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EARLY HISTORY

.....OF.....

Parkersburg and Vicinity.

BY MRS. MARGARET HENDERSON BARTLETT.

Wife of The Colonel

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EARLY HISTORY OF PARKERSBURG AND VICINITY.

BY MRS. MARGARET HENDERSON BARTLETT.

A paper read before the Parkersburg Literary Club, February 21, 1903, also a short sketch of Blennerhassett's Life on the Island.

In attempting to write the paper assigned me on "The History of Parkersburg" I have taken the earlier or beginning of what has grown under such difficulties, to be so prosperous a town. Being a decendent of pioneer families, I have had opportunities of learning much of the life and conditions of those times not known to the present generation. As we grow older our thoughts revert to the past, so I fancy my very imperfect gleanings and sketches will be of more interest to the older than the younger part of our club. If my paper proves long I hope you will be lenient.

The early history of what is now Parkersburg, except in the way of grants, surveys of the land, etc., is very limited and somewhat traditional. Our settlers did not come as an organized body, but drifted in, as it were, brought by varied motives and with very little thought that posterity would care to know more of them than to be benefited by the land they acquired.

The Moundbuilders have not left us their silent witnesses of occupation as they have at Moundsville, Marietta and other places along the river. Near Williamstown there are several very considerable mounds, monuments, no doubt, to the brave and valiant of that pre-historic people. From the stone implements and other relics found in this vicinity, it was probably a point of importance to the Indians who had not left the country when the

first survey, not even when the first settlement, was made.

There is no evidence of the finding of a leaden plate, such as were buried by Celaron in 1749 as mark of ownership by the French, and which have since been found at Wheeling and the mouth of the Muskingum.

We, of the present day, filled with pride and self-sufficiency, wonder why Washington, on his first trip down the Ohio seeking good locations for the grants given him for services in the French and Indian war, was not attracted by what we think so fine a situation for a town, but passed by and chose the fertile acres of what has long been known as Washington Bottom. The Tomlinsons, in the same year, 1770, chose the situation opposite the mouth of the Muskingum for their Tomahawk entry.

The first evidence we have of the occupancy by white men of the land on which the town of Parkersburg is now situated is of a Tomahawk entry and preemption right made by Robt. Thornton in 1773. (Perhaps I should say here that a Tomahawk entry was the blazing or cutting the initials of the persons, with the date, on the tree, or trees, thus giving notice that a claim was made on 400 acres surrounding. This was usually made with a small axe known as the tomahawk.) The territory then formed part of the dis-

trict of West Augusta. This was three years after the entry of the Tomlinson brothers at what is now our little sister, Williamstown. It was during the three years that those brothers lived and raised corn on their land that this entry was made, and we have every reason to believe the persons who made it enjoyed the cabin fires and hospitality of the brothers and their sister, who was afterwards Mrs. Williams.

This claim was sold by Mr. Thornton to Alex Parker, Esq., of Pittsburgh, for \$50, who in 1783 had it surveyed. In May, 1784, a patent was granted by Beverly Randolph, Governor of Virginia for 950 acres of land. The grant or patent is written on parchment and is a beautiful piece of penmanship. It would be difficult now to define those limits spoken of as from a post in a certain line to a white oak in a glade, thence crossing two runs to a forked locust on the bank of the Little Kanawha. Attached to the grant is a colored plat made shortly afterward. These documents were in possession of the late Stephen C. Shaw.

After the entries and first attempts at settlement, and before many along the river were at all permanent, came Dunmore's war and a long period of trouble with the Indians, who were very aggressive, being excited by the English during the period of the Revolution. The settlers about Wheeling and Grave Creek and others being obliged to take refuge at Fort Henry at Wheeling, or go back to their old homes near Cumberland, or parts of Pennsylvania until the great danger was past. After the close of the Revolution the danger was not so great and permanent settlers and parties of surveyors came in. Even though the rugged mountains and dense forests were formidable barriers, the rich lands and great rivers tempted them to come and start new homes in the wilderness.

In 1783 we first hear of Capt. Jas. Neal, who came as deputy surveyor

for Samuel Hanway, surveyor of Monongalia County, to survey the entry of Mr. Parker, then in Monongalia: the next year it was in the division known as Harrison. After returning to his home in Green County, Pa., Mr. Neal, with a number of men, left Pennsylvania in the fall of 1785, intending to go to Kentucky, where a brother-in-law lived. In a flat boat they descended the Monongahela and Ohio rivers to the mouth of the Little Kanawha, ascending that stream for a short distance; they landed on the south side of the stream. Being well satisfied and knowing something of the adjacent country from his surveys he concluded to make this his future home. During the fall and winter he and his party made a clearing and erected a house, which with other buildings, was known as Neal's Station. For many years this was an important place of refuge and safety from the raids of the Indians when on predatory war paths, from their rendezvous in Ohio to and fro through this part of Virginia, this being largely a hunting ground. Here the early settlers retreated in time of danger and dwelt in safety, while the travelers passing through the country sought it as a place for protection. He returned to Green County, married his second wife, and in the spring of '87, with his family and all his children, both married and single, moved to the Station, and became permanent settlers.

It is from this family that many of our worthy citizens have sprung. Capt. Neal was a man of energy, possessing many fine qualities, a leader in the settlement. He was Justice of the Peace with license to marry, probably the first person vested with that authority in the country.

Col. Hugh Phelps, son-in-law of Capt. Neal, was also prominent—one of the first justices. At his house the first court was held. He was Captain of militia at the time of the attempted arrest of Blennerhassett. His re-

proof of the men after the wanton destruction of property on the island during his absence added much to his reputation. He was endeavoring to secure large interests in land, but dying suddenly in 1823 his claims were not perfected.

