p. 7.

City of Bloomington website, <https://www.bloomingtonil.gov/departments/fire/history>

CHECKING IN WITH BENJAMINVILLE

By Rand Veerman

John R. Benjamin of Columbia Co., N.Y. bought land in McLean County in 1853. He influenced other members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) to move west to Illinois and settle near him. The families of Joseph Marot, Isaac Clement, and Timothy Benjamin founded the village of Benjaminville in 1856. The name was later shortened to Bentown. These farmers had come to the area in search of rich soil and their success caused others to join them.

The Society of Friends community continued to grow as more people came and settled nearby. *The Weekly Pantagraph*, March 24, 1858, “We are informed that the pleasant little place known as Benjaminville is progressing nicely. It is situated in Lee Township [now Dawson], about 10 miles east of Bloomington.” In 1859, the first meeting house was constructed, and the cemetery was established about the same time. As the community had continued to grow it would include a general store, blacksmith shop, three meeting houses, Quaker, Methodist, and Christian churches.



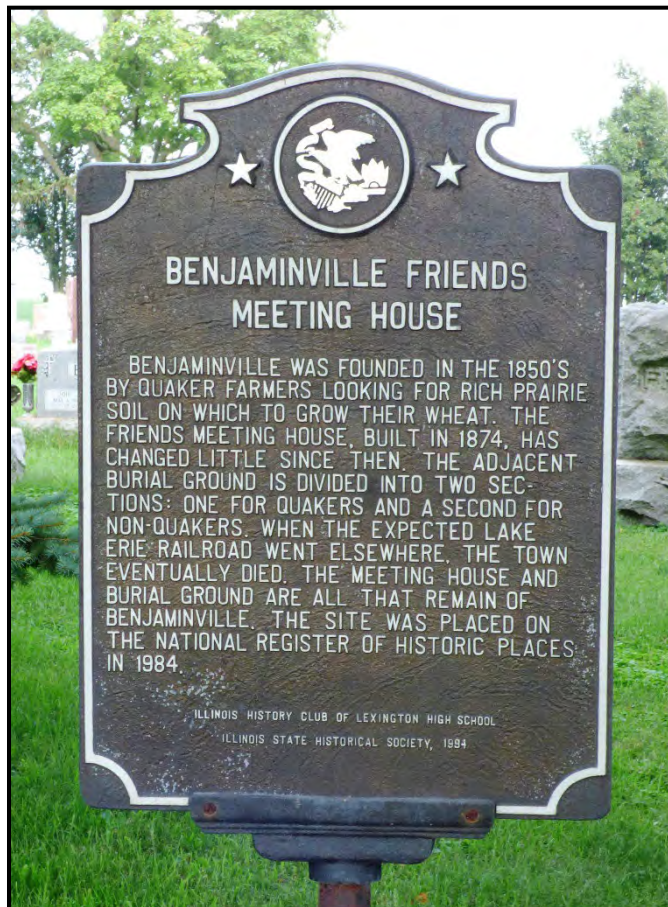
Friends Meeting House – the last structure that remains of Benjaminville, built in 1874. The Friends Cemetery is behind. Rand Veerman photo.

The Benjamin Quakers were not the first in Illinois and the new settlement was an offshoot of the Clear Creek Quakers located north in Putnam County. The Clear Creek Quakers were established in 1842 and still have an annual gathering in McNabb, Illinois.

The Clear Creek meeting minutes include much information about the Bentown organization. These minutes have been examined by Clifford Neal Smith and those records pertaining to Bentown were published in *Gleanings*, Spring 2003, Vol 37-No 1, p. 19: "Benjaminville (Bentown) Friends: The Ancient Records at Clear Creek." [Available at tmcgs.org] This article names hundreds of members showing their membership origin, children, meeting attendance, and members disowned for cause.

The Lake Erie Railroad aka (Lafayette, Bloomington and Mississippi) bypassed Benjaminville because of its elevation and located the depot south at Holder. Churches and businesses shortly relocated to be closer to the railway depot. The Holder depot closed in 1969.

One by one the buildings of Bentown have disappeared. The old wagon shop burned in 1981 leaving the meeting hall constructed in 1874 as the only remaining structure. The building was listed in 1983 on the National Register of Historic Places. The Quaker style of meeting house architecture was unique for the time in allowing men and women to worship together in the same room.



Bronze Plaque presented by the History Club of Lexington High School. Rand Veerman photo.

The Friends Cemetery is still being used and listed on Find a Grave as having 810 memorials and 91% of them are photographed. The cemetery is divided into three distinct areas: Quaker members, non-Quakers, and an area for distant relatives of both.

It is quite a sight for this historic building to have a band of 300-foot-tall windmills in the background. Imagine what a pioneer would think seeing the current landscape! The windmills have a 25-year life expectancy. The Meeting House is only 149 years old. It will be interesting to see what is in the background 100 years from now.

