

De



John S. Phelps

HISTORY
OF
GREENE COUNTY, MISSOURI,

WRITTEN AND COMPILED

FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE SOURCES,

INCLUDING A HISTORY OF ITS

TOWNSHIPS, TOWNS AND VILLAGES,

TOGETHER WITH

A CONDENSED HISTORY OF MISSOURI; THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS; A RELIABLE AND DETAILED HISTORY OF GREENE COUNTY—ITS PIONEER RECORD, WAR HISTORY, RESOURCES, BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AND PORTRAITS OF PROMINENT CITIZENS; GENERAL AND LOCAL STATISTICS OF GREAT VALUE, AND A LARGE AMOUNT OF LEGAL AND MISCELLANEOUS MATTER; INCIDENTS AND REMINISCENCES, GRAVE, TRAGIC AND HUMOROUS.

ILLUSTRATED.

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people southwest of the center of the State, and all of this vast amount of territory, now comprising forty or fifty counties, was still attached to Wayne county.

On the organization of Crawford county in 1829, this territory was transferred to its jurisdiction, under which it remained until the organization of Greene.

There were no regular roads, and the usual way of reaching this part of the country was either by way of the rivers, as has already been described, or by following the Indian trails across from Green's ferry, on the Mississippi.

Some few years since, Mr. John H. Miller, of Ritchey, Newton county, published a series of historical sketches in the *Springfield Leader*, for which the people of Greene county must ever be thankful, since they contain much valuable information that might never have been known to this and future generations. Mr. Miller, a son of Joseph Miller, one of the very first settlers of the county, is blessed not only with a retentive memory, but with a capacity and a disposition to put his recollections on paper. Let it be impressed on our people, that to his kindness in writing these sketches, and to the *Leader's* enterprise in publishing them, we are indebted for much of the knowledge of the early settlement of this county that we all possess. Speaking of some of the first settlements and pioneer settlers of Greene county, Mr. Miller says:—

In the fall of 1829, Madison and J. P. Campbell left Maury county, Tennessee, on horseback, traveling toward the setting sun in search of homes for themselves and their families. Crossing the Mississippi river, thence west through the then Territory of Arkansas, on to the present site of Fayetteville, then almost an entire wilderness; thence making a circle back in a northeasterly direction into Southwest Missouri, striking the old Delaware town, the first and only place of note on the James fork, ten miles southwest of where Springfield now stands. From there they went on to Kickapoo prairie and then north into the timber, discovering the Fulbright spring and the natural well. Near the latter they cut their names on some trees to mark their claims to the land in that vicinity.

At that time the first settlers already mentioned were living on the James, and Gilliss and old Joseph Phillibert had a little log store or trading post on a knoll near the Delaware town, where they kept a few pieces of calico and trinkets for sale to the Indians. After mentioning the return of the Campbell brothers to Tennessee, Mr. Miller goes on to say:—

In February, 1830, J. P. Campbell and his brother-in-law, Joseph

Miller, fixed up with their small families, and set out for Kickapoo prairie. Mr. C.'s family consisted of himself, wife and one child, Telitha, then not a year old, who was afterward the mother of Lula, wife of Frank Sheppard. Mr. Miller's family consisted of himself and wife and two children. Rufus was one year old, and John was twelve. They also had six darkies, one five-horse team and one Derbin wagon, which was driven by John. (Madison C. did not move until 1832.)

They journeyed *via* Nashville and Hopkinsville, crossing the Ohio at Golconda, thence over the south end of Illinois to Green's old ferry on the Mississippi. It being in February, they encountered great difficulties in crossing on account of the quantities of floating ice, but after making several trips across the river in an old, rickety piece of a flat, the wind being high and cold, they succeeded in landing safe on the Missouri side; thence they were obliged to almost cut their own road, but onward they went toward the West, by old Jackson in Cape Girardeau county, stopping one day to rest at old Col. Abram Byro's, five miles west of Jackson. Thence they proceeded on to Farmington, in St. Francois county, and by Caledonia, in Washington county, which was the last town, and it only contained one little store and two or three dozen inhabitants. Then on west, with scarcely any road, to the present site of Steelville, in Crawford county, and on twelve miles further to Massey's iron works, which had been in operation but a very short time, and so on to where Rolla now stands. Twelve miles further on, they came to old Jimmy Harrison's, at the mouth of Little Piney, on the Gasconade, about four hundred yards south of the present Gasconade bridge. Mr. Harrison kept a little store for the accommodation of the few settlers up and down the Piney and the Gasconade; that was also the court-house for the whole of Southwest Missouri, and so it was the only post-office until 1832. Thence west twenty miles brought them across the Big Piney on to Roubideaux, now Waynesville, in Pulaski county. Continuing their journey, they went up the Gasconade river to the mouth of the Osage fork, where they found a few white settlers—some of the Starks, Ballous, Tygarts, O'Neals, and one old "Jim Campbell," who was sheriff of all of Southwest Missouri. This was in the neighborhood of the present Oldland post-office. From there they came on to Cave Spring, where they crossed the Osage fork, leaving it at the old Barnett place, from which they came to Pleasant prairie, now Marshfield, and striking James fork twenty miles east, thence down to Jerry Pierson's, where he had built a little water mill at a spring just below the Danforth place; then on west they struck the Kickapoo prairie one mile east of the present Joe Merritt place; thence five miles more brought them to the natural well (a short distance north of the present public square of Springfield). Here they first camped on the night of the 4th of March, 1830.