The building of Fort Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum in '86, and of Farmer's Castle in Belpre in '89, gave much more security. A block house was built at Belleville in 1785 by Mr. Tilton, who had claims for many thousand acres of land. He brought with him a Mr. Woods, who was long identified with the country. Here they, with four Scotch families as emigrants, lived, the families remaining in the country. Mr. Isaac Williams and his wife, Rebecca, also returned to their claim in March, 1787.

As the danger was less, families, many of whom were instrumental in forming the courts and promoting the interests of the country, came in. The Cooks and Spencers from Connecticut, the Beesons from Pennsylvania, above town on the river. Then there were the Hannamans, Creels, Pribbles Kincheloes on the Kanawha; farther up Beauchamps, at what is now Elizabeth, and Hendersons still farther up the river. Below the Kanawha were Neals, Phelps, Foleys, Wolfes, and later Lewises and others.

In 1800 the place was known as Newport or Stokelyville, more generally spoken of as the Point. It contained about a half dozen log cabins, all near the point, a tavern, or ordinary—perhaps a small store for our merchants soon began to gather pelts etc., and send them away.

The life of the pioneer at this time, if he was thrifty, was busy, indeed. They had come long distances, those from Virginia and Maryland on horseback, carrying their goods on pack mules. Some from Pennsylvania might come in flat boats by way of Pittsburg. They could bring but lit-

tle with them and were obliged to be content with the barest necessities of life. Our town was merely a pioneer village, and for many years a very small one, the conditions of life in many respects similar in town and country. Most families had at least a few negroes, and while they were useful as servants and in clearing up the land, their clothing and food must be provided. The flax and wool spun, woven, cut and made into garments for both family and servants, often all under the supervision of the housewife. Sometimes the yarn was sent to the weavers and returned as jeans, flannel, blankets, and later those beautiful old blue and white coverlets, as they were called. The common dress of the women was home-made flannel, with home-made linen underwear, precious calico or white muslin or dimity for ladies in summer, with stockings of their own knitting. Shoes were usually made by the village shoe maker; sometimes a man went about the country to the farms and made the shoes for the family and servants. Probably this was a time when boys went barefoot as long as possible. I imagine the ladies did not have so many changes of style as now. The houses were small, usually with the kitchen and servants quarters a little distance from the "house," as it was called; the furniture the very plainest and very little of it—split bottom chairs, a table, and big chest made of walnut or cherry, with the beds, being in very early times the furniture of the "well-to-do." Later, bureaus and such furniture were made by the village cabinet maker. Some supplies were brought by pack mules or wagons to Pittsburg, from there by flat boats or pirogues. Some supplies were brought from Virginia in great wagons over the mountains by way of Redstone. I have seen memorandums of these goods brought. On their return they would carry the furs and pelts of wild

animals—deer, bear, beaver and others—many of them having been killed to provide meat for the settlers. For a long time, meat except wild animals was scarce. The bears liked pigs, and in return the darkey liked bear meat better than venison, more oily and not so dry. Salt was more precious than sugar; sugar could be made from the sap of the maple. They did not know of the wealth of salt so near. First the hand mill, then the horse or water power mill ground the corn and the wheat, and one darkey beat the hominy in great wooden mortars. Mr. George Woodbridge, of Marietta, in an anniversary speech, said that he had the invoice of the first store goods brought to Marietta. The articles most in demand were powder, shot, lead, flints, tobacco, rum, whiskey, fish hooks, shoes, wool hats, spinning wheel irons, common crockery, glass, nails, tea, snuff, gun locks, etc., all in one store, and such it was in Parkersburg, or the Point. These articles were often paid for in pelts, one merchant collecting 800 bear skins in one year from the territory of what is now West Virginia.

Later, of course, more goods were brought, but the silk or canton crepe dress was carefully preserved, and worn on grand occasions for many years. The men also wore home-made clothes. The blue "hunting shirt," as it was called, was, when properly made, not an ungraceful, and very serviceable garment. In the very early days they often wore buckskin breeches and hunting shirts. The Rev. Reece Wolfe had a pair of buckskin breeches stitched with silk, which he was sometimes requested to wear to weddings as late as 1826.

The Richmond Enquirer, in 1810-11, states that "agreeably to a resolution of the last session, most of the members appeared dressed partly in domestic manufacture." Our represen-

tatives that year were John Neal and Jacob Beeson, the peers in accumen and intelligence of those of the tide-water region. The hardships endured in pioneer life produced strong men both physically and mentally, men who were both patriotic and independent.

As early as 1789 the House of Burgesses passed an act for surveying and opening the stateroad from Alexandria, Va., westward over the Allegheny mountains to the Ohio river, opposite the town of Marietta. It came by Winchester, Romney and Clarksburg, and was one of the great thoroughfares between the East and West until the Northwestern Turnpike was completed in 1837.

In early times the mails were entirely unreliable along the Ohio river. In 1795 a plan was put into operation of transporting the mails regularly from Wheeling in light strong boats, built like whale boats, manned by five men, fully armed. They generally kept the middle of the river to avoid attacks from the Indians, and landed in some sheltered place at the head of an island to do their cooking and eating. There were four relays between Wheeling and Cincinnati, Marietta, Gallipolis and Limestone. The time required between Wheeling and Cincinnati was six days going down, and twelve returning. After the treaty with the Indians in '95 land routes began to be established. I have in my possession some letters of dates from 1799 to 1813. The rate of postage from Alexandria, or Dumfries, Va., were 40, 25, 20, and 17 cents. They were folded in the old style, without envelopes, and directed in clear, even hand, some to "Mr. Alexander Henderson, Esq., living in Wood county, on the Little Kanawha, care of postmaster at Marietta." One to "Wood Court House, Care of Mr. Neal." The writer though he seemed to have written much oftener, hoped to hear from his sons

every month. The distance from above Elizabeth to Marietta for mail, perhaps did not seem so great as it would now, though it was made on horseback or by boat. Very little mail but letters, a few pamphlets and newspapers.