**HALL-BARNARD CEMETERY:
Est. 1835 Res. 1981 Ceta-AFL-CIO**

<u>BARNARD CEMETERY</u>	
Section 29 Dry Grove Township, McLean County, Illinois	
This Cemetery has been neglected and the stones are hidden in weeds and underbrush. The inscriptions were copied in September 1966 by Alice Steinberg.	
*Artis	Robert, son of J. E. & S. E. - 1873
*Artis	Ella - d. 1869
Barnard	James O. July 16, 1800 - Oct. 17, 1873
Barnard	Lydia, wife of James O. Barnard Sep. 15, 1820 - Apr. 20, 1847 (2 different stones with same dates)
Barnard	Catherine, 2 consort of Francis Barnard Jan. 19, 1794 - (death date broken off)
Barnard	Jane, consort of Francis Barnard Nov. 26, 1775 - Aug. 26, 1835
Devalon	William A., son of J. J. and C. L. Sep. 1, 1832 (or 1852) - 1 year, 7 months, 29 days
Goodpaster	John F. Sep. 26, 1832 - Sep. 26, 1836
Goodpaster	Jane A. Aug. 26, 1811 - Sep. 26, 1836
Hall	Francis Micajah Mar. 25, 1833 - Apr. 5, 1917
Hall	Jane Ellen Barnard, his wife June 22, 1838 - Sep. 7, 1925
Hall	Y. M. Mar. 24, 1863 - Jan. 16, 1911
Hall	Jessie, son of F.M. and J. B. Hall Jan. 22, 1869 5 months, 7 days
Hall	Willie, son of F. M. and J. B. Hall Dec. 20, 1861 - Feb. 16, 1862
Hall	Eddie, son of F. M. and J. B. Hall Feb. 25, 1867 1 year, 2 months, 16 days
Hall	Susan T. dau. of P. & E. Hay died Oct. 11, 1849 49 years, 8 months, 16 days
*Hay	Apphia K. 1843 - 1921
*Hay	John 1797 - 1888
*Hay	Sarah E., dau. 1826 - 1848
*Hay	John W., son 1828 - 1848
Warlow	Susan E., dau. of J. B. & C. B. died May 20, 1870 (or 1876) 6 months, 6 days

The McLean County Genealogical Society (formerly known as Bloomington-Normal Genealogical Society),
Vol. 1 No. 1 Sep. 1967, p. 17

Take Route 9 west from Bloomington to 750 East Rd. Turn right (north) and when you reach a "T" crossing, turn right (east) and go 1/10 of a mile. The cemetery lies on your right (south) and is accessed by a grassed lane. You can see the stones from the road. Or go .1 mile south of the Old Peoria Road, Section 29, Dry Grove Township.



Cheryl Budde photo

Hall-Barnard Cemetery was a burial site for early settlers but is unidentifiable through dense brush and foliage. (*The Pantagraph*, 26 May 1974) A man had been hired to clear brush but chopped down a few trees and walked away from the project. A group of AFL-CIO men cleaned up the cemetery in 1981 as the sign at the entrance to the cemetery notes. Another cemetery in Dry Grove Township was restored in 1974 after some 90 years of being abandoned. At that time, the last burial had been in 1925 and the ground not only had brush, trees and weeds, but also had grazing cattle working their way through and over tombstones.

Two of the early settler families who are buried here were Hall and Barnard. Children of those early settlers were married on August 19, 1855: Francis M. and Jane Ellen (Barnard) Hall celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 19, 1915 at their home one mile east of Danvers. The couple, who had lived in McLean County all of their lives, were among its oldest living residents. Francis Hall was born in Todd County, KY on Mar 25, 1883 and moved to Illinois with his parents Young and Rachel (Hay) Hall in 1835. Jane Barnard was born June 22, 1838 in what is now Dry Grove Township, just a mile or so from her current residence.

The 60th anniversary party's guests included three who were in attendance at the wedding in 1855: Francis Hall's brothers: Henry P. Hall of Peoria and John R. Hall of Lake City, Ia.; and Jane Barnard Hall's sister: Nancy A. Artis of Winter Haven, Fla. The Halls have three living children, 13 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Her father, James Osborn Barnard, came to Illinois from Tennessee on horseback and settled in McLean County in 1828. The potential lure of the railroad going through the state on the third principal meridian provided incentive for the move north and west of Tennessee. Mr. Barnard founded the town of Wilkesborough (just east of Danvers) on a 40-acre plat and built a tavern on the land. Jane Barnard's mother, Lydia Swallow Barnard, was in charge of the tavern. Other families settled nearby and soon there were many newly built houses, a blacksmith shop, a general store and a post office! Wilkesborough faded as the railroad went through Danvers rather than where Francis Barnard had expected.

The stone for Francis Micajah Hall (25 Mar 1833 – 5 Apr 1917) and Jane Ellen (Barnard) Hall (22 Jun 1838 – 7 Sep 1925) is substantial and is in good condition. Jane's burial would be one of the last for this cemetery, which would be forgotten over the decades until the DAR began their diligent documentation of burials of early settlers. Another generation would forget the cemetery until 1981 when Ceta-AFL-CIO completed another restoration. I would be remiss if I omitted Milo Custer's painstaking work in documenting *Soldiers of the Revolution and the War of 1812*, completed in 1912. From Mr. Custer's documentation on the War of 1812: Francis Barnard, Jr. is buried at Hall-Barnard, as is his wife Jane McCord Barnard (1875-1835). He was quartermaster with the North Carolina Militia during the War of 1812. Thank you to all who work so diligently in keeping these cemeteries alive.



Friends Meeting House and Cemetery with Windmills – Rand Veerman photo.

References

1. Find a Grave, Friends Cemetery, 2400 East Road, Bentown, Illinois
<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/597586/friends-cemetery>
2. *Gleanings*, June 1975, Vol 9-No 2, p. 54; "Benjaminville or Bentown"
3. *Gleanings*, Spring 2003, Vol 37-No 1, p. 19; "Benjaminville (Bentown) Friends: The Ancient Records at Clear Creek."
4. *The Weekly Pantagraph*, March 24, 1858.
5. *The Pantagraph*, Apr 21, 1981, Page 77.
6. Wikipedia, "Benjaminville, Illinois", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjaminville,_Illinois

“German Evangelical Lutheran Combined Friedens Church”
Excerpt from a TMC GS Publication
PART 2 1902-1979

The Part 1 reprint was published in *Gleanings* Winter 2022, Vol 55, No 1. What follows is a reprint of Part 2 from our publication available for download for only \$4.00 (publications are free for members). The book is copyright 1998.



