

1884 HISTORY OF AUDRAIN COUNTY

History of Audrain County, Missouri: written and compiled from the most authentic official and private sources, including a history of its townships, towns and villages; together with... biographical sketches of prominent citizens

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CHAPTER VII

LINN TOWNSHIP

Its Boundary - Old Settlers - Mills - Churches

LINN TOWNSHIP

Linn township is bounded on the north by Prairie, on the east by Cuivre, on the south by Loutre, and on the west by Salt Creek townships. It embraces an area of fifty-four square miles, and is a fine agricultural district. It is watered by Cuivre creek and one or two tributaries of Salt river. It is traversed almost its entire length from east to west, by the Chicago and Alton Railroad - the road entering the township at section 22, and passing out at section 2.

OLD SETTLERS

Many of the old settlers of Linn township are mentioned in the history of Prairie township. Linn was for many years a part of Prairie.

Shorten Blankenship came to Audrain county in the spring of 1837, and located on Littleby creek on the 11th day of April of that year. His father's name was Eli, and his mother's name was Mary. The family came from Logan county, Virginia. There were sixteen children, all of whom lived to be grown. Their names were: Shorten, Jesse, Claiborne, Thomas, John, Reuben, Henry, Levi, Chloe, Polly, Lavina, Esther, Annie, Rachael, Nancy, and _____.

Duncan Blue, of Scotland, married his cousin, Effie Blue, and came to America and settled in North Carolina before the Revolution. He joined the American army, when the war began, and served during the struggle for independence. After the war, he moved to Christian county, Kentucky. His children were: Daniel, Neal, and Peggy. Neal was in the War of 1812. He married Elizabeth Galbreth, of North Carolina, and they had Duncan, John, Sally, Effie A., Peggy, Flora, Eliza, Emeline, Caroline and Charlotte E. Several of the children died young, and in 1831, Mr. Blue and the rest of his family came to Missouri and settled in Audrain county.

The first and only mill that was ever erected in the township was a horse-mill and put up by Neal Blue about 1840, near the mouth of Littleby creek.

David Martin came to the township in 1836, and raised the first crop of tobacco in that section of country. The seed was brought to the county by him, and the tobacco was known as the "Yellow Pryor."

James Harrison, or as he was called, "Jeems" Harrison, by the old pioneers, was one of the earliest settlers in the township. He came from Virginia, and after living in Audrain county a number of years, he moved to Callaway, and there died before the War of 1861. He was one of the most noted hunters in the country, having acquired his reputation by spending much of his time in the woods. The last elk that was killed in the county was shot by Mr. Harrison. His old flint-lock gun was very homely in appearance, but possessed rare virtues in the estimation of its owner, who seldom failed to bring down the deer upon which he drew a bead. He killed the elk referred to in March, 1837.

The first double barrel shot-gun that was brought to Linn township, and probably the first that was brought into the county, was owned by an old settler whose name was McCamey. It was a great curiosity in the way of a fire-arm, and those who were fond of hunting, and who were living in the neighborhood of McCamey's cabin, all tried, his gun. McCamey died on Cuivre creek before the last war.

Douglass Murray, another early settler, was the recognized fiddler of the community.

His fiddle was his inseparable companion, and when spending an evening with his friends, he possessed the happy faculty of discoursing to them the most delightful music, always accompanying his instrument with an unique and improvised song, which was replete with wise and startling hits and felicitous innuendoes, touching the vulnerability of some one or inure of his entranced and rustic auditors. Douglass was especially happy when playing for a dance. Upon such occasions the scintillations of his wit were resplendently luminous, and even the instrument itself seemed to be inspired with new life, and gave back its most thrilling notes to the amorous touch of this rustic musician. Never did Troubadour sweep the strings of his harp with half as much pride and self-assurance as did Douglass, when he sounded the notes of his violin at a country dance. He played many pieces to the delight of the dancers, but none permeated their very souls like that old familiar tune, called in yeoman parlance, "Chicken Pie." So irresistibly happyfying in its effects was this tune, that even old age forgot its wonted infirmities, and was often found treading the mazes of the dance. The words of this remarkable song were very suggestive, the

first two lines of which ran as follows: --

Chicken pie and pepper, oh!
Are good for the ladies, oh!

While "Chicken Pie" was universally liked as a favorite dish, and as a favorite dance song, there was another song that always enlivened the dancers, as they listened to its inspiring measures. This was "Buffalo Gals," and seemed to be played especially on moonlight nights, when the weather would permit of a dance under the bewitching beams of a silver moon.

In the dances the women would often take part in the jigs, and although they did not make as much noise as the men, they successfully vied with them in the intricacies and evolutions of the dance.

The first church edifice (log cabin) was erected by the Methodists, on Littleby creek, just below the forks. Solomon Peery was among the first ministers to hold services in that humble house.

The pioneers went to Monroe county, near the town of Florida, to get their grain ground. In cultivating their fields they used the old Cary plow with wooden mold-board. Their fields were generally small in area, and abounded with stumps, because their farms were invariably selected from the timbered lands - the virtues of the prairie not being appreciated at that time. Settling on the banks of Littleby creek, and its tributaries, they were greatly afflicted with chills and fevers, and suffered in this way for many years after their arrival in the country. Quinine was used by many families, but the most noted remedy was Smith's Tonic Syrup, which is still a favorite medicine in some portions of the country.