In 1798 there was sufficient population to warrant the division of the county of Harrison. The first act of the legislature creating the county of Wood, named in honor of Governor Wood, of Virginia, was in December, 1798, giving the boundaries and directing that the justices of the peace meet at the house of Hugh Phelps, take oaths of office, organize a county and fix upon a place for holding courts, at or near the centre thereof, as the situation and convenience will admit. There are three points in this document that claimed my attention:

First, the centre, or convenient place agreed entirely with our modern ideas. Next, there should be no unfair dealings, or decisions, if a majority of the justices were not present; and lastly that bad weather was allowed as a reason for absence.

The following August the gentlemen justices met at the house of Hugh Phelps, on the South Side, and did swear in Wm. Lowther as sheriff, and John Stokely, clerk, and took bonds agreeably to law." These justices were Hugh Phelps, Thos. Pribble, John G. Henderson and Jacob Bennett. They also recommended Robt. Triplett a fit person for surveyor, and Harman Blennerhassett Hezekiah Bukey and Daniel Kinchloe as gentlemen qualified for justices, and recommended that they be appointed. Blennerhassett never served. There was much trouble and contention as to the location of the Court House. The Spencers, at Vienna, and Isaac Williams at the Ferry, or Williamstown, both wishing to have it. A small building of logs on the land of Col. Phelps, the loca-

tion of which is not now known, was made and court was held there.

"At a full meeting of court in 1800, it was agreed that the Point above the mouth of the Little Kanawha river, on lands owned by John Stokely, was the proper place, and an order made for public buildings, John Stokely giving the land not to exceed two acres."

This order was signed by the following justices, fourteen in number. It is interesting to note the names, cendants or persons of the same family now living amongst us. First was Hugh Phelps, Joseph Spencer John Glassford Henderson, Daniel Kinchloe, Thos. Lord, Caleb Hitchcock, Jacob Beeson, Ichabod Griffin, John Stephenson, Jesse Lowther, Reece Wolfe, Joseph Cook, Wm. Hannaman and Abner Lord.

Joseph Mayo, a distinguished Virginia lawyer and author, speaks of the county courts as "the most useful body of agents in the State. In early days they were wisely selected and appointed by the Governor, and their character, dignity and unsalaried services entitled them to the gratitude of their generation and the distinction which went into the records as Gentlemen Justices." I speak of them here because pride of ancestry is inherent in the human race, and the many descendants of these persons are pleased to know that they were persons to whom the organization and government of the new county was entrusted.

The new court house was of hewn logs, two stories, the upper (approached from the outside) used as court room, the lower as a jail. This building, I understand, is still in existence, on First, near Juliana street, owned by Mrs. Rex. Weatherboarding and a tin roof change its appearance since its erection more than a hundred years ago, when forest trees shaded its walls, and the approach from the tavern across Rifle

kun, or in canoes or dug-outs from the South Side. Puncheons or split logs were used for the floor, as they often were in cabins or houses. Probably split bottom chairs and board benches and stools were the seats.

A whipping post and stocks were also provided—a whipping post probably such as was lately suggested by the governor of one of our more northern states. In this case it was in accordance with the laws of Virginia. It may be suggested that I am spending a great deal of time on courts and court houses. We should remember that this was the centre of a large scope of country, and many matters came under the County or Justices' Court. This was the only form of court, nearer than a higher at Staunton or Morgantown, later at Clarksburg. Not until 1819 was a higher court held at Parkersburg. Then and for many years the business of the town was small, the court house, as for many years in Virginia, the resort of the men of the county.

The farmer could leave the work to the servants while he rode to town to know of the progress of some suit of his own or neighbors, or hear a speech from some prominent lawyer. Politicians were not so much in evidence then as now.

Our pioneer was often an educated man and the very fact of his isolation made him more keenly alive to the pleasures of oratory or argument.

The history of Parkersburg might be considered incomplete without the story of Blennerhassett. It was during this time, from 1798 to 1806 we should have this episode.

The story of Blennerhassett is known to most of us, some being descended from persons who were familiar with the family and interested in what is known as Burrs' trial.

Harman Blennerhassett, a young man, evidently of romantic temperament arrived in New York in 1797. He was born in Hampshire, England, in 1767, where his parents were then on a visit. His family resided at Castle Conway, in the county of Kerry, Ireland, to which they afterward returned.

He was educated with great care,

completing his studies at Trinity College, Dublin, in company with his relative, the celebrated T. A. Emmitt. He traveled in France and the Netherland. Expecting to fall heir to a large estate he made little effort to excel in the practice of law, rather cultivating his taste for music, science, etc. He became involved in the political trouble of Ireland, and, on the death of his father, went to England, where he soon after married Miss Margaret Agnew, daughter of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man, and granddaughter of General Agnew, who fell in the battle of Germantown. His Republican principles, not agreeing with his relatives and friends, he concluded to visit the United States and enjoy the benefits of freedom.