The dream for a beautiful church now seemed to take more definite shape. Early in 1902 a building committee was appointed and the members were: Fred Heise, President of the congregation, Jacob Kohrt, President of the Building Committee, Rev. Ed. Durand, Chris Schultz, Jacob Weber, William Schmoekel, John Hinkleman, and Charles Wielatz. Before the church was built the congregation had many trials and difficulties, but the record states that after it was built there never was any church that had such peace and harmony as Friedens Church. The Ladies Aid furnished the pews, Altar, carpet, and other furnishings. The Young People paid for the wonderful chandelier, and the Sunday School paid for one large art glass window. Individual members also provided for the other art glass windows. The dedication of the new church was on September 29, 1902, and the congregation expressed their gratitude to God for the wonderful way in which He had Blessed their work in building the church. The following ministers spoke at the dedication; Rev. C. Schaub; Rev. Wm. Hattendorf; Rev. P. Brauns; Rev. Peter Weil; Rev. H. Tiedke; Rev. C. Nauerth; Rev. D. Bruening; and Rev. H. Hubschmann.

A short time after the church had been dedicated the Ladies Aid took an active part in remodeling the parsonage. A new Building Committee was appointed with Rev. Ed. Durand as the Chairman. The other members were, Jacob Kohrt, William Neumann, Charles Wielatz, Julius Winklemann, Otto Werkmeister, Herman Gantzkow, and Theo. Prochnow. They were very proud of the work they had accomplished in remodeling the old school and church into a modern parsonage. The city official congratulated the congregation on their fine achievement. The parsonage had 10 rooms and a bath, with a large reception hall and two beautiful halls on the second floor. It was furnished with both hard and soft water, a furnace, and gas lights. All of these things added greatly to the comfort of the remodeled parsonage.

The officers of the congregation at this time in 1904 were: President, Fred Heise; Secretary, Otto Werkmeister; Treasurer, Theodore Prochnow; Trustees, Julius Winklemann, William Dietrich, and Chris Schultz; Elders, John Hinklemarm, Fritz Blum, and John Gustavs.

In May 1910, Rev. Ed Durand resigned and the Rev. Edward E. Klimpke was called to be the pastor. During his time the church indebtedness was considerably reduced. He resigned in 1919, and the Rev. Herman H. Bierbaum was called to become the pastor. Under his direction the church continued to grow. The introduction of the English language was made; the church offering envelopes were introduced, and a new constitution was adopted. All of the church activities of the church increased and the membership more than doubled so that it had the largest membership in its history.

Up to the year 1916, Frieden's Church had been an independent church but in that year it joined the Evangelical Synod of North America.

In 1924, the congregation was assessed for the repaving of Front Street, received a quota for the Synodical Budget and Eden Seminary at Webster Groves, Missouri. Approximately \$2,400 was contributed for these appeals by the members and friends.

On July 20, 1924, the church celebrated its 40th Anniversary. The speakers were the Rev. A. Zimmerman, and The Rev. Arnold Franke.

In 1925, plans were made for the installation of a new furnace and Oil-O-Matic oil burner. The cost was about \$5,000 and financed through loans from the members of the congregation.

Rev. Herman Bierbaum resigned at the end of 1925 and on Feb. 1, 1926, the Rev. Ernest F. Rathmann was called to be the minister. During his pastorate he also served the Danvers Church until 1932 when that property was donated to Friedens Church. The property was sold to the Mennonites in 1933 for the sum of \$392. During the week of April 24-29, 1934, Friedens celebrated the Fiftieth Anniversary with special services on Sunday, April 29th. Rev. Shieck, D.D., pastor of Emmanuel Church, Chicago, spoke in the morning. In the afternoon there was a confirmation reunion service. The Rev. T. Lehman D.D., President of Elmhurst College, was the speaker. Almost every confirmation class was represented. One member from the first confirmation class in 1885 was present.

During the following years there was the depression and the church suffered through it.

On July 1, 1935 the Rev. Henry C. Warder was called as the pastor and he served until Dec. 1, 1942. During his time conditions improved and most of the indebtedness was paid off. The German language was discontinued. The merger of the Evangelical Synod in North America with the Reformed Church in The United States took place in June 1934 to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Interest was also shown at this time in the development of Bloomington East Bay Camp to provide recreation and religious training for the youth of the community.

Dr. Charles Decker, Professor of Secondary Education at Illinois University, supplied the pulpit from December 1942 to May 1, 1943. During this time the indebtedness was paid off through the loyal support and financial help given by the members.

The Rev. Gordon G. Robinson began his duties as pastor of Friedens Evangelical and Reformed Church on May 1, 1943. During the fall of 1943 the Church Board discussed plans for the future. The Second World War was in progress, the times were filled with an intense appreciation of the values of freedom of worship, and people were hoping for peace and the return of the men in service. To show that the church was not standing by while others were making sacrifices, the Church Board moved to establish an "Advance Planning Committee" on Nov. 1, 1943. The following committee was appointed; Mr. Leo Haas, Chairman, Mr. Hugo Kempin, Mr. Herman Klingberg, Mrs. H. Loercher, Mrs. C. Peters, and Mr. W. A. Givens. On December 6, 1943, the committee reported its recommendation to raise money to purchase a new pipe organ for the sum of \$7,000.



CHURCH CHANCEL BEFORE REMODELING

At a meeting held February 17, 1944, the project was approved by the congregation. The official slogan was, "Organ Or More In 44". At the Annual Meeting in 1945, the congregation voted to continue the project but changed the slogan to "Keep It Alive in 45". A new Planning Committee was appointed, W. A. Givens, Chairman; Mr. Leo Haas, President, Rev. G. E. Robinson, Mr. L. Scott, Mrs. G. Henninger, Mrs. Charles Geib, Mr. Herman Klingberg, and Mr. H.F. Robinson. On March 3, 1946, the congregation accepted the recommendation of the Committee to buy a new organ from the Wicks Organ Co. for \$7,500 and agreed to make the chancel changes.

