

HISTORY OF MERCER COUNTY, MISSOURI.

In 1850 the first national census was taken in the county. The following shows the aggregate population in the county at that and the two following decimal periods:

Population in 1850.....	2,691
" " 1860.....	9,300
" " 1870.....	11,557

Since the taking of the census in 1870, there has been a very large increase of population, and it is believed that the present population will not fall short of 16,000.

There never were many slaves in Mercer county. The county, besides containing a considerable number of anti-slavery men, bordered upon the free state of Iowa, which afforded to slaves, if discontented, too many opportunities for escape to make that species of property a safe investment. The census of 1870 shows a slave population of twenty-four.

Although the county was not the scene of actual hostilities during the war, yet it affected all the material interests of the people disastrously. A great number of the able-bodied men were in the army, while those who remained at home lost all interest in everything except the great struggle.

The Southern Confederacy found very little sympathy here, while the Federal government received the support of almost the entire people, and the services of a large number of its citizens in the army.

The state government, at the breaking out of the war, being in the hands of the Confederates, it was a considerable time before Missouri was in a situation, as a state, to call to the aid of the Federal government the services of its people. In the meantime, large numbers of Mercer county men enlisted in the service of the adjoining states. A considerable part of the 5th Kansas cavalry and 10th Kansas infantry were composed of soldiers raised here. It is estimated by those who are competent to judge, that at least 350 Mercer county soldiers were in the regiments of Kansas and Iowa. Parts of the following Missouri regiments were raised in this county for the Federal service:

3d Missouri State Militia.	27th Missouri State Infantry.
6th " " " "	23d " " " "
7th " " " "	2d " " Cavalry.
44th " " " Infantry.	11th " " " "
18th " " " "	12th " " " "
35th " " " "	

According to the best estimate that can be made, there were during the war from this county not less than 1,400 soldiers in the Federal service. The most careful inquiry can discover only six of the citizens of Mercer county who enlisted in the Confederate army.

In scarcely no part of the county did as great a part of the able-bodied men enlist in the army. This is shown by the fact that, notwithstanding so large a number were enlisted and credited to other states, yet the people here had no terrors of the draft, for the county was always far ahead of its quota in voluntary enlistments. The following is a list of the commissioned officers in the Federal service during the war from this county:

Major M. C. Hensly.	Lieutenant H. J. Alley.
Captain Wm. B. Ballew.	John McIntosh.
" Squire Ballew.	Aaron McIntosh.
" Hiram Stanley.	George W. Calvin.
" Geo. T. Hamblin.	Wm. Argo.
" Wm. B. Rogers.	Stephen S. Clark.
" Elisha Vanderpool.	Wm. H. McKinley.
" Joel H. Shelly.	Wm. Wilson.
" Harvey Shook.	Elisha Horn.
" John R. Clark.	George T. Prichard.
" Jonas J. Clark.	Samuel Cargoe.
" Wm. Roberts.	F. M. Clark.
" Nathan Arnold.	John N. Clappitt.
" Greenville Watson.	Wm. N. Herriman.
" Garrett Gibson.	O. H. P. Cox.
" George Linder.	I. L. Hunt.
	James Dykes.

The following list of the county officers has been compiled partly from the records and partly from other sources deemed reliable:

Representatives.	
W. N. McAfee, Democrat.....	from 1846 to 1848
H. B. Duncan, Whig.....	" 1848 to 1850
John M. Nichols, Democrat.....	" 1850 to 1852
Geo. T. Prichard, Whig.....	" 1852 to 1854
O. C. Roberts, Whig.....	" 1854 to 1856
John R. Clark, Democrat.....	" 1856 to 1858
Andrew Wolsey, Know-Nothing.....	" 1858 to 1860
Asa Campbell, Democrat.....	" 1860 to 1862
Joseph A. Kennedy, Republican.....	" 1862 to 1864
David M. King, Republican.....	" 1864 to 1866
W. L. Jerome, Republican.....	" 1866 to 1868
R. D. Kenney, Republican.....	" 1868 to 1870
Joseph H. Barrows, Republican.....	" 1870 to 1874
C. H. Stewart, Republican.....	" 1874 to 1876
T. E. Evans, Republican.....	" 1876 to 1878

Sheriffs.	
Wm. J. Girdner.....	from 1846 to 1848
Peter Cain.....	" 1848 to 1852
John R. Clark.....	" 1852 to 1856
S. E. Mickey.....	" 1856 to 1860
F. M. Clark.....	" 1860 to 1862

