Sixth Annual Reunion of the Will County (Ill.) Pioneer Assoc'n, Sept. 1, 1886.
SIXTH ANNUAL REUNION

The Will County Pioneer Association,

SEPTEMBER 1, 1886.

BEING THE

SEMI-CENTENNIAL

OF THE

Organization of Will County.

1836--1886.

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WILL COUNTY SEMI-CENTENNIAL,


NECROLOGY, GREETINGS AND REGRETS,

At the sixth annual reunion of the Will County Pioneer Association held Wednesday, Sept. 1st, the venerable and respected president, Geo. H. Woodruff, delivered the opening address, which was so absorbingly interesting, so replete with facts and statistics in connection with the early history of our county that we give it in full. Its effect upon the assembled representatives of four generations, and especially upon the older ones whose memory runs back to the events detailed, was like a Pentecostal pouring out upon them of the spirit of youth.

PRESIDENT WOODRUFF'S ADDRESS.

Fellow Pioneers—Ladies and Gentlemen:

That must have been a sober day in the history of our 100th regiment when, after its baptismal fight of three days at Stone river, it was mustered on the fourth day of January, 1863, for roll call, and Lieutenants Worthingham and Mitchell, and Privates Thell, Hopkins, Rham, Hess, Greenman, Atkins and Wagner, killed on the field, and many others wounded and in hospital, failed to answer to their names.

Not altogether unlike the sad feelings of those survivors, as they closed up their depleted ranks, have been ours to-day, as we have listened to the names of those pioneers who have died since our last meeting, and as, during our hour of social interchange, we have learned of this one, and that one, who have been prevented from meeting with us by the infirmities of age.

I trust a feeling of gratitude to Almighty God, for the life and strength still vouchsafed us, has not been wanting in our hearts.

On several of our previous gatherings we have found ourselves keeping a semi-centennial. In 1881 we commemorated the first settlement of this region, which practically began in 1830-31, although Father Walker's mission dates a few years earlier.

In 1882 we kept the fiftieth anniversary of the Black Hawk war, and we met on the 2nd day of August, the date of the late hostile encounter with the Indian, on this side of the Mississippi.

In 1883 we took note of the first stroke of enterprise in the Desplains' valley, the commencement of the old McKee mill, and dam by the pioneer Charles Reed, and in 1884 we observed the semi-centennial of the city of Joliet.

This year we are called upon to observe one more of these memorable periods in our history, that of the organization of Will county which occurred just fifty years ago. Some brief historical notes of this event are therefore in order.

I am well aware that the story has been told several times before, and that the tediousness of a "thrice-told tale" has passed into a proverb. But I am obliged to bore you yet once again, and I assure you that you cannot feel the tedium of this repetition any more than I do. I suggest that there is one way you can avoid similar inflections in the future. This can be done by retiring your president on half-pay, which I most seriously ask you to do to-day.

The emigration into this region after the Black Hawk war was so rapid that the people began to agitate the matter of a separation from Cook county early in 1835. It was felt to be too great an inconvenience to be obliged to go to Chicago—then an all-day journey—whenever we wished to indulge in the luxury of a big law suit, or of getting married or divorced.

Accordingly, in the winter of 1835-6 Dr. A. W. Bowen of Joliet, and James Walker of Plainfield, went to Vandalia, the capital of the state for the purpose of "lobbying" the project through the general assembly. They were successful, and on the 12th day of January 1836, an act was passed, by which the territory now included in Will county, and also all that part of Kankakee county lying north of the Kankakee river, was erected into a new county, to be known as the County of Will. This name was given to it, not because we were especially a wild people, but because a senator of that name had just died, whose memory they could in this cheap way make immortal.

By this act Joliet was made the county seat and the public buildings were required to be put upon that part of the public square adjoining section 5. This is the part now occupied by the jail and by the debris of the old court yard fence and empty tin cans, broken jugs, etc, etc.

The county was made part of the 6th judicial circuit, and it was also enacted that all justices and constables, also the County Surveyor, who were residents in the territory, should hold their respective offices for Will
county. By this Addison Collins became our first surveyor, and also a justice of the peace, and Joliet, at the various precincts established in the territory by Cook county, voting at this time in this state or by word of mouth, affording no chance for issue ballots.

Whereupon the people of the new county began to move. This at this time had not been organized, or rather but one party was known—the Democratic. It was therefore both safe and proper to call a mass meeting without regard to party to nominate, as they always do, the best men for county officers.

Such a meeting was at once called for this purpose. I do not know who signed the call, but I suppose "many citizens." It met in the third story of the south shore of the new and splendid stone block erected the previous season by Mr. H. Hammond, on the southwest corner of Exchange and Bluff streets. This is now known as the D'Arcy block, and in describing it now we do not use the same adjectives. But then there was no other to dispute the distinction, and it furnished the largest room for the meeting to be found in the place. The West side was then of some importance, as we expect it will be again when the Exchange street canal is completed. I am sorry that I cannot give you any of the particulars of this meeting. I do not know who was chairman or secretary. We had no paper then to record the proceedings. I did not attend it. For, having at the urgent solicitation of those same "many citizens," who had the welfare of the new county deeply at heart, allowed my name to go before the convention for the office of recorder, I thought my wisest course was to keep out of sight. I still think that for me, at that time, this was the best strategy, and perhaps it might be safely imitated by some others now, altho' in this degenerate age "check" seems to be the most relied upon, and most successful. But in this case modesty carried the day, and I was nominated by a large majority over all competitors.

(N. B.—This was written a week ago.)

The following is the full ticket nominated at this meeting:

For County Commissioners—James Walker, of Plainfield; Holder Sisson, of Lockport, and Thomas Durban, of Bourbonais.

For Recorder—George H. Woodruff, of Joliet.