It was a happy day on June 30, 1946, when the new pipe organ and chancel were dedicated. This was the first major change in the structure of the church and in having an altar-centered chancel the worshipful atmosphere has been increased. It is not possible to mention all the names of those who made these improvements possible. It would have been impossible for the recommendation to be carried out if it had not been for the immense amount of labor done by the men of the congregation and cooperation by other members and organizations of the church.

New chancel furniture was added at this time: The black walnut Altar in the center of the chancel was placed in memory of Cpl. Leo W. Welling, born November 19, 1920, who gave his life in service to his country in World War II, on April 3, 1945. The donors are his relatives, friends and organizations of the community. The Memorial Chimes were dedicated on December 12, 1948. These beautiful chimes were given by the members and friends of those who have departed but whose memory is still held sacred. On Dec. 31, 1947, Reverend Gordon E. Robinson completed his pastorate at Friedens Church.

Rev. Robert Nolte was called to the pastorate on Nov. 16, 1947. Several matters presented themselves for attention. One of them was to revise the constitution and to change the name from Friedens Evangelical Church to St. Luke's Evangelical and Reformed Church. After laborious work, the constitution and the new name were adopted. The other problem was to secure more adequate space for the Sunday School. A planning committee was appointed to study the problem and a resolution to start a Parsonage Fund was adopted for the sake of either remodeling the parsonage into a parish hall or to secure another house for the parsonage. After the campaign for funds had been set into operation, Rev. Nolte was called to St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church, in Pana, Ill., and resigned in July, 1952.



The present pastor, Rev. Gerhard Sennewald assumed his duties as pastor at St. Luke's on Dec. 4, 1952. The practice of celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of every month was started. Numerous improvements were made; the trim on the church painted, the parsonage painted and given a new roof, a new oil-burner, a downstairs lavatory and a new hot water heater installed.

The 70th Anniversary was celebrated in 1954 with an Anniversary Banquet on May 26, 1954 and the Anniversary Services on September 20, 1954.

The next years saw several major improvements; the rest rooms were remodeled by the Women's Guild and the Brotherhood, and a new floor was placed in the church basement. The sanctuary was redecorated. A new cross for the altar and new candelabras were given in memory of Emilie Greenburg. The outside of the church was tuckpointed in 1956.

In 1957 the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Christian Church. Also during the year at the Annual Congregational meeting authorization was given to build an educational unit and to make improvements in the parsonage. On June 2, 1957, ground was broken for the educational unit and on July 14th the cornerstone was laid. In it were placed the membership list, copy of the *Daily Pantagraph*, Annual Reports for the year 1956 and the of Order of the Worship Service. The unit was dedicated as the Fellowship Hall on November 3, 1957 at a cost of \$21,638.82.

In 1959 Rev. Sennewald resigned to assume the pastorate of Trinity Church in Rome, New York.

During the years 1960-61, the Rev. Isaac Corn, a retired Methodist pastor living in Bloomington assumed the interim pastorate. He served with enthusiasm and devotion rare in interim service.

In July of 1961, the pastorate was assumed by the Rev. Joseph C. Cronenberg.
During the ensuing years, the governing council of the church was restructured.

A bell was secured for the steeple through the cooperation of the United States Navy's Historical Archives Division. This was installed at a special service April 2, 1962, conducted by the Youth Group.

The outstanding debts were retired, this being celebrated in May, 1966, with a mortgage burning service.

The church left Front and Lee streets on September 14, 1975, when St. Luke's United Church of Christ merged with (and moved to) Union Presbyterian Church, 2101 E. Washington St.

The 76 year-old building then remained vacant until Faith Baptist Church purchased the building in 1979.

QUERIES

Betty Lovekamp, 223 Ivanhoe Way, Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Wanted: Any information on Perry BAILEY - born about 1825 possibly in Pa. - died 1892 in McLean County. Married Nancy Jane Hensley who later married Charles Andrew YORK in 1893. Perry BAILEY is supposed to be from a large family of sisters and brother. He lived in LeRoy, Ill. and was in the Civil War. Did he have a brother, David? Who were his parents?

The Mclean County Genealogical Society (formerly known as Bloomington-Normal Genealogical Society)
Vol. 1 No. 1 Sep. 1967, pg. 27



“First *Gleanings* Editors”—L to R: Miss Louise Muxfeld, Mrs. Ivan Light, Mrs. Glen Lovekamp, and Mrs. Arnold Hering. *Gleanings Committee. The Pantagraph*, September 17, 1967. Photo reprinted with permission in *Gleanings*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring 2006, p. 4.

Betty Lovekamp was one of the founding members, a “proud” founding member (according to her obituary, of the Bloomington-Normal Genealogical Society, now The McLean County Genealogical Society. In Volume 1, Issue 1, Betty was not only Editor of the *Newsletter*, but she placed a query (as seen above). She also served as Program Chairman that first year. In addition to her love of history and genealogy, she was an avid bowler and was inducted into the B.W.B.A. Hall of Fame in 1986. She served as Youth Bowling director for many years. She and her husband Glean bowled in leagues and tournaments for decades.

Her genealogical searches didn't have the same kind of access we have today. For Betty, my mother, aunts, grandmothers, and tens of thousands of researchers her age there was no internet, only trips to libraries and museums. No findagrave.com, only road trips, sometimes planning a vacation around research in a place far from home. Glorious trips, but many times arduous.