In the meantime, Uncle Billy Fulbright had got about three weeks ahead of them, and stopped at the Fulbright spring. His brother,

John Fulbright had settled at another spring near by, and had a cabin up; and his brother-in-law, A. J. Burnett, had succeeded in putting up a small oak-pole cabin 12x15, just on the spot of the old Squire Burden residence on Booneville street. Mr. Campbell having had rather the oldest claim, by his name being cut on an ash tree at the well, Mr. Burnett gave way and went and commenced an improvement five miles east, at the Merritt place. Both Miller's and Campbell's families then moved into the pole cabin, the negroes having a good cloth tent to live in. This cabin had a splendid dirt floor.

Then all pitched into cutting and clearing, and soon succeeded in opening a few acres on the north side of the branch (Jordan) and just north of the natural well. They also cleared a field on the top of the hill, where the city now stands, the north string of the fence being about in the middle of the public square running west and including the ground where the Metropolitan hotel now stands.

The remains of the old Kickapoo Indian village still stood in the southwest portion of the present limit of Springfield. It was built of bark and small hickory poles bent over. Plenty of dead corn stalks were to be seen in the little patches that had been cultivated by the squaws. The Kickapoos had moved northwest in 1828. They came here from Illinois.

The following communication from the pen of Mrs. Rush C. Owen, daughter of John P. Campbell, taken from the columns of the *Springfield Leader*, of August 3, 1876, gives some interesting incidents in connection with the early settling of the town of Springfield:—

• In 1827 my father, John P. Campbell, and my uncle, E. M. Campbell, took refuge from an autumnal storm in old Delaware town on the James, not far from the Wilson Creek battle-ground. The braves had just brought in a remnant of Kickapoos which they had rescued from the Osages. Among the Kickapoos was a young brave boy ill with a kind of bilious fever recently taken. Just before leaving home my father had been reading a botanic treatise, and became a convert. In his saddle-bags he carried lobelia, composition and No. 6. He gave them to understand that he was a medicine man, and against Uncle Mat's earnest protest, who feared the consequences if the Indian died, he undertook the case. Not understanding the condition of his patient, or, perhaps, the proper quantity of the emetic to administer, he threw the Kickapoo into an alarm, or in other words a frightful cold sweat and deathly sickness. Then there was work for dear life. Uncle Mat, the older and more cautious of the two, pulled off his coat and plunged in to help my father get up a reaction, which they did, leaving the poor patient prostrate, and "weak as a rag." My father always laughed and said: "But feel so good, good—all gone," laying his hand weakly on his stomach. They remained some time with the Indians, hunting and

looking at the country. They finally made up their minds to return to Maury county, Tennessee, and bring their families. Pited by the Kickapoo they went some distance up the James, and made arrangements with an old trapper to get out their house logs ready to be put up immediately upon their return. They had selected lands where Springfield now stands. They found four springs whose branches uniting formed Wilson creek. About the center of the area between these springs was a natural well of wonderful depth, now known to be a subterranean lake, hard by which my father "squatted," after a toilsome journey through the wilderness, the Mississippi river frozen over so hard that they crossed on the ice in February, 1830. Several families accompanied him, among whom was glorious old Uncle Jo Miller. Who ever saw him angry? Who ever caught him looking on the dark side? The moment he was seated every child clambered and buzzed over him like bees over a honey-comb, and we had implicit faith in his "honey pond and fritter tree," and have to this day. The Kickapoo came over immediately and became an almost indispensable adjunct to the family. Seeing that my father was very tender with my mother, he looked upon her as a superior being, something to be guarded and watched that no harm come near. He was out on a hunt when my sister was born, the first white child in Kickapoo prairie. When he came in my father, who had thrown himself on the bed by my mother, said: "Oh, ho! look here!" He approached, looked at the little creature with quaint seriousness, and said, "What call?" My mother, to please him, said "Kickapoo;" and my father, who was cheerful and bright, had just taken baby's tiny hand and exclaimed, "My Beautiful," so that the child was ever to the Indian "Kickapoo, My Beautiful," and exceedingly beautiful she proved to be. The old people discourse upon her loveliness to this day, and refuse to believe that there ever was another to compare with her. The Kickapoo's greatest pleasure was guarding the rustic cradle, and drawing the delicately tapered hand through his own.