For Sheriff—Robert Stevens, of Joliet.

For Coroner—Ephraim Daggett, of Joliet.

This ticket met with some opposition at the polls, but was elected, as will appear from the report of the board of canvassers which we give in full:

At an election held on the 7th day of March, 1836, at the several precincts within the territory particularly mentioned and described in the act of the general assembly of Illinois, entitled, 'an act to establish the county of Will,' approved Jan. 12, 1836, and in pursuance of the 8th section of said act, the following persons received the number of votes attached to their respective names, for the following described offices, as appears to us by the returns made to us by the several boards of canvassers, to wit:

George H. Woodruff, 144 votes for recorder.
Robert G. Cook, 70 votes for recorder.
Albert W. Bowen, 57 votes for recorder.
Robert Stevens, 225 votes for sheriff.
Charles Clement, 98 votes for sheriff.
Robert G. Cook, 44 votes for coroner.
Ephraim M. Daggett, 116 votes for coroner.
George H. Woodruff, 11 votes for coroner.
James G. Butler, 24 votes for coroner.
Moses W. Clarke, 10 votes for coroner.
Erie Dodge, 3 votes for coroner.
John Lyons, 5 votes for coroner.

(Here we have a farmer, a saloonkeeper, a doctor, a boy, a butcher, a millwright, a constable, and a carpenter "running a scramble" for this high office. Need I say that the saloon-keeper come out ahead? I suppose the people thought it would work in best with his business, although one of his competitors was a doctor and another a butcher!)

(To resume.)

James Walker, 169 votes for county commissioner.
Thomas Durham, 290 votes for county commissioner.
Jireh Rowley, 103 votes for county commissioner.
Harry Boardman, 133 votes for county commissioner.
Holder Sisson, 167 votes for county commissioner.

Given under our hand and seal this 9th day of March, 1836.


Of the names that occur thus far in our record, O. W. Stillman and myself are the only survivors.

The highest number of votes was cast for sheriff, total 223. How many stay-at-homes there were I do not know.

At an election held in August for member of congress, 290 votes were polled for May, Dem., and 113 for Stewart, Whig; total 403; and at the presidential election in November, the vote stood 306 Dem. and 181 Whig; total, 487. I have to confess that my vote was cast with the majority, but the statute of limitations saves me.

The vote of Will county at the last presidential election was Republican, 5,792; Democrat, 4,722; Greenback, 340; Prohibition, 111; total, 10,989, almost twenty times that of 1836.

At the August election James Walker was elected to the general assembly, and Richard L. Wilson was elected county commissioner in his place.

At the March election those who resided upon the west side of the river were in the precinct of Plainfield, and had to go to that ancient burg to vote, while those residing upon the east side were in the Hickory creek precinct and voted at the log house of Philip Scott, on the farm now owned by John Shutts, Esq.

It is worthy of special notice that all of this first set of county officers were native Americans. We were then unfortunately compelled to rely upon such exclusively, as
neither our Gallic or our Teutonic friends had arrived to review us of the irksome duty of holding office. Save James McKee, a native Kentuckian, and C. C. Van Horne, a Mohawk Dutchman, there was not a "Mc" or a "Van" in the lot. Time has brought us a happy change in this respect, and both Irishmen, Sensible men from whence there in sufficient numbers, and are so patriotic withal, as generally to relieve us of this onerous duty.

The first county court was held on the 14th day of March, at the old "Joliet Hotel," which stood on the northeast corner of Ottawa and Van Buren streets, then kept by Thomas H. Blackburn. Holder Sisson, James Walker and Thomas Durham composed the court, not so imposing in numbers as the present board of supervisors, but three dignified, true and honest men.

Their first act was to appoint Levi Jenkins clerk, in whose behalf a strong petition was presented by his many friends. He had come to our emory city from Ohio during the summer month of Aug, to keep his tavern ready and waiting, Mr. Jenkins is still living, and is beside myself the only survivor of the original set of county officers. They also appointed him school commissioner under bonds of $12,000. Wm. Rogers, Aaron Moore, Wm. A. Chatfield, Archibald Crow and Charles Clement, all good men and true, were his sureties—all of whom are now dead.

They also appointed Archibald Crow treasurer and assessor, but at a subsequent meeting in May he was, at his own request, relieved from the great responsibility; of Ottawa, Charles Clement was appointed in his place.

The court divided the county into ten precincts, designated a place for holding polls, and appointed three judges for each. All the persons so selected, with but two exceptions, are dead. They also appointed viewers for various county roads, one of which was to Plainfield, then separated from us by a formidable and sometimes impassable slough—now happily united to us by bonds of steel. After transacting some other business, they voted themselves for dollars for three days' work and adjourned.

At a special meeting in May grand and petit jurors were selected. Of the two lists there is but one—George Tryon, of Channahon—that has not joined the silent majority.

One of the most important acts of this May session was the fixing of tavern rates, then considered a wholesome restraint. They were as follows:

For brandy, gin, rum and wines, $0.75 cents per gallon.
For shrub, whisky, cider, beer, and all fermented liquors, 65½ cents.
How these prices compare with saloonkeepers' prices now I am not able to say, and it is not for a moment to be supposed that a careful comparison would enlighten us.

They fixed the price of breakfast, dinner and supper at the uniform rate of 35 cents. Ignoring the distinction said to have been sometimes made by early tavern keepers, when they charged 55 cents for "corn bread and common doings," and 50 cents for "wheat bread and chicken fixings."

The price of lodging was fixed at $1.25 cents, without regard to the kind or number of bedfellows.

Several licenses to keep tavern under these wholesome restrictions were granted at prices from $7 to $15, according to location, the higher sum being for Joliet.

Oh, happy day! Oh, palmy, golden days! when one could get license to "rob, murder and destroy," (as the prohibitionists would say), and live in奢侈.