His stay in New York was only of a few months, his letters, wealth and literary merit giving him acquaintance with some of the best families. Hearing of the rich valleys and beautiful country on the Ohio river he crossed the mountains to Pittsburg and arrived in Marietta in the fall of '97. Here he spent the winter looking for a suitable place to establish his home. Dr. Hildreth, of Marietta, says: He finally decided on purchasing a plantation on an island 14 miles below the mouth of the Muskingum, within the jurisdiction of the State of Virginia. The situation was wild, romantic and beautiful. As it was chiefly in a state of nature he could reclaim and adorn it to his own taste. Its location also gave him the privilege of holding colored servants as his own property, which he could not do in the Northwest territory. The island was moreover near the settlement of Belpre, composed chiefly of intelligent and well educated men, disbanded officers of the American army. The island itself was a picture of beauty, as well as all of its kind, at that early day before the hand of man had marred its shores. The drooping branches of the willow bowed their graceful foliage in the water, while the more lofty sycamore and elm, with their giant arms, protected them from the rude blasts of the storm and gave a grandure and dignity to these primitive landscapes now only to be seen in the remote regions of the West.

Beautiful description of a place with which we are so familiar.

The island was then called Backus, from a man who had owned it since 1792. It is said to have been entered by Washington in 1770. It was surveyed in 1784 at the time the survey was made for Mr. Parker, under a patent issued by Patrick Henry. In March, '98, Mr. Blennerhassett purchased the upper part, about 175 acres, and moved with his wife and one child to an old blockhouse, about half a mile below the upper end of the island, built by Captain James during the Indian war. Here he lived while building his mansion, which was completed in 1800. From the description, which I have no doubt is authentic, the house and grounds must have been elegant and beautiful, no expense being spared that could add to its convenience or adornment.

The grounds were large and laid out with great taste. A flower garden on one side of about two acres, planted with flowering shrubs, both native and exotic, through which wandered serpentine walks, bordered with flowers. On the other side a large kitchen, garden and orchard of choice fruit. The furniture is described as very elegant, with rich curtains and carpets, walls and ceilings artistically adorned. It no doubt appeared so in this wilderness. Much of the furniture was doubtless destroyed, but some that has been in possession of families in Marietta and Belpre would look very small and plain in the parlors and bed rooms of to-day. The expense of building and improving amounted to about \$40,000, much of which was expended amongst the farmers, mechanics and laborers of this new region, where money was scarce and hard to be obtained. This was a very great advantage to them. "Mr. Blennerhassett may be considered in this respect the greatest benefactor that had settled west of the mountains." Of the cultivation, talents and charming social life of this couple, as well as the great beauty of Mrs. Blennerhassett, her beautiful and elegant dresses, feats of horsemanship, walking, dancing, as well as great proficiency in house-keeping and sewing, much might be

said. She cut and made many of her husband's clothes, besides attending to those of the servants.

Social life was very pleasant during the eight years of their life on the island. Parties of young people from Marietta, Belpre and Wood county, with occasional visits from more distant regions, often assembled. Parties of the older and more sedate portions of the community would be invited to spend several days on the island, especially the females of families with whom they visited, and they visited at least thirty miles from their home, as family traditions relate. Much more might be told of this delightful home, but time will not permit.

In an evil hour this peaceful and happy home was entered by Aaron Burr, who like Satan in the Eden of old visited this earthly paradise only to deceive and destroy. So polite and decorous, so interesting and fascinating when he strove to engage the attention, that it was impossible to resist his influence. It was in the spring of 1805, this intriguing, artful man first visited the valley of the Ohio. His mind restless and uneasy, a vexed man, his hands still red with the blood of the noble-minded Hamilton. Of his schemes and objects we will not speak, more than to say that he induced Blennerhassett to join him in a scheme which was found to be treasonable to the United States government, and was suppressed with great disaster and loss to Blennerhassett. It is said that when he heard the news of the action of the Assembly of Ohio at Chillicothe he half resolved to abandon the cause, but his wife, who had entered with much spirit into the enterprise, and who seemed to have been much charmed with Mrs. Alsten, daughter of Burr, prevented him. Had he listened to the dictates of his own mind and suggestions of prudence, how much misfortune and misery he would have been spared. After his escape from the island it was occupied by the Wood county militia. They acted in a most disgraceful manner, invading the house and cellar they became a drunken mob, destroying furniture and fences, causing much

fear and trouble to Mrs. Blennerhasett.

On the return of Col. Phelps, who had followed and attempted to capture the boats he severely condemned these proceedings and did all he could to suppress their excesses, treating Mrs. Blennerhasett with respect and kindness.

In 1811, the farm being rented by the creditors, a large crop of flax was stored in the house, which the negroes in their Christmas frolics set on fire, and the whole of the beautiful mansion was destroyed, the orchards and gardens spoiled. Nothing remained to tell the story of this beautiful home, but a well of pure water, from which many of us have been refreshed.

In 1810 an act was passed establishing the town of Parkersburg, adjoining the town of Newport and including the same, and allowing the seat of justice to be removed, which on the completion of the brick court house, was done although Vienna and Munroe or Neals on the South Side continued to assert their claims.

A deed for the public square was made in 1811 by Wm. and Mary Robinson, Mrs. Robinson being a daughter of Alexander Parker, granting one and one third acres, a gift to the town. The survey of the town was made by Mr. Geo. D. Avery, a sureyor and lawyer of Belleville, a man of many fine qualities and much intelligence, whose name is perpetuated by a prominent residence street in the city; other streets appropriately named, some for ladies of the pioneer families living here. In 1812 or 1813 a contract was made for a new court house to be built of brick, 40x40 feet. two stories high, various materials to be used in construction mentioned. But here was trouble again. Some objected to the extravagant building, others to the location at Parkersburg. It was those Vienna people again. A petition was sent to the Legislature, commissioners appointed, men from Ohio and Mason counties, to decide upon a place for holding courts. Parkersburg was in danger again, but as it has since came out all right. The commissioners deciding "that the public square in the town of Parkersburg is

the proper place for holding the courts of said county." There the court house was erected with a small one story brick building on either side, used as clerks' offices. Here, too, they brought the whipping post.