Joseph Moss.....	appointed 1862
Wm. B. Rogers.....	from 1862 to 1864
H. J. Alley.....	" 1864 to 1868
Wm. Speer.....	" 1868 to 1872
James D. Dykes.....	" 1872 to 1876
Charles E. Minter.....	" 1876 to 1878

Clerk of Circuit Court and Recorder.	
Green W. Laughlin.....	from 1846 to 1848
Richard B. Ballew.....	" 1848 to 1864
W. L. Jerome.....	" 1864 to 1866
D. M. King.....	" 1866 to 1874
Wm. M. Casteel.....	" 1874 to 1878

Clerk of the County Court.	
Green W. Laughlin.....	from 1846 to 1848
Richard B. Ballew.....	" 1848 to 1864
Benj. F. Cornwell.....	" 1864 to 1865
John W. Crawford.....	" 1865 to 1866
Charles H. Stewart.....	" 1866 to 1874
D. M. King.....	" 1874 to 1878

The Probate Court of Mercer county was created by special act in 1849. It was abolished in 1859, and again re-established in 1861.

Probate Judges.	
Richard B. Ballew.....	from 1849 to 1857
George W. Taylor.....	" 1857 to 1859
John T. Myers.....	3 months.
John G. Ellis.....	2 "
Calvin Butler.....	11 "
C. M. Wright.....	from 1862 to 1865
S. H. Perryman.....	" 1865 to 1868
H. G. Orton.....	" 1868 to 1875
P. Stacy.....	" 1875 to 1878

There is one person, though not a county officer, who should be noticed in this connection. This is Mr. Thompson B. Harrington, who came about 1844 from Kentucky. He was soon after elected a justice of the peace. This office he has now continuously held for thirty years. His sound judgment and impartiality in his long official life has won for him the universal esteem of the people of the county. He has long been known by the euphonious sobriquet of "Old Dad." The business done in this court is as great, perhaps, as that done by all the other justices of the peace of the county. Though greatly oppressed by the infirmities of age and disease, he still attends at his office, and transacts his large business.

TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATION.

Soon after the passage of the law of 1872, authorizing counties, on a vote of the people, to organize a system of township government, this county, by a large majority, adopted the township system, and soon put the same into successful operation. The county was divided into nine townships, nearly corresponding with the old election precincts, called Lindley, Marion, Summerset, Harrison, Morgan, Ravanna, Madison, Washington and Medicine townships. This mode of municipal government, giving to the people of each township the control of its own local affairs, soon became very popular. Under this system the townships, by their own officers, assessed and collected the revenue raised by taxation within their own territory, and had a general supervision over the public highways, smaller bridges, and the disbursement of the township and school moneys within their respective jurisdictions.

In 1877 the legislature abolished these township governments, and restored to the county court the supervision of all the matters of which the township board had control. This caused very general dissatisfaction among the people. Inasmuch as the system had been adopted by a vote of the people, and as the new constitution of the state provided that the legislature might, by law, provide for its abolishment by a vote, they regarded the act of the legislature, destroying these municipal governments, without their consent, as an unwarrantable interference in their local affairs.

SCHOOLS.

Until about twelve years ago, Missouri had paid but little attention to popular education, although there were, in the wealthy parts of the state, many private schools open to such of the people as were able to bear the expense; yet no system that placed the school within reach of all the people had been adopted.

In 1866 the legislature enacted a law organizing a free school system throughout the state. This law found the people of the county almost destitute of school-houses. Such as had been used before the war were, during that exciting struggle, neglected, and were in a dilapidated condition. The wages of competent teachers were high, new school-houses were to be built in almost every district, and all kinds of building material were exorbitantly high, so that the putting into operation of the new school law imposed upon the people a very heavy burden of taxation. Notwithstanding these discouraging circumstances, the people earnestly set themselves about the organization of the free schools of the county. There are about fifty school districts in the county, each of which is now provided with a comfortable school-house. The want of competent teachers experienced on the adoption of the free school system, is now no longer felt, and efficient schools are kept open in each district from five to eight months in each year. In these schools all the common branches are taught, while in many of them students pursue algebra, geometry, history and philosophy with success.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

Very soon after the organization of the county there was erected a log jail and court-house at the county seat. The jail stood upon the lot now enclosed with

the residence of Mr. John C. W. Lindsey, and the court-house was on the lot now occupied by the store building of Speer Brothers on the east side of the public square.