The court also rented the second story of the Wilson store for a court room and clerk's office. This is the building now occupied by Swanson's carriage shop.

At the meeting of the commissioners' court held in March, 1837, it was resolved to build a court house and jail, combined. Richard L. Wilson, a member of the board, and Allen Pratt and Albert Shepard, were appointed a building committee, and authorized to contract for the erection of a stone building two stories high, and 56 by 90 feet on the ground. The contract was let to Blackburn & Wilson for $2,000. Our present one we believe, has cost us about $180,000. How many extras the contractors of the first one got in I do not know, or to say it so that a stone building was erected of these modest dimensions. A pretty good idea may be got of its appearance from the illustration published in the Historical Edition of the News, which Mr. Paige has had transferred to the walls of one of our new court rooms. It certainly had not as imposing a facade as the one just completed, and there was no ceremony of laying its corner stone. The building committee were not bothered by any questions of a tower, granite columns, plate glass, frescoing, or any one of a long list of complications, but, as you might readily conjecture from a look at the illustration, it had but four cells excavated to the rock which held all the criminals and tramps of that day, except when we had a canal riot. Over these was a court room whose walls and ceilings only displayed the rough work of a common plasterer, but they echoed the voices of the lawyers that composed the Will county bar in the first few years of our history—the voices of Newkirk, Wilson, Osgood, Boardman, Fellows, Pepper, Little, Schofield, Henderson, Gardner, Gegg and Paddock—all save the first named now silent in the grave, but then a brilliant array of legal and forensic talent which has seldom been surpassed.

Many interesting memories are attached to this old court room, some of which I have elsewhere recorded. But there is one which I have never made historic, and must do so now. It was in that old court room that in the campaign of 1848 a young editor of Lockport made his maiden political speech, which I am happy to say was for "free soil"—the half-way house between Democracy and abolition. And it was then that the people of Will county discovered that they had an orator among them—one of whom they have ever since been proud to enlighten us.

The old first court house, and indeed the second one, by which it was superseded in 1850, made but a sorry appearance beside our new one. Fifty years hence our children and grand-children will no doubt keep the centennial of it, and will be able to narrate the changes and improvements of the next half century, I believe that the present generation has done its work so wisely and so well that yonder beautiful building will then
be standing intact and still answering the needs of Will county. I hope the city papers will put this prediction on record. It may

will that the maker of the present one smile at our expense. For so great a progress in the coming fifty years as we have seen in the past would give Will county a court house equal at least to our State capitol. But should such a one be built I do not think it will be upon the ruins of the present one,

or on some one of our highest bluffs, with so high a tower that from it one will then look down upon a city of 300,000 or 400,000—its gorgeous stores and dwellings and extensive manufactures not only filling up this valley from Lockport to Joliet Lake, but also crowning all the enclosing bluffs, and extending far out upon the outlying prairies; while through this same rocky bottom shall then flow an enlarged canal, fed directly from Lake Michigan, and bearing upon its pelucid water the trade of the lakes of the North and the great rivers of the South and West. Our new and beautiful court house of to-day will then be occupied by the city mag-
nates of the council and school boards—not the present incumbents probably—and by a grand city library, containing something be-
sides novels.

In estimating the progress in city and county during the half century we close to-day we must use twenty, and in some things eighty, for our multiplier. Using twenty for the next fifty years, and our children and grandchildren will see the fulfillment of our dream.

But, fellow thirty-somers, we shall not see it, at least not in the flesh. What we may see and know as disembodied spirits it is not worth our while to speculate upon, for we shall soon know.

Of the county officers elected in the spring of 1836 Robert Stevens declined to serve as sheriff, and at the August election Fenner Aldrich was elected. The first circuit court was held in the house built upon the property of Octobered by Judge Ford, afterwards governor. He ap-

pointed Levi Jenks clerk of the court, thus heaping honors and offices upon him; and Uri Ogood State's attorney, and so the new county was fairly launched upon its glorious career.

Among the records of the county clerk's office there is a curious little book about six inchea square, in which are recorded the ear marks of the early settlers. These marks consists of slits, crops and holes of various shapes made in the right or left ear. The mark selected by a settler was recorded with a pen and ink illustration of the same, and when so selected and recorded became the ex-

clusive franchise of such settler.

The first entry in this book is as follows:

Name, Reason Zarley; date, April 23d, 1836; mark, crop of left ear and slit in the right.

I ought to have said that these marks were intended for the ears of the settler's swine, sheep, cows, calves and mules; and that they were for the purpose of identification merely.

For in these thirty-five golden days no one thought of questioning the right of any man's swine or cows, whether their ears were frescoed or not, to occupy the public streets, or to enter any yard or garden, at their own sweet will. Such tyranny was reserved for "this degenerate age."

There is another curious little book of the same same size, in which are recorded the marriage licenses issued. An examination shows that thirty-five were issued in 1836, and that our old friend, O. W. Stillman, tied the first knot under Will county auspices, April 3, 1836. During the seven months which have elapsed of 1836, the number issued has been 500, and Mr. Zarley says that owing to the hard times it has not been a good year for the little God either. The last number was 11,490, which shows that our increase in population has been largely a legitimate home product.

There were other events which made the year 1836 memorable. Many valuable citi-

zens were added to town and county. Not to mention others, J. A. Matteson, after-

wards governor, and George Woodruff, late our banker, and Brother Hardy, came that year. It was also the year in which ground was first broke on our canal.

But I have already occupied more than my share of time, and must leave something, both of time and topic, for Judge Parks. I am afraid I have already stolen some of his thunder.