At this time, and for years after, all the business and nearly all the houses were on or below Court, now Third street. Mrs. Rebecca, wife of Jonas Beeson, told me that when she came here about this time, the land on which Mr. James Cook's house is, also where Bentley & Gerwig's factory now stands, was covered with beech and maple trees. I hear also that east of Market street, and about Holiday's graveyard were large sugar trees.

The first tavern or ordinary licensed by the court was to Hugh Phelps, on the south side of the Kanawha in 1789. The next to John Neal in 1801. This was the father of the late D. R. and Cincinnatus Neal. It was built of hewn logs, and was known as "The Rest." This building with improvements was in existence as tavern and store house until 1850. On part of the lot the building once known as the Swan House stands. This was erected by Mr. Benj. H. Latrobe, of Baltimore, about the time of the completion of the B. & O. railroad in 1837.

"The Rest," with its swinging sign, "Entertainment for man and beast," was the resort of the pioneers. Here they doubtless spent many hours, telling bear, game and Indian stories, and discussing the questions of the day, Federal or Democratic eagerly receiving the news from passing travelers and uncertain mails.

From 1812 to 1815 the first and oldest existing hotel of substantial material was built on the northwest corner of the Public Square. It was erected by Caleb Bayley, who at the same time was building the brick Court house that some of us remember. This hotel which is really the historic building of the town was long known as the Bell Tavern, from a bell in a tower on the roof. There assembled, as they had at "The Rest," the travelers, the judge, lawyers, jurymen and witnesses—when not invited

vited by some friends to ride several miles in the country to stay all night, visit old acquaintances, and save a tavern bill. This old hotel was also the scene of many gayeties. Here the young people came from all the country round for balls and other festivities. The ball was the high social function. Young ladies occasionally riding on horseback with their escorts, from at least ten or fifteen miles in the country, no doubt spending some days with friends or cousins nearby. It was afterwards known as the United States hotel, kept by John Stephenson, who went to the far west, Oregon, I think, later by Wm. Teft, then Mr. Conley, who afterwards kept the Swann house. It now survives as the Commercial. Let us hope it will be a long time before this relic of the olden time gives way to the sky scraper.

Other taverns of various descriptions were built later on. The best, the American House, was on the southwest side of Court Square, this first known as the Prentiss house, kept by Harry L. Prentiss, a talented young man, one of whose sons was the famous Gen. B. M. Prentiss, of Missouri. None of these are hotels now. In 1800 the courts fixed the rates for meals and drinks. Breakfast or supper, 21 cents; dinner, 25 cents; lodging, 8 cents; corn or oats, per gallon, 11 cents (for the horse must be fed); whiskey, half pint, 8 cents. Later rates were changed, but prices always fixed for man and horse; also, for various drinks, such as whiskey, peach or apple brandies, and such liquors as were freely used. As the market for corn was far away, much of it was made into whiskey, which was more easily transported. It was almost considered a necessity at house raisings, log rolling, shooting matches, and such gatherings. Mr. Woodbridge tells an amusing story of the building of Duck creek bridge. After many days' work and many gallons of whiskey used, Duck creek bridge fell down and I have no doubt a bridge over Pond or Neal's Run would have suffered a like fate for a like cause.

The names of the earliest merchants we have been able to obtain are John Neal and Derrick Pennybacker, both

of whom have descendants living here Mr. Thomas Neale was also a merchant, the same said to have kept the "Rest" after Mr. John Neal. The business of the town increased as the surrounding country opened up and fertile lands cultivated. The merchants gathered up the corn, flour, bacon, whiskey, brandies, also pelts and other produce, and shipped them mostly to the south—a long and tedious process, as the return was generally by horseback. Boats of various descriptions—some ships—were built, along the river at this time. We are told that in 1811 the first craft propelled by steam passed Parkersburg (the first on the river). It was built at Pittsburg by Nicholas Roosevelt, of New York, was called the New Orleans. She left Pittsburg in September, Captain Roosevelt commanding. The people protested against his wife accompanying him on so perilous a journey. This lady was a sister of B.H. Latrobe, of Batimore. At Cincinnati the brave captain was told he could go down, but would never bring his boat up stream. Tradition says she stopped at the Point for wood, which was sold as a great favor by the landlord of the Rest; this was the only steamboat on all these great rivers, so we did not immediately begin traveling by boat.

In 1818 fifteen steamers had been built at various points on the rivers, and while they were very different from the palaces that have since navigated our waters, they helped to make a new era for our pioneers.

We have no statistics of population, but in 1820 a charter for the town was granted and freeholders were allowed to vote for trustees, recorder, and other officers, giving us our first town government and the officers the power to collect taxes for expenses and improvements. The town as originally laid off, extended north to Washington, now Sixth, east to Green street. We do not know the names of these first officers.

During the early years of this decade the town and country suffered from an epidemic, which attacked both old and young, and various conditions of life. A bilious fever, from which few families escaped, and many

lost one or more members. The time was always spoken of as the sickly season of 1822 to 1824.