Her query, looking for information about Perry Bailey who died in McLean County in 1892. She asks if he had a brother, David? Who were his parents? Civil War service?

In the two hours I'd allotted for research, I found the following without leaving my desk.

From Perry Bailey's wife's obituary: Nancy Jane York, was 76 years old at the time of her death. Her parents were Milton and Lucy Goodman Hensley, and she was born in LeRoy on April 23, 1859. She and Perry Bailey married in February 1876. Mr. Bailey died in April 1892. Nancy then married Charles A. York on April 6, 1893. (*The Pantagraph*, 26 Aug 1935, pg. 3)

From findagrave.com, we find that Perry Bailey died on 26 April 1892 and is buried at Old Oak Grove Cemetery, LeRoy, Ill. His birth is unknown. His enlistment card from the Records Administration: Headstones provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans. 1879-1903 states that he served with Company I of the 39th Reg. Ill. Volunteer Infantry. *The Pantagraph* further verifies Perry Bailey's service: “The 39th Regt. Ill. Vet. Met at their headquarters at Camp McCullough” Among those in attendance was Perry Bailey, company I, LeRoy, Ill.”

In *The McLean County Genealogical Society Empire Township Cemeteries*, Vol. 3, the data states that Perry Bailey was born in 1826 and that there is no death date. Pvt. Co. I 39th Ill. Vol. Inf.

Betty's question about whether Perry Bailey had a brother came to life in the *The McLean County Genealogical Society Empire Township Cemeteries*. The name immediately above Perry Bailey is David Bailey who died 2 Apr 1865 at the battle of Fort Gregg, VA. His unit: Pvt. Co. I. 39th Ill. Inf. David Bailey and Percy Bailey...brothers?

30 Oct 1885, *The Pantagraph* notes that, “Perry Bailey, being nearly blind, thinks of locating to Leroy (sic).”

9 Apr 1886, *The Pantagraph* provides an update, Perry Bailey, an ex-soldier, is nearly blind.”

From ancestry.com, the 1870 US Federal Census: Perry Bailey was living in Empire Township; his birth year was about 1828, so he would be 42 years old when the census was taken. He was

born in Pennsylvania. He was listed as being a laborer, as were several other men in the household of Stephen Smiley, whom the census lists as a Brick Maker.

From ancestry.com, the 1878 US Federal Census: Perry had married Jane (Hensley), they were living in a house, had no children and his occupation was laborer.

In the U.S., Selected Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880, Perry Bailey's occupation was in agriculture.

There is one Perry Bailey in ancestry.com family trees. Data from this is not always source documents, so would need to be verified further. This online family tree provides a few nuggets to verify:

1. A daughter, Laura Isabelle Bailey, born 9 Nov 1889 LeRoy, Ill.
2. Residence in 1900 – Dawson, McLean County
3. Entered the Civil War 4 Sep 1861 and was discharged for disability 4 Jul 1863
4. In 1889, Perry Bailey lived in Bloomington, Ill.

In *The Pantagraph* 4 Feb 1896, Laura Isabelle Bailey, daughter of Perry Bailey was appointed a guardian, Mr. Charles Sterling who had a bond of \$100. (This was under probate notes and did not mention either of Laura's parents.)

In conclusion, while I have fingertip access to a world of digital information, the collected publications of The McLean County Genealogical Society, the McLean County Historical Society, sometimes a person or family is elusive and not much can be found to verify a life well lived. And each bit of information leads to other questions like that of "Are David and Perry Bailey brothers?" David Bailey had family in LeRoy or Empire Township that wanted him "back home" for burial after his death in the Civil War. However, David Bailey and Perry Bailey are the only two Bailey burials at Oak Grove Cemetery. Who were they? I would love to know what Betty found about her Perry Bailey and what nooks and crannies in which she gave breath to him.

If you have answers to any of Betty Lovekamp's Perry Bailey questions, please contact me at mcgs.research@gmail.com

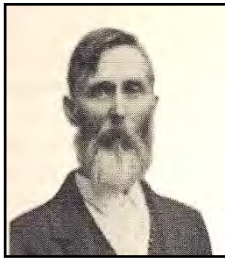
Addendum: Though many of the resources created by The McLean County Genealogical Society are dated, in many respects that is why those publications are so invaluable in conducting research about McLean County and its residents. The cemetery books especially have data that is no longer available from an actual trip to a particular cemetery. Stones erode and are sometimes destroyed by storms or vandalism; they are knocked over by mowers or farm equipment; vegetation sometimes plays a part in the decay of tombstones; changes in roads (new roads or widening of roadways); and the actual material from which a tombstone is made decays just as a normal part of being out in the wind. Add the records compiled by the DAR and Milo Custer and so many other materials available through The McLean County Genealogical Society and you have an absolutely wonderful place to start and to continue a search for family and local history in McLean County, Illinois!

Heyworth Christian Church Celebrates 150 Years

Dr. Nathan L. Soice (soice1977@gmail.com)

The year 2021 marks the 150th anniversary of the Heyworth Christian Church in Heyworth, IL. The congregation was established as the result of a seven-week protracted meeting led by J.S. Stagner, county evangelist for the Illinois Christian Missionary Society (Disciples of Christ). The meeting commenced on January 7, 1871 on the second floor of Abbott's Hall, which is currently the site of the Knights of Pythias No. 442 building (built in 1906 and currently occupied by "J's Dance Studio" at 210 E. Main Street). Benches were made for attendees from rough planks purchased from Van Ordstrand's lumber yard.