In conclusion, permit me to say that I must sincerely thank you for the honor be-
stowed upon me for the first six years of our organization, and I most earnestly renew my request to be relieved from the honor in

JUDGE PARK'S ORATION:

The orator of the day, Judge G. D. A. Parks, delivered a highly interesting speech that commanded the most profound attention of the assemblage. The address is lavishly complimented on every hand and is as fol-

ows:

In following the president of your society, I feel a good deal like the famous Thackeray before commencing one of his lectures upon the Four Georges. Recounting his audience and spying that encyclopedia in breeches, Macaulay, on one of the front seats, the dis-

mayed lecturer whispered to a friend: "A guinea to any man who will manage to get that fellow out of the room. Egal in his presence I feel like a poor devil with a six pence in his pocket in the counting house of the Barings."

That, my friends, is about my size as I find myself rising on this platform after the dis-

distinguished gentleman who has now for so many years been looked up to as the Colossus of Joliet and Will county history. As to all the facts of that history, big or little, having the least interest for anybody, I would readily own up that he has forgotten more than I ever knew, were it not for the other fact that he has forgotten nothing, and that whatever he touches he somehow makes interesting. It's a mere knack, of course, but it is his knack.

The task assigned me, as you have learned from the executive proclamation announcing the order of exercises, is to speak the piece de resistance, a French culinary term which means, I am informed, a tough piece to chew on. That piece you shall duly have, and it will be, I fear, all that the phrase implies.
There are, however, some other disagreeable things which I can and will spare you. You will, I know, be rejoiced to hear from me in the outset that I intend to steer around all perilous comparisons and in like manner give that many-worded sentiment, in which you would no doubt be interested, to pass by. Nor do I intend to make myself an object of commiseration delicately flavored with contempt by feebly essaying to touch up, to use a painter's phrase, the fine panorama of old times he has unrolled before you. In short, the historical, pictorial and statistical part of these exercises you may consider as done, and the little that remains to me is a short summing up, somewhat in the nature of a doxology.

The county of Will, offspring of Cook and mother-in-law of Kankakee, came into existence by the fiat of the legislature and was fully organized in 1836. This year, therefore, disregarding the minute of days and months as the semi-centennial of its birth, and the chronological fact, which could scarcely fail to be recognized with interest by those who have spent their lives wholly or for the most part within its limits.

The commemoration of important public events upon their anniversaries of their occurrence has become a most popular custom, especially in our new world where old Father Time, as yet, has furnished us but a scanty supply of centuries or semi-centuries for purposes of celebration. Hence it was not to be supposed that your society, devoted as it is to keeping alive the memories of the past concerning your own county, could forget so remarkable an accessory to the programme of this reunion.

The interest of the affair, doubtless, is circumscribed—of small concern to those whose lot was cast outside of these Elysian fields. But we are the foster children of old Will, and to-day we flock lovingly to her side with birthday offerings.

The Genius of Home by some mystic spell upon the heart endears every spot where a hearthstone has been planted, a roof tree raised, an altar set up, a school house built, a grave opened where kindred hands have laid the form of some one loved and lost.

The fields, the prairies, the groves, the springs, the streams, the highways, the lanes, the streets, the churches, the play grounds, the homesteads, the hillsides dotted with those other homes appointed to all the living, these objects, composing the scene and background of our daily lives and labors, in the web of memory with all the vicissitudes of our earthly existence, become like the lineaments of a dear old mother's face, and our hearts cling to her soil as to a mother's bosom. I owe and pay homage to the Union and to my state, more especially to that portion of the same which has been my home, and in which, but for any figure of speech, I can be said to love, lies within the compass of that county where my whole active life has been spent and where, God willing, my bones are to be laid.

It is natural for us, then, as the children of Will county, to regard in some becoming manner, this incident in her history. To the customary festivities of our annual reunion we are now permitted to add our mutual congratulations that we behold and appreciate circumstances so favorable to the fiftieth anniversary of the year when she assumed her place, a proud one from the first, upon the imperial map of Illinois. And to-day, like a band of travelers gathered together at midnight upon some commanding eminence, we pause here and turn our gaze amidst the deepening shadows, endeavor to catch glimpses here and there of our long and winding way. In this commemoration I think you do no more than your duty as citizens. So distinguished a milestone on your road could not decently be passed without some sign of notice. A nation or a community indifferent to their history, without national, state or county pride, without sensibility or public spirit, knowing no good save what is good to eat, with hearts shrivelled by a banjo, incapable of being stirred with bright visions of their country's future or tender recollections of its past, immersed in what Carlyle calls the pig's swash of selfish gain and selfish enjoyment, such a race if such a race were supposed to accomplish a semi-centennial or two it be it large or small, about as sympathetic as the clusters of an oyster bed and not half as much to my taste. I could conceive of such a congregation of bipeds—it would really be of no consequence whether they had two or four feet—or four only, under the idea of a desert waste like that described by Junius in one of his scathing letters, 'where no flower takes root and no verdure quickens.'

Your speaker has often, perhaps too often said, for it is a thought which such occasions always suggest to his mind, that the true superiority of a nation is in its heart; not in its granaries, warehouses, treasuries; not in its flocks and herds, not in its fleets and armies, not even in its institutions of government, however excellent, but in its universal love and intensity and supremacy of that love of fatherland and home, which is the germ of all social and domestic charities, all civil association, and all true, national spirit.

Without this inspiration no hero would draw his sword, no monument would rise to sainted names; Art would drop the brush and chisel from her paizled hands, and Music, Poetry, Eloquence that now move and delight the world would be stricken dumb.