In 1858 the court-house now in use on the public square was erected. The contract price of this building was \$8,000. In 1874 the new jail was erected. This is a substantial brick structure. The prison apartments are constructed within the brick walls, wholly of iron, and on the most improved pattern.

There are three considerable streams that traverse the entire length of the county, the bridging of which has been the cause of a very large outlay of the public funds. There are now seven substantial bridges across Grand river, which have cost, on an average, \$2,000 each, while a still greater number have been placed across Muddy and Medicine creeks, though at a less cost.

CLIMATE.

Like the climate of this latitude throughout the country, we are subject to occasional "cold snaps" in winter as well as very warm weather in the summer. There are three belts of timber running north and south through the county, which, acting as wind-breaks, considerably moderate the severity of the winters. The winters are subject to occasional spells of very cold weather, during which the thermometer has been known to fall as low as twenty degrees, and on rare occasions even lower, while the summers are frequently subject to very hot weather. These extremes, however, are an exception. The climate here is more mild than that of the same latitude east of the Mississippi, and is well adapted to growing all the staple grains of the country.

RELIGIONS.

It is believed that the first religious society was organized in the county in 1840. It was known as the Salem Baptist church; was organized in the south part of the county. Its minister at the time was Rev. Ira Blakely.

The Methodists soon came, and organized in various parts of the county several small societies; and with them came that then popular mode of religious revivals—the camp-meeting. This denomination increased rapidly in the county until the division of the church into the North and South Methodists. This internal strife almost entirely broke up the organization of these societies, and from that time the Methodists did but little work in the county until after the close of the war, since which time the North Methodist church has rapidly increased in its membership throughout the county.

Both the Methodists and Baptists have, in almost every neighborhood, an organized society, and each have in the county a number of convenient and respectable church buildings.

The membership of these two denominations, at the present time, is about equal.

The Christian church has also a number of societies in the county, those at Princeton and at Goshen being quite large. The society at Goshen have a commodious church edifice. In the other parts of the county, the members of this church meet for worship in other churches or in the school-houses.

There are in the county societies of several other denominations, but their membership is small, and none of them have a church building.

NEWSPAPERS.

The first newspaper published in the county was the "Princeton Reporter," the publication of which was commenced in 1859 and continued till 1861. The publishers of this sheet were P. O. James and James A. Scarbaugh. In politics it was neutral, and was patronized by persons of all political parties; but it is said that the opponents of the Democratic party who contributed to its support complained that its nominal neutrality was but a very thin disguise of its support of the Democratic party. The paper collapsed on the breaking out of the war, and the press and material were sold for the debts of its proprietors.

The next paper started in the county was "The Mercer County Advance," published weekly by A. O. Binkley. Its publication was commenced in 1866, and, after having changed hands a number of times, it was finally purchased by its present proprietor, Mr. W. L. Robertson, in 1872. A few years after its publication was commenced its name was changed to the "Princeton Advance." This paper, in politics, was first Republican, and its publication as a Republican newspaper was continued till November, 1874, when Mr. Robertson, its present proprietor, changed its politics, and made it Democratic, since which time its support of the Democratic party has been able and zealous. Whether working in Republican or Democratic harness, its management has been creditable, and it has been well sustained. It is now published as a four-page, eight-column sheet, with what is known as a patent outside.

The next newspaper to be noticed is "The Princeton Telegraph." This was founded in 1873 by L. W. Brannon, an experienced newspaper man, who still owns and manages it. This paper has been ably managed, and its circulation has steadily increased, until now it is as well supported by the people as any local paper in this part of the state. It is a four-page, eight-column sheet, and published with a patent outside. It has always been a zealous supporter of the Republican party and its policy.

DISPUTED BOUNDARY.

Until the year 1851 the northern boundary of the state was in dispute. Iowa and Missouri each claimed the territory north of Township No. 65 for a distance of twelve miles. Over that part of this strip adjacent to it, Mercer county exercised jurisdiction. The people living on this disputed territory took part in the elections for county officers. Mr. H. B. Duncan, then living in this disputed territory, was elected to the legislature of Missouri as Mercer county's representative in 1848, and after the settlement of the dispute, while residing in the same house, he was elected to the legislature in the state of Iowa. This dispute was finally settled in 1851, each state getting about half of what it claimed; and the boundary was surveyed and marked by iron posts set in the ground every ten miles.