The a-cappella singing (no musical instruments) during the meetings was led by Michael W. Powell of Lytleville. Those in attendance were baptized in the Kickapoo Creek one mile north of Heyworth. Ice had to be cut away for the baptisms, yet no illness resulted from exposure to the extreme cold. On March 6, 1871, forty-eight charter members organized the church with Mr. Stagner remaining as local pastor. Church meetings were held in Abbott's Hall until the first edifice was built. The first elders of the church were William Kitchell (also clerk) and Michael W. Powell while Albert Nickerson and Robert Rolofson served as the first deacons.



Michael W. Powell



J.S. Stagner



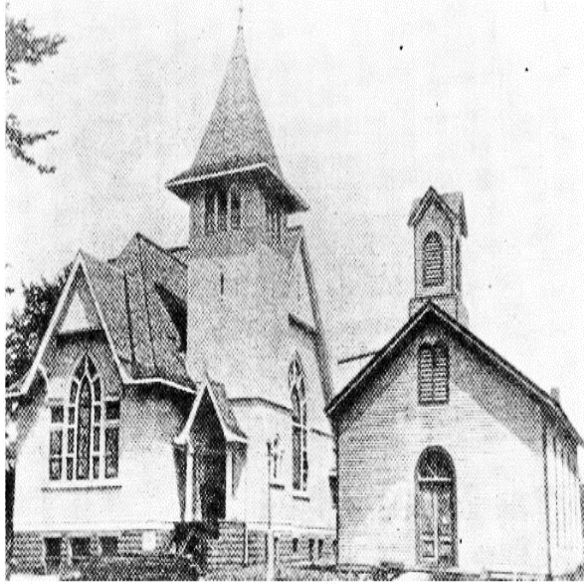
William Kitchell

In the fall of 1871 the congregation began building their first meeting house on land purchased for \$200 from Zebulon Newton on the northeast corner of what is now Route 136 and Buchanan Street. With Albert Nickerson, John Van Ordstrand, and J.C. Short serving as trustees/building committee, the building was dedicated on October 8th, 1871 at a cost of \$2000.

An unfortunate split occurred within the congregation in the spring of 1891 over the issue of using musical instruments in public worship. One evening a group removed a newly acquired organ from the sanctuary and burned it in the street. A replacement organ was purchased and those opposed to its use withdrew from the congregation.

During the late 1890s and into the early 1900s, the church gained quite a few membership transfers from several nearby rural Christian Churches that disbanded (Lytleville, Grassy Ridge (northwest of Heyworth; cemetery remains), Long Point (south of Heyworth near Wapella; cemetery remains), and Fairview (between Heyworth and Waynesville; cemetery remains).

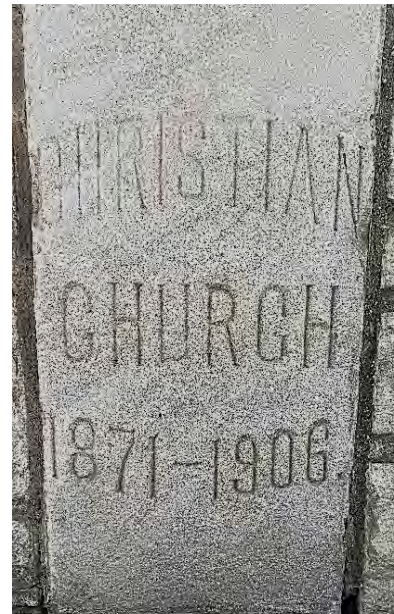
After J.P. Givens became pastor of the church in 1902, the congregation began to grow rapidly and the need for a new building arose. The congregation voted to build a new building on the site of the first building. The original church was moved to the south side of the lot and worship



1906 and 1871 buildings at Buchanan
Route 136 location

services continued in the old building while the new one was being constructed. The building was dedicated with a special service and other activities throughout the day on Sunday, September 9, 1906. The names of the building committee, carved in the cornerstone (moved to the current building), were S.C. Sniff, J.C. Fielder, S.W. Ayers, M.W. Powell, Charles Karr, William Munson, and William Kitchell. After the current Heyworth Christian Church building was built, HCC sold the 1906 building and property to the Heyworth Baptist Church in 1963 for \$5,000. The baptist congregation inserted their own cornerstone into the building and worshiped there until 1991 until they sold the building to Doug and Pat Fuller for \$19,500 and built a new building on East Cole Street. The old Christian Church is now a handsomely remodeled private residence (208 S. Buchanan) currently owned by Brad Schwendy.

The first parsonage was built in 1919 (currently 107 E. Sullivan). During the ministry of William G. McColley, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary in March of 1921 with a basket dinner and anniversary program. During the ministry of R.H. Parker in 1939, the church choir, quite large and active, presented “Vesper Music” on Sunday evenings on Bloomington radio station WJBC. Gladys Jensen directed the choir accompanied on the piano by Irene Moneymaker (Mrs. Moneymaker served as church pianist for over 50 years and taught piano to many local Heyworth residents). In March of 1948, HCC officially withdrew from the Disciples of Christ denomination and became an independent Christian Church. The year 1956 marked the Heyworth Village Centennial, the 50th anniversary of the church building, and the 85th year of the congregation. A special service/program was planned on July 15, 1956 with a basket dinner featuring golden 50s, yellow flowers, gold place mats, and napkins lettered in gold. In the early 1950s, pastor Gayle Hollingsworth, through significant effort and evangelistic work, did much to further the growth and mission of the church. He suffered a heart attack in 1955 and resigned in 1957.



1906 building cornerstone

Mr. Hollingsworth was succeeded by John K. Jones. During the early ministry of Mr. Jones, the church once again felt the need for a new building due to continued growth. In March of 1958 the congregation voted to purchase land on the north edge of the village from Everett Pearce and

to erect a new building on that site. A building committee was appointed and C.R. Miller and Sons was hired to draw up the plans. A ground breaking ceremony was held on September 11, 1959.