Such occasions of patriotic communion come like showers to our souls parched with business cares, and therefore I can but congratulate you on this feature of your present meeting. You, old pioneers, who have fought through the long campaign, you surely can well felicitate yourselves on the reflections which are yours to-day. If life lengthened out to cover the most eventful epochs of all time, be worth living; if we may call it a happy fortune to have been actors in a drama of moral, intellectual and physical progress, such as is in Western and Northern Illinois, if the soil of Will county has been for us the appointed stage on which we have played our respective parts; if it be fitting for rational beings to recall and ponder upon events closely connected with their own individual fortunes and with the growth of the state or community to which they belong as
members, then! ye men and women of 1836, lift your voices in thanksgiving, clasp your hands together in mutual greetings, that you behold this day your hands that indeed are falling, and oblivion with its fast pursuing tide has submerged all but faint and broken traces of your long, long road. It is like evening straining its dim eyes to recall the impressions of the morning. Yet now by this short hour, without vain regrets, without idle murmurs, even if not entirely without the tears which are due to human fellowship, let us give ourselves up to cheerful and exultant retrospect of the past.

You whom I address by the general appellation of old settlers were not all here when Will county first saw the light as a body politic, but I rejoice to recognize a goodly number who were here, and among that number especially one long, tough connecting link that can easily clasp both sides of half a century, possibly some few years, were the other end. Your worthy president, not only was here full grown and ripe when the county was born, but he was one of the nurses, a dry one, who officially rocked its cradle, helped teach the orphunts its first presents and toys, and for this propenseness, even at that early day, scribbled records of its deeds. Go read them in the court house—if you can. As to the paper pertaining to his kindly and tender office—well, as to the paper I am afraid he took the most of that himself as fees. No matter—let bygones be bygones. I do forgive him the fortune he accumulated in the first term of the recorder's office, and to-day have only to be glad with you that a life so genial and so useful in rare forms of public service has been spared so long.

There are others here also, contemporaries with the event, bearing honored and in some instances I may say, distinguished names in the annals of our county, but which it is not within the scope of my short discourse to mention.

My friend Woodruff, of course, forms an exception, because, you know, he is the typical old settler, and on such an occasion your speaker could no more refrain from naming him than a Bunker Hill orator could refrain from pointing up to the monument.

But ignoring now all nice distinctions of rank and seniority as old settlers, we are assembled in our common character as fellow citizens of Will county to greet with some proper forms of recognition the semi-centennial that meets us here to-day; an anniversary of venerable aspect, its locks blanched with many winters, its visage seamed with many cares and conflicts; but its outstretched hands full of good gifts and thank-worthy blessings.

Ten years since our nation by one universal impulse knelt with reverence and awe, as the clock of centuries struck a hundred years from the date of American Independence. Four years ago you of this society again noted as an event not without interest even to the pioneurs of Will county, that almost formidable figure, bad old A.X. Mac, which with its little valley of a score or so of rifles terminated the reign of the red man in the whole Northwest. And to-day again you honor your character as an intelligent community while marching past this conspicuous and noted waymark, to halt for one short hour of recognition and remembrance. And now, fellow citizens, if I give way to my prolixities, I refer them to those more eloquent than brag. But in the crowd there may be strangers from abroad, men possibly from Grundy or Kendall, and these guests must be treated with tender consideration. The duties of hospitality must be respected, and I will simply ask these ill-starred foreigners, if they have not often felt a little sad as they reflected upon their lamentable mistake in not settling somewhere in some blessed town ship in some range from 9 to 15 E. of the 3 P. M., and 32 to 37 N. of the base line.

It is impossible to stand where I stand to-day, in the midst of such a scene of prosperity and health and happiness, with such a past for proud remembrance, and such a future for intoxicating hope, without giving vent to the superlatives of exultation which it inspires. Half a century, not merely of great progress and improvement—such words seem tame—but half a century, let us rather say, of miracles and marvels! Where will you find in all history another like period of fifty years? What generation hereafter can surpass our own? Long ago I lost all courage in setting bounds to the empire of human intellect, but still I find it hard to believe that in any future cycle of like duration a like advance is possible. It would indeed almost seem as if preceding ages had moved forward as a mere preface to our own; and had been chiefly charged to accumulate the germs and prepare the conditions for this wonderful development.

In this march of progress, it is enough to say, that Will county has never been caught lagging behind the most forward of her sisters, but has always pushed bravely to the front. And here would be the place to produce the positive evidence of this proud boast, if my limits allowed. Nothing from me, I am aware, could be so entertaining as an ample and accurate exhibit, and the expression and impressiveness of the contrasts between the young Will of 1836 and the old Will of 1886 in all the phenomena of growth which can be expressed by figures. But your president's address has at once saved me that labor and I have nothing to add of that nature. And indeed, why the necessity at all? The tomb of Sir Christopher Wren in the crypt of St. Paul's cathedral, of which he was the architect, arrests the visitor with the inscription, "If you are seeking for the monument, look around you." So I might say of the evidence of our progress, the volume lies open before you. Whodos not remember Webster's still more sublime expression in referring to the state, whose fame at a critical moment seemed to hang upon his lips: "I shall either hang upon no encomium upon Massachusetts. She needs none. There she is; behold her and judge for yourselves."

For our own Will county, I would to-day almost dare to imitate that copious and majestic eulogy. I need not, as I cannot measure by the limited population, add up the long columns of her wealth or prepare an inventory of her re sources. On this occasion, I point, not to her numbers or riches; not to her net-work of railroads, by which every township nearly is throbbing with the arteries of commerce;
not to her multitude of markets, convenient to every pasture and cornfield; not to her wide expanse of rich and well-tilled farms; not to her advanced agriculture, furnished with all the mechanical appliances of the day, and the strength of a farmer's and a Reaper's hand, and with all the methods of fertilization and drainage which can redeem or ameliorate the soil; not to her mines and manufactures; not to her towns and cities; not to her light burthen of taxation, law and order, in consequence of an honest and economical public service; not to these things would I point, but rather to her grander aspects as a cultivated and Christian community. I would point to her tens of thousands of elegant and tasteful homes in towns and country, the seats of domestic virtue and refinement, the citadels of industry and order. I would point to her schools and sanctuaries, of which no traveler within her limits anywhere can lose sight. I would to-day point with special pride to that Temple of Justice just completed, that spires with all the emphasis with which stone and iron, made eloquent by architecture, can attest, to her profound loyalty to the institutions of government, and to the rank which her inhabitants for fifty years have held and still hold, of a Great Mourning, order-loving and law-abiding people.