It has been difficult to learn much of the schools of this early period. It is thought there was a school on the south side, near Neal's station, probably one on this side also at a very early date, before the advent of Mr. James McAboy. This is the name of the first teacher I have been able to get. He was a Baptist preacher and lived here from 1817-25 and taught in a house on Avery street; the first church of the Methodists, Mr. Benj. Beeson, aged eighty-three, says, when eight years old he went to a Mr. Edgington in the John Neal house at the Point, where the Swann house stands. This was in 1828, after Mr. McAboy. Later we hear of a little yellow school house on Market street, between Third and Fourth streets, taught some time by a lady, Miss Gilman, where many of our older people learned the rudiments and where they seem to have had a good time.

The boys who were so fortunate as to have more than common school advantages were probably sent to the Ohio University at Athens, or to the old homes in Virginia or Pennsylvania. The girls got such education as they could in the schools, read some carefully treasured books, such as Misses Magazine, Miss Burney's "Evelina," possibly the early English poets, learned domestic arts, and at an age when girls now are in short dresses were married. With all these disadvantages (if such they were) perhaps also a large family of children, we have known intelligent, sprightly women who would have taken creditable place in our club today.

I have spoken of the old Court House and the old Taverns. Some old dwellings deserve mention also. Probably the oldest of these is the house known as Mr. James Cooks' now occupied by Miss Mollie Cook and Mrs. Turner. It was built and occupied by David Blair, a lawyer of prominence, in 1825. The house now owned by Mrs. Gambrell was built by Mr. James Harden Neal about 1826. He was the youngest son of Captain James Neal and father of Mr. Joseph B. Neal. He was for many years clerk of the Cir-

cuit court, a man of education and ability. It was owned for many years by Mr. Cincinnatus Neal and his lovely wife, who is now living with her daughter, Mrs. Vrooman. The house owned by the late Dr. Safford was built about 1820. His father came the year before from Gallipolis. The house occupied by Dr. Camden was built in 187 by Mr. Brainard Spencer, of Vienna. Mr. John R. Murdoch, long time clerk of the County court, lived in it for many years. Later it was occupied for some years by W. L. Jackson, at the beginning of the war Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. Two handsome houses on Juliana street were built about this time also. One by Mr. Snodgrass, only member of Congress from Parkersburg before the war. This is now the Blennerhassett Club house. The other large brick on the southwest corner of Fourth and Juliana by Mr. Geo. Neale, father of Mr. George Neale and Mrs. Amos Gordon. The handsome house in which General Jackson lived and in which his large and talented family grew up has been taken down and a store occupies its place at the corner of Third and Ann streets.

As late as 1830 to 1835, there were very few carriages. Even those in prosperous circumstances rode horseback. An occasional gig, or Jersey wagon without springs. I have no doubt many of our ladies were quite the equals of Mrs. Blennerhassett in horsemanship, though none had her advantages of cultivation. The road to Williamsport, as it was then, called, crossed Pond Run at Third street and followed the banks of the Ohio. This was until about 1850 a beautiful drive, shaded by fine forest trees. Now the location is changed. Carriages pass to and fro and the whistle of the steam car and the trolley tell us the old times have passed away; the new are here.

With a population of perhaps 400, we find that about this time (1832) there was a religious revival. We will now look for some history of the churches, and here we find, as is usual in new countries, the Methodist was first on the ground.

The Methodist was the first religious organization in the settlement; first in Wood county, being organized and

holding meetings near Neal's Station in 1799. The Rev. Robt. Manley was appointed to the circuit by Bishop Asbury, of what was then the Western Conference. The meetings were probably held in a log school house, private houses, or under the trees, as they often were throughout the country for many years. The Rev. Reece Wolf was a local preacher living in that neighborhood, who went about the country preaching and marrying, solemnizing nearly all the marriages in the county as late as 1826.

The first church built in Parkersburg was a Methodist Church. It was a plain brick structure and stood on Avery street between Third and Fourth streets on a high bluff. We do not know the date, but have heard that it was in this building the Rev. Mr. Mc Aboy, taught between 1817-25. This house must have been occupied for some time, for it was not until after the great revival of 1832, the first church on Fifth street was built. The date given is that of 1835. It stood where the laundry and Sentinel office now are. It was also of brick, with steps in front on the outside leading to the audience room. The lower story was used as a school room. It was built principally through the efforts of Henry Logan, Tillinghost A. Cook and James H. Neal. Rev. Thomas Power was Presiding Elder. He certainly showed his zeal and interest in the work by hauling much of the timber from the woods himself on an ox-cart. Mr. Henry Logan was a faithful helper, working sometimes at night.

In 1845 was the separation or division on account of slavery. After this for some years was much contention and suits for church property, which resulted in the Northern or Anti-Slavery division gaining the suit. There they worshipped until 1862, when the old church was torn down and a more modern erected under the supervision of Rev. T. H. Munroe. This with the parsonage was destroyed by fire in 1873.

After this the large church on the opposite side of the street was built.

Amongst the early Methodists we find the names of many prominent

families, many of them members of this church. There were Neal Phelps, Beauchamp, Cook, Tavenner, Holyday, Mayberry, Baldwin, Logan, Dils, Smith, Chancellor and many others.

After the decision as to property, the Southern branch built a church in 1858, corner Market and Seventh or Pike streets. Many of the old members were advocates of slavery, so went to this church, which has been active and prosperous. This building was recently sold, the hill taken away and a fine hotel erected in its place. They now occupy a handsome new edifice, corner Market and Eleventh streets.

The Baptist was the second church in Parkersburg, having been organized in 1817 by Pastor McAboy with twelve members, some of which were from a church called Mt. Zion, below Kanawha, which had been constituted the year before. Some names on this list are familiar: Harwood, Neal, Barrett and Creel. Only occasional meetings were held in the village of Parkersburg at this time. There were only about twenty to thirty houses in the town. The pastor lived in a two story house on Avery or Harriet streets. The meetings were usually held at his house, except on important occasions, when they went to the Court House, or held associations or such meetings in the groves nearby. The grand jury room of the Court House was used by this and other denominations. Mr. Sedgewick was the first pastor to reside here and give his time to the church from 1843 to 1848.