Current HCC building on North Vine Street (old Route 51)

Much of the labor was donated by those in the congregation and local tradesmen. The educational section of the building was ready and in use by the summer of 1961. The fellowship hall was used as the sanctuary until the remainder of the building was completed. The sanctuary was finished and a new Wick's pipe organ was installed in January of 1962. Dedication services were held March 18, 1962.

Shortly after the dedication of the new building, a new state approved kindergarten was established at the church by Mrs. Elsie Kaufman. After the state required all public schools to add kindergarten classes, the church's school became a pre-school and still exists today as "God's Garden." Past teachers include Elsie Kaufman, Mary Jane Wood, Linda Koets, Kay Beuttel, Melody Murry, and Victoria Crow (current director). The home at 306 1/2 N. Vine was purchased for a parsonage in 1971 and the Pearce home at 307 W. Randolph was purchased for a parsonage in 1974.



Vernon L. Oakley

Following Mr. Jones' resignation in 1963, succeeding ministers included Tom Armour (1963-1965), Bill Anderson (1966-1970), Vernon Oakley (1971-1988), and Bob Guy (1988-1994). The year 1994 was a troubled year for HCC. Following Mr. Guy's resignation in 1994, several families from the congregation withdrew and chartered "New Horizon Christian Church." Vernon Oakley answered the call and returned to the ministry at HCC in December 1994. Vernon served faithfully until June 1999. Vernon is still fondly remembered in the community as one of the most loved and effective ministers in HCC's history. He was loyally dedicated to the Heyworth community and made a long-lasting impact in the lives of many residents. The church grew both spiritually and numerically during both of his ministry stints. Vernon, along with his wife Kathryn (both age 85), now reside with their children in Missouri.

The most recent ministers at HCC include Kurt Flora (1999-2013), Jerry Dusenberry (2013-2016), and Pete Hopkins (2017-2021). The church is currently in the process of searching for a new senior minister. The current leadership team consists of Steve Wissmiller, Ken Kascel, Bernie Wiltshire, and Candi Evans. Joe Carroll, Mike Francis, Andrew Lee, Todd Runge, David Hunt, Paul Quinn, and Jim Spaid serve as deacons. Bob Brooks and Gerald O'Neal serve as trustees and Deb Behrens serves as custodian. Candi Evans has served as Youth Minister since 2011 and Amber Stiehl was recently hired as Administrative Assistant. The church's current membership numbers at 150. Information can be found about the life of the church on their website, www.heyworthcc.com or Facebook page. The worship services are held Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. (308 N. Vine St., office phone 309-473-2771).

As Mrs. Jane Fleming-Bell proclaimed in a 1916 HCC history published in the Heyworth Natural Gas newspaper, "May the success of this institution continue its substantial growth in the future as it has in the past. May its influence in the community as a potent factor for good continue its growth in the future as it has in the past. This is the sincere wish of every individual in the community who believes in such institutions as the greatest power in the world for the uplifting of mankind."

A note about the author: The Heyworth Christian Church will always be near and dear to Nathan's heart. Several generations of his family (Soice, Peasley and Buckley) have been active members there through the years and his parents (Steve and Lona Soice) were married there in 1973. He grew up at HCC, served as volunteer worship leader during his high school years, served as deacon during his early married life, and was ordained into ministry there in 2003. Nathan and his family reside in Heyworth while serving as Associate Pastor at the Atlanta Christian Church since 2017. From 2003-2017 he served as Worship Minister at the First Christian Church in Monticello, IL. He truly appreciates the opportunity given to him by the leadership at HCC to write this short history on the occasion of the church's 150th anniversary.

Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing - Senior Class 1948

Emanuel Troyer was a Central Illinois pastor who saw the future wanted to establish a hospital and nurse training in Bloomington to enhance Christian outreach. He raised \$10,000 from farmers to purchase a home and convert it to hospital care in May 1919. Physician George Kelso sold his sanitorium at 807 North Main Street, Bloomington to the enterprise and the first eleven students began in May 1920. The first graduation ceremony was in 1922.

Nurses have always been a vital part of our health care, especially in areas that lack doctors. This central Illinois school would go on to graduate hundreds of highly productive, educated, caring individuals and for that service it would be recognized as one of the best in the nation.

The 1948 *Troyer News* – Graduate Edition has photos of students, jokes, quips, pleas, hopes, and dreams. What follows are some excerpts to highlight history.



1948 Graduating Class Members

Beverly Andes
Marguerite Bertram
Dorothy Brandt
Carolyn Claudon
Jane Davis
Maxine Dunlap
Esther Eigsti
Joyce Irons

Maxine Kent
Eudene King
Erma Liddle
Imogene McHatton
Betty Murrell
Doris Reeser
Betty Rosendahl
Stella Schwandt

Helen Smith
Imogene Starr
Thelma Thommen
Mary Twist
Doris Yoder
Joan Yoder

The Senior Class of 1948 motto: To be of service!

“That I May Be of Service” --- this is the motto chosen by the Class of 1948. May the class ever live and be an example of this motto.

To be of Service – what does this include? A long useful life full of promise and work for each of us, each in a different way – his own way. To be a missionary in Africa, to be a private nurse, a supervisor, to go on to school, or to make a home for a family; those are our tasks.

What happened to them?

Beverly Jean *Andes* Baker, born in Maroa, Illinois 20 Feb 1926; died Denton, Texas 9 Oct 2018 (age 92). Find a Grave # [201934984](#). Retired from nursing in 1989 after 41 years of service.

Marguerite Viola *Bertram* Digal, born in Pontiac, Illinois 31 Mar 1919; died in Pontiac 2 Jun 2008 (age 89). Find a Grave # [27346817](#). Employed as registered nurse at St. James Hospital. She was a cadet in the World War II Nursing Corps.