The occasion bids me dwell yet a moment longer on this allusion to our new court house, which stands a visible and splendid monument, not only of the wealth, enterprise and spirit of our inhabitants, but of the wisdom, prudence and integrity of our public servants. Here, again, I am denied the privilege of going into details and awarding to individuals variously connected with the work, the honors they respectively deserve. I address architect, contractors, superintendent, building committee, and last though not least those members of our county board who were most prominent in originating or sustaining the project. I am now to speak of it only in its significant character as the new and conspicuous symbol of progress—a mute but potent witness to our character as a political community. Of this indeed it is a most potent and a most opportune witness. The boundless license which our too lenient government gives to whatever chooses to call itself by the name of political theory, and our overweening confidence in institutions which we are wont to regard as immutable as they are good, have at length allowed the elements of a volcano to gather under our very feet. Even within our own borders some of our important industries were not long ago involved in the widespread revolt of labor against capital. And the end is not yet. Jurists and statesmen are daily receiving portentous admonitions in a thousand forms, that a revolution within the commonwealth, as the power of government shall be wisely or unwisely wielded is preparing to readjust upon some new basis the relations between the several classes into which society has hitherto been divided.

At such a time, we ought to feel, and if not, well we ought to feel with a peculiar intensity, that our chief safeguard against crime and violence, may, that our best hope for every proper reform, however radical, is to be found within the pale of the law and the ultimate power of the ballot-box.

The sword of the magistrate is not, it is true, our only security. In my conception of the social edifice I see three great pillars of support—Religion, Education, Law. No one of these is a mere type, nor yet has the type been found yet justified by history, can be spared from the structure.

But in the view of the practical statesman, the great central column of the whole is the Law. The prime concern of every commonwealth, which we were long importing though not yet into abundant and wholesome cultivation, is to give to law, to order, to regularity, to justice, to virtue a standard of utter and efficient support. To that justice Will county has now in its fiftieth year, in the plenitude of its resources, completed another temple, not destined indeed, to be more honorable by the associations of an able bar and an upright judiciary and of public respect and confidence, than that which is now supplanted and over shadowed but which, in these times of evil counsel, worn Anarchist twin sister of Atheism is abroad, testifies in trumpet tones, that Will county is now as she has ever been, a land of Law; and that she is resolved to maintain that high character as long as the last and foundation stone is laid.

So may it be! And if so goodly a gathering of the gray-haired patriarchs of our county may without impropriety perform today some rude rite of dedication, we here consecrate that temple to justice, inflexible as its walls, firm as its corner stone. Let it ever be a sanctuary now and in all coming time for that law, of which it was once so eloquently said: "Her seat is the bosom of God, her voice is the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as well as the greatest and the greatest as not exempted from her power."

But I must not close without giving you briefly some proof that I am insensible to none of the objects of this meeting. I do not forget that this is a festival for reviving old friendships and for receiving encomiums, valorous and meritorious, from the hands of others. Such sacrifices were never denied, and the meeting for eloquence, address, and for the reflection of society, and the effect of education, is not exempted from the inestimable end. The harvest year by year, grows more and more thin, but yet more and more ripe for the great Reaper. I cannot count up the places in the line made vacant since the last roll call. The necrological record has been reserved for another hand. Within the compass of a few recent months Peter Adams, William J. Heath and Calneh Zarley, amongst our earliest inhabitants here in Joliet, have joined the majority. Of these and others you will not, of course, expect me to speak at length. The name of Zarley, however, as one of the very oldest of our inhabitants, one of the best known editors in our state, and a marked and somewhat extraordinary character both in his demeanor and in his noble trait, I must be allowed to say, that had I been not present I would have been present under such an occasion as this without the tribute of a few words. A skillful and friendly hand has lately drawn his portrait, and little could I add to that. The will of your friend. And if you had been present, but more akin, I would have called him a friend and a brother and a sister to the community. I would have said that he had been the light of our day, and that if the race has not received from him his share of the sun, he was born with the sun and will be with the sun as long as it shines on this world, and when it shall be no more, will shine on the world in another and a better form.
jar tree from the prospect of our dwelling places. Though its boughs were gnarled and knotted and its symmetry sadly marred by the storms with which it had stubbornly battled, still we should miss it as an object infixed with our life-long memories, and the void would be one which could never be filled. Even our old friend's infirmities and errors, as some would call them, grew out of his devotion to his party, as self-sacrificing as any which ever led a martyr to the stake or a patriot to the scaffold. Peace to his ashes!

Personal allusions crowd upon me, but I have outstayed my welcome and must close. In retiring I will not suffer myself to think or say that we shall all never meet again. Death is a hard creditor, I know, and he is very apt to collect the debt of nature punctually as it falls due, without discount, renewal, extension or days of grace. I notice also that he accepts no dilatory pleas. But still I say, let not the cypress of the grave project its shadows too far over the perspectives of life. Let us take the jolly old epicure's advice, with some pious qualifications—and just "live while we live." A certain allowance of fun for us old fellows—would I join the ladies in the proposition, if I dared call them old, is not only a legal right, but a religious duty, and every interest in this world or the next, I am sure, is promoted by a cheerful temper. We elderly gentlemen—elderly is the word—have yet some useful duties to perform, even on the downhill of life, and we can best perform those duties by cultivating this happy disposition.