Springfield soon became a habitation with a name. Cabins of round poles were hastily put up, and filled with emigrants. My father vacated and built thirteen times in one year to accommodate new comers. Log huts filled with merchandise, groceries, and above all that curse of America—whisky—soon did a thriving trade with the Indians and immigrants. A cool autumn afternoon my mother, who was remarkably tall, with black hair and fine eyes, went to one of the primitive stores to buy a shawl, and could find nothing but a bright red with gay embroidered corners. She threw it over her shoulders, and crossed over to see a sick neighbor. Returning at dusk she was forced to pass round a crowd of Indians who had been trading and drinking. A powerful, bare-armed Osage, attracted no doubt by the gay shawl, threw up his arms, bounded toward her shouting, "My squaw." She flew towards home. Just as she reached the door her foot twisted and she fainted. A strong arm with a heavy stick came down on the bare head of the dusky savage,

northwest was "attached" for some time, "for civil and military purposes."

Concerning the distinguished patriot, Gen. Nathaniel Greene, in honor of whom the county was named, Col. S. H. Boyd, in his "Historical Essay," says: "The spot where he is buried is unknown. No imposing shaft stands out in bold relief to catch the patriot's eye, and invite him to prayer, or to drop a tear over a nation's hero. No tablet, rich in design and elaborate in finish, spreads itself out to commemorate the heroism and fame of departed greatness. Not even a rude headboard marks the spot where Gen. Nathaniel Greene rests. But Missouri remembered him, and raised to him a monument and immortalized him by giving his name to the fairest, freest garden of her dominions, Southwest Missouri." In the acts of the legislature, and in the early records, the name *Greene* is written and appears without the final *e*,—evidently an error in orthography, as the autograph of the old hero and all histories of the Revolution attest.

The first subdivision of the county after its organization seems to have been when Rives (now Henry) county was organized, December 13, 1834, and the next was upon the creation of Barry, January 5, 1835. It now became necessary to readjust the boundaries of Greene county, and this was done by an act of the legislature, approved March 20, 1835, wherein they were declared to be established as follows:—

Greene.—Beginning where the line dividing townships 26 and 27 crosses the line dividing ranges 17 and 18; thence west with said township line to its intersection with the eastern boundary of Barry county; thence along said line to the southeast corner thereof; thence south to the beginning.

FIRST SESSION OF THE COUNTY COURT.

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the county during the first year of its existence as a county, was the first session of the county court, held March 11-14, 1833, at the house of John P. Campbell, which stood on the present site of the town of Springfield. Previously, on the 14th of February, Jeremiah N. Sloan, James Dollison, and Samuel Martin, having been elected at an election held on the first Monday in February, pursuant to a provision of the organization act, had been commissioned justices of the county court by His Excellency Governor Daniel Dunklin (John C. Edwards, Secretary of State). February 23, John P. Campbell was appointed county clerk.

The county judges took the oath of office before Esq. A. J. Burnett, an acting justice of the peace in and for the county. John D. Shannon had been elected and commissioned sheriff.

The proceedings of the first county court may thus be summarized: Samuel Martin was appointed presiding justice for six months. Letters of administration were granted Joseph Weaver and John A. Langles on the estate of John Marshall, the wealthy old Indian trader, well known throughout Southwest Missouri in early days, and who had died some time previously. Spring River, Jackson, and Osage townships were organized, and justices of the peace appointed. The road then leading from Springfield, *via* Delaware Town (a large encampment of the Delaware Indians) to Fayetteville, Arkansas Territory, was declared to be a public road. Commissioners were appointed to "view, lay out, and mark a public road from Springfield westwardly until it strikes the main fork of the Six Bulls, at or near Samuel Bogart's, thence in the direction of Fayetteville, Arkansas." Commissioners were also appointed to lay out a road from Bledsoe's ferry, on the Pomme de Terre river, to an indefinite point on the Twenty-five Mile prairie. Absalom Bledsoo was granted a license (for \$2) to keep a ferry across the Osage river and charge for every foot passenger 12½ cents; for every two-horse team \$1.25, etc. These proceedings were had the first day.

On the second day (March 12) a public road was ordered viewed and marked out from Springfield to the Twenty-five Mile prairie, in the direction of Boonville. Another road was ordered reviewed from Springfield to Swan creek. James Caulfield was appointed administrator of the estate of John Fitch, deceased. A settler named Brantlet had died a short time previously, leaving his family in destitute circumstances, and his three children, John, Finny, and Judy, were "bound out" to Kindred Rose, Larkin Payne, and Joseph Price; the two boys to serve until they were twenty-one years of age, and the girl, Judy, until she was eighteen. Richard C. Martin was appointed county assessor; A. C. Burnett was made collector, but declined, and later Larkin Payne was appointed; Junius T. Campbell, treasurer; Samuel Scroggins, surveyor. Of these officials Mr. Burnett died in Jacksonville, Oregon, in April, 1877, aged 89 years.

The third day justices of the peace and judges of election were appointed for the several townships, and elections were ordered for constables. Oliver township was organized on this day. A. J. Burnett