The Baptist church owes much to Mr. Wm. F. Coffey, who first came to Parkersburg in 1827, for twenty years clerk of the church. It was largely through his efforts the old frame church on Ann street, corner of Sixth, was built on a lot given by Isaac Morris in 1836, not completed till 1838. It was used until 1872, when the large brick edifice on Market street was occupied, completed and dedicated in 1877.

The Presbyterian church was organized about 1833, as nearly as I can ascertain. There may have been services earlier, but I have not been able to hear of them. In 1832 a very re-

markable revival took place. The preachers were Rev. Mr. McAbby, now a Presbyterian from Marietta, who had formerly lived here as a Baptist, and the Rev. Thos. J. Powers who was afterwards instrumental in building the Methodist church. Many joined the Methodists, but one result of the revival was the forming of the Presbyterian church. We are told this was the first great religious awakening in the town. Amongst the first members were the Tefts, Hutchinsons, Mrs. Hannah B. Gibbens, Mr. Albert G. Leonard, also the Spencers from Vienna. There was no church building until 1839, they like other denominations holding meetings in school houses, or the Court House. Rev. Festus Hanks was first pastor. He lived and had a school for young ladies on 6th street between Market and Avery, in a house occupied for many years by Mrs. Ann Moss. He employed several young ladies as teachers, and had quite a flourishing school. The Rev. Mr. Bowcock succeeded him. A man of fine character and good influence. Rev. Mr. Leps is kindly remembered by our older people. About 1872 this congregation was divided, the first or old church occupying the old building, corner Juliana and 6th streets. The new or Calvary erecting a very pretty modern structure corner Avery and 5th streets. After various vicissitudes these churches are again united in one strong church wielding much influence for good in the town. They have a handsome new building, corner of Market and Tenth.

Having three churches so nicely established and hoping their teaching will have a good influence on our people, we will look again at the material prosperity.

In 1839 the Northwestern Bank of Va., was established, now the Parkersburg National. This was a State Bank, the parent bank being at Wheeling. Mr. Jas. Cook was first President. Mr. Beverley Smith first Cashier. This bank has always been in the building in which it now does business. Sixty-four years of honorable and profitable life. For many years the cashier lived in the building and social life was enjoyed there. The First National Bank was established in 1862, Senator J. N.

Camden, Pres. W. N. Chancellor, Cashier.

One very considerable factor in the prosperity of this time, very little appreciated now, was the completion of the Northwestern Turnpike to Winchester, which took place about 1837. This gave stage to Winchester and more direct communication East. Later 1843 the Staunton Pike was completed. These brought business and traffic to this point, to and from which goods were easily brought by steamboat. This decade seems to have been fraught with good things for our little town. The first newspaper was published in 1833 by John Brough, afterwards Governor of Ohio. It was a Whig paper, The Parkersburg Republican. In 1838 it was bought by a company headed by Gen. J. J. Jackson, S. C. Shaw, came as Editor in 1840, then the Gazette and Courier. Afterward owned and edited by McCreary and Sterrett.

A Democratic paper called the Parkersburg News was published for several years before the war, by Chas. Rhodes.

The village was small in 1844 numbering scarcely 1400. The farming country around was opening up very slowly. There was a court house and lawyers and judges, many of them men of ability. We had then good churches and very reputable schools, some of them carried on by ministers, first of the Presbyterian, later the Episcopal churches. Still later, Mr. Nash, a history of Parkersburg would be incomplete for many gentlemen without mention of him. His name is perpetuated in the Nash School house. Then we had hotels and stores. The Neals had general stores; also Mayberry and Printiss. The Logans were makers and dealers in shoes and leather. Mr. Robert Smith who came from England in 1821, tin and copper wares, also bought and shipped produce. Col. Bradford carried on a large tobacco business on the south side. There were large tanneries and both flour and lumber mills, the output from which was shipped by boat to distant markets. The boats on the river and the stage on the turnpike gave opportunity for travel and business.

The home life though busy ought to

have been pleasant, as I have no doubt it was. Better houses were built in town and country, carriages more frequently used. The negroes had multiplied as well as the whites, and were contented and happy. Many families in town kept horses and cows—had their own gardens, not only for flowers but vegetables. Probably not so much butchers meat as now but plenty in the barrel in the cellar—and produce from the country cheap and abundant. Living was much plainer than now. The housewife was still a busy woman. The finer goods were bought from the store; the servant's clothes were generally home made. There were no sewing machines and always sewing to do, if not sewing, knitting. When the ladies went to spend the afternoon or day, dressed in a nice French morino or bombazine, more probably in her last gingham or calico—she did not go empty handed but took her knitting or sewing (perhaps a nurse and baby also). The daughter was taught sewing at a very early age (an accomplishment that gave her great satisfaction later), and many nicely made quilts, and pieces of sewing were the product of the little fingers. The men, especially the professional, enjoyed more intellectual advantages than the woman, for she did not have them as the women of today, but improved and keenly enjoyed those that came her way. The care of large families of children, making of material and clothing, management of servants with the social duties that grew upon them required ability and decision. I have always admired this old time wife, and mother, who strove to do her duty, in that situation in life in which it pleased God to place her.