Thus living, patient and hopeful under all the ills, and grateful for all the blessings and alleviations of our lot, when the end comes we may realize the poet's Euthanasia—

"Thou go, not like a quarry slave at night Scourging to his dungeon; but sustained and soothed

By an unaltering trust approach thy grave,

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Dr. B. F. Allen, the necrologist, read the list.

OLD SETTLERS WHO DIED SINCE LAST MEETING.

Mrs. Mary Ashley, wife of Cyrus Ashley—Born in 1800; died at her home in Joliet of consumption, October 7, 1883.

Mrs. Louise W. Dipell, widow of Elder J. B. Dipell, and mother of Judge Dipell—Born in Ellington, Conn., in 1819; died at Joliet, October 17, 1883.

James G. Gregor, member of the bar—Born in Tioga county, Pa., in 1836; died at his home in Joliet, October 17, 1883.

Wm. Netter—Born in 1810; died at Wyanette, Bureau county, Ill., October 8, 1883.

Jeptha Elderkin—Born in 1803; died Nov. 4, 1883, in Joliet.

Mrs. Rebecca Demmond, widow of Charles Demmond—Born in Rutland, Mass., in 1804; came to Illinois in 1839; died at the home of her son, M. G. Demmond, in Joliet, Dec. 4, 1883.

S. M. Corbett—Born in 1810; found dead in his bed Dec. 5, 1883, four miles from Wilmington.

Robert Strong—Born in Greensboro, Vt., in 1806; settled in DuPage township in 1831; died at his home Dec. 30, 1885.

Jacob S. Palmer—Born in 1810; died in Joliet, Jan. 14, 1886.

Mrs. Catherine E. Sunderland, sister of S. W. Randall, of this city—Born in 1813; died at Plainfield, March 6, 1885.

Sexton R. Rathburn, father of Valentine Rathburn—Born in Marcellus, Onondaga county, N. Y., in 1805; came to Illinois in 1845; died at DuPage, March 11, 1885.

Mrs. Abiah Weeks—Born in 1797; died at the home of her son, Horace, in Joliet, March 26, 1886.

Don't B. McElhern—Born in 1819; died in Joliet, April 24, 1885.

Mrs. Rachael Barrett—Born in 1814; died at Brooklyn, Joliet township, March 21, 1886.

John Linebarger—Born in 1818; died at Bonfield, Ill., May 6, 1886, for many years a resident of Jackson, Ill.

Robt. L. Seward—Born in Otsego county, N. Y., in 1828; came to will county in 1850.

Morgan Ashley—Born in Lewis county, N. Y., in 1818; came to Illinois in 1833; first settled in Plainfield; died west of Lockport, June 30, 1886.

Wm. J. Heath—Born in Oswego county, N. Y., in 1804; came to Illinois in 1840; died at his home in Joliet, June 10, 1886.

Peter Adams—Came to Joliet in 1839; died at Galesburg, Aug. 13, 1886.

Calneh Zarley—Born in Pike county, Ohio April 21, 1822, came to Joliet in 1831; died at his home here Aug. 30, 1886.

OFFICERS Elected for INSURING YEAR.

President—Dr. Daggett.
Vice Presidents—Curtis Morse, Homer; Amos Paxton, Lockport; Thos. J. Sprague, Dupage; Robt. Crow, Wheatland; T. J. Lang Plainfield; D. C. Searles, Troy; Chas Smith, Chanahon; John Kelly, Wesley; Selah Morey, Florence; Jabez Harvey, Wilton; R. J. Boylan, Jackson;Clark Baker, Manhattan; H. H. Stassen, Green Garden; Fred Wilkis, Washington; A. P. Lilly, Crete; D. L. Christian, Peotone; Levi Doty, Frankfort; Thos Doig, New Lenox.


Secretary and Treasurer—B. F. Allen.

Captain—S. R. Beggs.

The poem of the occasion was grand. It was read and dedicated to

THE OLD SETTLERS.

[By Capt. Egbert Phelps, the Poet Laureate of the Old settlers.]

Once in a while in this journey of life,
In the midst of its care and its trouble and tears
The weary heart turns from its turbulent strife!
Back to the record of sunnier years—
Back to the halcyon days of its youth.
When the earth-life was built upon castles in air.
Too bright for the after-time record of truth,
Freighted with hope visions brilliant and rare;
Finding rest from the present in memories dear
Of the joy-lighted skies of that long vanished year
Of the happiness craved on each slow passing year,
Redeeming the griefs of all earlier time.

Once in a while in this journey of life
The heart of a green and a happy old age
 Freed from all care and all trouble and strife,
Halts and turns back to the tear blotted page
Where the record of sorrow is graven too deep.

For the finger of time to obliterate all—
The memories holy that never can sleep,—
Or lift from each collar its time-honored pall;
And finds in each grief of the soul-hallowed past
An influence holy that chastens the bliss
By the gold of life’s sunset over later years cast.

Rounding up those dark days with the glory of this.

For while life is a drama but rendered complete—
When its lights and its shadows together are bent—
The fairy paths trodden by toil-burdened feet
With the flowers whose hues to the wayside are lent;
Each has its own measure of sorrow and joy
The coming years cleft by—
Every rose with its thorns—every bliss with alloy
To test its true strength for the record on high.

Gazing back ward half a cycle
Through the long, care-burdened years—
Through the slitting, flower strewn pathways—
Through the mists of blinding tears—
Or the gravestones that have sprinkled the wayside thick and fast—
Or the towering spires and temples
Of a faithful, earnest past—
How the heart of age must triumph
In the glory of to-day.