Carolyn R. *Claudon* Barling, born 14 Jun 1927 in Normal; died 19 Jun 2013 in Normal (age 86). Find a Grave # [112642541](#). Worked as a nurse for Mennonite Hospital and later Drs. Knight and Thielmann.

Jane Davis Rieger, born 18 Jul 1927 in Kentucky; died 27 Feb 2020 in Gibson City, Illinois (age 92). Find a Grave # [167134123](#). Worked as supervisor of Livingston County Public Health where the library is named in her honor.

Esther Elizabeth *Eigsti* Sutter, born 28 Jan 1927 in Gridley; died 10 Jun 2017 in Eureka (age 90). Find a Grave # [180523447](#). Worked as a nurse until she married Dr. M. Willis Sutter in 1957.

1948 Senior Class Will - Excerpt

We, the Senior Class, unconditionally give and bequeath to the entire Freshman Class all our well-worn corn plasters and bunion-pads.

To the Juniors, we will the honor of our first floor camping grounds in Troyer, where the rooms are always open to public inspections and where the telephones ring madly day and night.

Troyer News 1948 Graduate Edition, Bloomington Mennonite Hospital.

1948 Baccalaureate Service

Baccalaureate Services for the Class of '48 were held at the Waldo Mennonite church near Flanagan, Illinois.

The Rev. Hartzler of the Waldo Mennonite Church was chairman of the service and gave the Invocation.

The Scripture was read by the Rev. Mitchell of the old People's Home in Flanagan.

A quartet sang several numbers.

The address was given by Rev. Bertche of the Meadows Church.

Miss Maxwell presented the class and Mr. Garber gave each graduate a Bible from the Hospital Staff. With the Bible was a card of congratulations containing a crisp new dollar bill from Mr. Gerber.

Troyer News 1948 Graduate Edition, Bloomington Mennonite Hospital.

**Note: The complete *Troyer News 1948* edition is available on our website at: <https://tmcgs.org/free-books/>
Thanks to the McClean County Museum of History for loaning us their copy.**

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Revision Date: November 2, 2022

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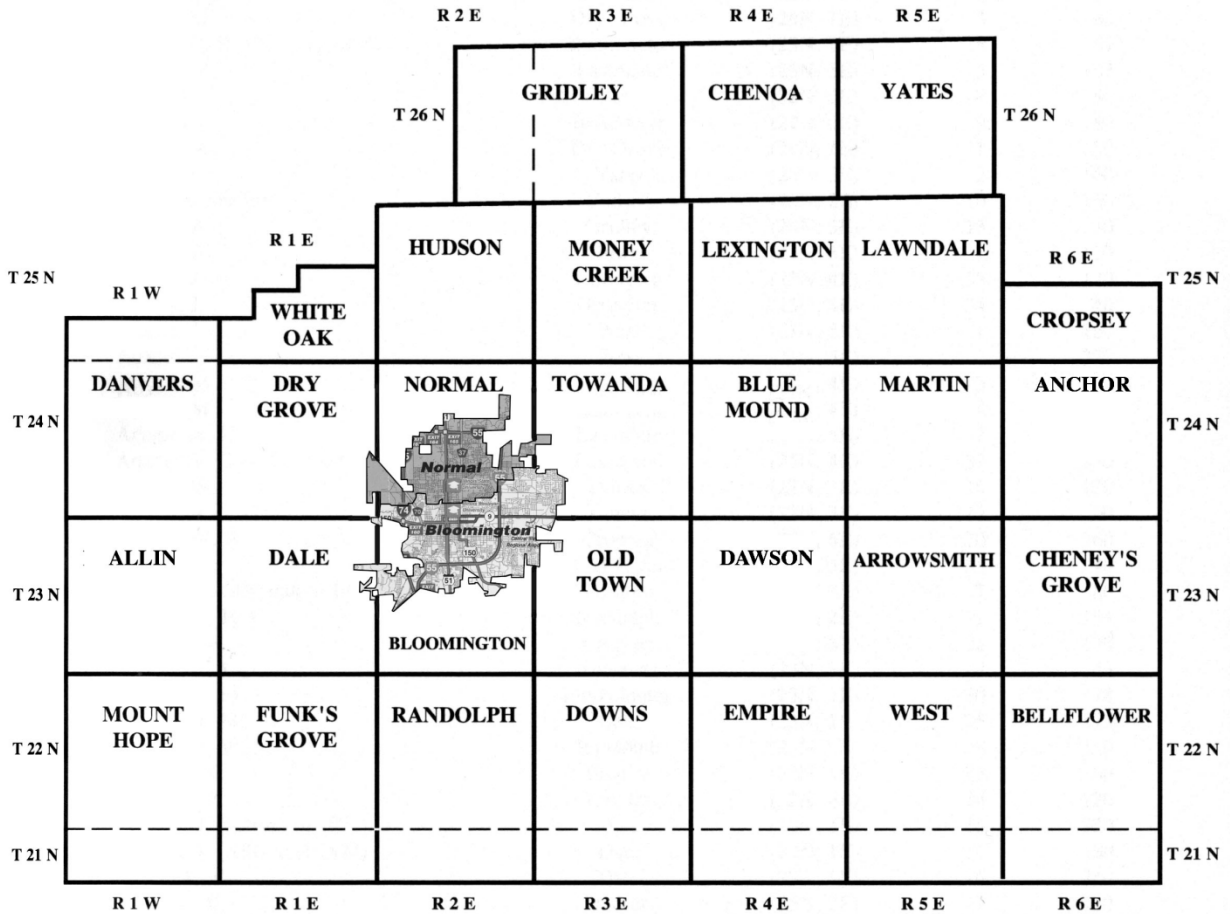
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