The late Mr. A. T. Laidley, of Charleston, is authority for the statement that the Rev. Joseph Willard was the first minister of the Episcopal church to come to Parkersburg. He came in 1814 as agent of New York people who owned lands in Virginia and Ohio. He gave occasional services as opportunity offered. In the summer of 1816 three children of Mr. James B. Laidley were baptized here. This gentleman (whose wife was a half sister of the late Mrs. Beverly Smith)

lived in a log house, afterwards weatherboarded and owned by Mr. Josiah Shanklin, well known to our older people, respected by all. The house was on Ann street where the Devore block now stands.

There was no regular organization, but in 1832 Rev. J. T. Wheat, a man much loved, agreed to labor alternately here and at Marietta. A subscription list was made bearing the names of many of the old families of different denominations amounting to about 150 dollars.

Bishop Meade in his journal or report for 1835 says, that soon after the last convention 1834, he set out on his visits to the West. Coming by way of Charleston he reached Parkersburg the 29th of June, spent three days in that place, preached five times, baptized one child, confirmed four. He says. We have no place of public worship, but received assurances that this should not long continue. The Rev. Mr. Wheat has charge and officiates every other Sunday. Bishop Meade also visited here in '34 and '35, baptizing and holding services. In 1842 he says of Parkersburg, this place has increased beyond all others in Western Virginia. Many excellent and handsome houses have been erected on its beautiful sites, two of them houses of worship, but none for our church, as I had hoped on my last visit. On a previous visit he had appointed to this section Mr. John J. Jackson, and in his absence Mr. John Taylor lay readers. This is a quaint and interesting document, no doubt prized by his descendants. Gen. Jackson was faithful to his charge and his church. In 1843 a Parish was organized and Rev. Thomas Smith, of Virginia took charge, finding only four communicants: Mrs. William Rathbone, Mrs. John R. Murdoch, General Jackson and Mr. Taylor. Mr. Smith was a man of zeal and energy, inspired with true missionary spirit. He went often on horseback to preach the gospel in Pleasants county, visiting church families on the way. Beside the care of his little flock here, he spent some time in the East, soliciting funds for the erection of a church. He was successful in obtaining money enough to commence a

church the corner stone of which was laid July, 1846. He did not live to see it completed. April 1847 he died, and at his own request was buried under the unfinished structure.

Mr. Smith was succeeded in the fall of '47 by Mr. E. T. Perkins, who remained until 1853. The Parish gave him at this time \$300. Besides this he received a small amount from the Miss. Society. He was to preach here three Sundays each month and one at either Pribble's Mills, now Newark, or at Cow Creek, now St. John's, Pleasants county. It was at this time that church was built. It was through his efforts the church here was completed and consecrated in 1850 as Trinity church. After the removal of Mr. Perkins a long time intervened, Mr. Hyland being the next permanent rector, so well beloved by all. He too was a good missionary, keeping alive the points already occupied, and being the first to hold regular services in Williamstown. Soon after he came the rectory was built. His wise conduct in keeping his congregation together during the civil war was much commended. He was a man of fine ability, of social and genial disposition. A rectorate of 19 years was ended in June '78. About the same time the brick church built by the efforts of Mr. Smith and Mr. Perkins was taken down and the handsome stone edifice built in its place, and we are seeing the results of the good seed sown by those faithful men long gone to their reward.

The Rev. Robert A. Gibson, now Bishop of Virginia, was his successor.

In the latter part of the forties the negroes became dissatisfied, the slavery question being agitated in the northern states. From about 1846 many of them disappeared, folding their tents or packing their bundles, and being assisted by underground railroad to move to more northern and colder regions. This continued until when war times came there were very few left in the town, or country round.

The picturesque old Kanawha bridge, covered and dark, was built in 1847 or '8. It was a toll bridge and was a great convenience for the people on the lower side of the river.

Later the St. Marys Pike was built, and a railroad talked of. In 1851 a charter was secured for the North Western Railroad, which was not completed and cars running until 1857, when the first cars came to Parkersburg.

This was then a branch of the B. & O., the main line going to Wheeling. These were busy times. With the building of the road came many of our old and respected Irish families, and the Roman Catholic church. The same year the Marietta and Cincinnati railroad was completed to Harmar. This road did not at first come to Belpre, but to the river at what was known as Scott's Landing, ten miles above. From there passengers were brought by boat to the depot, which was the brick building now the B. & O. freight office, at the river. After some time the M. & C. was built to Belpre and passengers and freight were transferred by boat. After the bridge was completed in 1872 the short line to Athens was built, making a more direct line to Cincinnati.

The railroad facilities and the number and capacity of the steamboats gave new life to the town. Our boundaries had extended as also our trade, many people coming in quest of business and homes. Mr. Shaw says from a population of 1500 in 1851 we had increased to 2,800 in 1860. At this time we received a city charter and had our first mayor, Mr. Jefferson Gibbens. We had not sprung up like a mushroom, but from this time, our growth has been more rapid.

The opening of the oil territory at Burning Springs in 1859, '60 and '61, and the civil war following so closely are events of which we will not attempt to speak.

As we look back over the century the contrast is great. In 1803 a few log houses at the Point and muddy roads, now we have well paved streets and fine houses. Instead of the canoe, flat boat and pack-mule, we have fine steamboats, steam and trolley cars. Instead of the pine knot or tallow candle and the great wood fires, we have electric lights and natural gas. In place of the hardships and deprivations of pioneer life, we have comforts

and luxuries such as were not dreamed of in the most civilized country of that time. Let us remember and respect those brave self-sacrificing men and women, through whose efforts we have come to this goodly inheritance.

I wish to say that I am indebted to the late Mr. Stephen C. Shaw, Dr. Hildreth of Marietta; also Mr. A. F. Gibbens and many other good friends for many of the dates and facts of this article, also to the ladies for their patience and attention.