Wrought by its unfruitful effort,
Plodding each his lonely way,
Laboring with an earnest purpose,
Not alone for present weal,
But for all the future ages,
Working out, with eager zeal,
God’s own purpose, even blindly,
Hidden though that purpose were,
Now, that Time the veil has lifted,
Unmistakable and clear.

Where the lonely prairie slumbered
In its solitude sublime—
In its silence all unbroken
Through the dreary lapse of time,
Now a lordly city gathers
To its broad and widening fold
Thousands of unfruitful workers
Turning earth’s dull dross to gold
Hymn of traffic—clank of engine—
Buzz and whirr of tireless wheel,
Sing the hymn of labor worship
And life’s glorious end

Clustering hamlets dot the landscape,
Creeds and all of busy life,
Happy homes of peace and plenty,
Guerril of the olden strife;
Thundering steam cars bearing onward untold wealth from shore to shore,
Teeming product of the prairies
Fruitless in the days of yore;
Slender wires whose vieless lightning,

Flashed thought from distant lands,
Bind the whole broad earth to-gether
In communicative bands.

There the product of the life-work
Of the throngs assembled here
To review a fifty cycles
Of a life grown old and near,
Well may every humble toiler
Glory in a work so grand

Wrought with other tireless workers,
By his own unfruitful hand.

But in glancing o’er the pathways
Of the bygone fruitful years,
How the tombstones meet the vision
With their tale of sacrifice,
All the graves that mark the wayside—
Milestones on the path of life—
Of the brothers that have fallen
By your side amidst the strife
How their holy memories mingle
With our joyance of to-day,
Chastening all the light and glory
Of the old-time eager day!

Theirs the part with you to battle
Bravely through the strife sublime,
But alas for them no triumph
Crowned the glorious after-time.
All too soon they fell beside you
Ere the eager, hopeful eye
Caught the gleam of coming glory
In the future’s clouded sky.
But perhaps in yonder Aiden—
From their brighter, blissful sphere
They may still hold sweet communion
With the happy circle here.

Waiting for that best reunion
When the love of yore shall meet—
All the old ties reunited
And the circle all complete.

Youth it is cheerful
Age is not dreary

When time but makes brighter life’s honest
Uses youth is not cheerful

When grief bars the light from the tear laden eyes

Time it is fleeting
Brief is the greeting

Of souls that too soon from each other must part;
Sorrow and pleasure

Fill up life’s measure

Dividing the throne in humanity’s heart.

Never the burden
Borne to life’s guardien

Is weightier laid than the spirit can bear—
Never the lightness
Born of life’s brightness

Comes to the happy heart more than its share

So in rotation

God’s compensation

Comes to each sorrow and joy of the soul,
Chastening each pleasure,

Lightening grief’s measure

Shaping each life for eternity’s goal.

Toll is the portal

To the immortal

Both of this earth and of yonder bright heaven

No thing worth living for

Comes without striving for

Just as each labors his crown will be given

Happy, reposing,
Near to life’s closing,
On the green laurels of victory won,
He whose life story

Tell’s the glory

That gleams in the record of labor well done.
This be your portion,
Reward of devotion
To duty well done in the toil burdened past.
Through pathways of flowers
May life's closing hours
Glide peacefully, happily on to the last.

And when the Father
His harvests shall gather
May no one be missed from these brotherly bands,
But all hold communion
In blessed reunion
In that beautiful city not builded with hands

REGRETS.

The president, Mr. George H. Woodruff, received the following regrets and beautiful tributes supplementary thereto:

"LOS ANGELES, Cal., Aug. 23, 1886.—FRIEND WOODRUFF:—I send you herewith a little poetical greeting for old Will's Old Settler's reunion, wishing yourself and the grand old society long life, abundant happiness, and unfallowed enjoyment at your coming meeting. I remain most sincerely yours,
ALBERT F. KERCHEVAL.

THE SETTLERS OF OLD WILL.
In tender thought though far away,
Where meet the hoary heads and gray
Old patriarchs of the olden time,
Our hearts are with you all, to-day.

From out the mist of gathering years,
And intermingling smiles and tears,
We send to-day from western shores
A greeting to thy Pioneers.

We see thy prairies wide outspread
Beneath thy smiling skiles o'erhead,
As when their virgin, flowery wastes
First felt the impress of your tread.

We see once more old Hickory's gleam,
The bluebells flash by, pond and stream
As in our boyhood's early prime,
When life was all a golden dream.

The shimmer of thy fair DesPlaines,
Like fairy magic that enchains
The soul forever in its thrall,
A glorious memory yet remains.

We see thy smiling Kankakee
Like some sweet maiden bright and free
When fancy weaves her tenderest spell,
Glide onward toward the Southern sea.

In什么ever far retreat
May rest their weary, way-worn feet,
Thy children yet with filial love
Cling to thy memories pure and sweet.

And whereso'er their pulses thrill
In distant lands and countries still,
With tenderest thought of thee and thine,
They think of thee to day, "Old Will."

ALBERT F. KERCHEVAL.

SAN FRANCISCO, Cal., Aug. 25, 1886—Will county pioneers of 1836, all hail! A thirty-sixer who cannot join with you in your semi-centennial, pauses a moment by the western sea to drop a tear for those whose once familiar forms are growing dim in memory; to send a word of congratulation to those of the earlier settlers still living near his boyhood's home, and to lift a prayer for the All Father's guiding love as the evening shades gather about us all. How swift the flight of fifty years as seen in retrospect! How stupendous the results as written in undying history! How different the Will county, the Illinois, the America, the civilization, the Christianity, of 1836 and 1886! Each earnest purpose, each heroic action, and each self-sacrifice has contributed its share to the grand result. With a firm loyalty to truth, with love for all, with trusting hope in the better days to come, we pass on and leave our places for the descendents of the "36ers."

JAMES M. HAVEN.