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CITY OF BRYAN
PREFACE

Few people who live in Ohio’s great urban areas have had occasion to know about Williams County, which is wedged between Indiana and Michigan in the extreme northwestern tip of Ohio. This county of pleasant hills and level valleys, of big farms and small factories, is a quiet area today. But long before it was formed, scarcely more than a hundred years ago, the people hereabouts were building a rich fund of history and legend. As settlements became towns, and the great westward migration went through Ohio, the county was the scene of many a rousing episode and the home of desperado and hero alike. Fighting parsons and eccentric schoolmasters; brave soldiers and murdering thieves; turbulent editors and quiet philanthropists; earthy farmers and imaginative artists—these are but a few of the people who lived in nineteenth-century Williams County.

Then this section of Ohio slipped into the quiet prosperity so characteristic of it today. The land is good and the farmers are happy; the factories are going and the workers are satisfied, for the wage scale is comparatively high. The relief problem is negligible.

Such, in brief, is the county treated in these pages. The basic manuscript resulted from the research of Ralph Goll in the district supervised by Gerald M. Sullivan. R. D. Sims handled publication arrangements. The cover design was drawn by Arthur Griffith of the Ohio Art Project, supervised in the State by Charlotte Gowing Cooper. The Writers’ Project acknowledges gratefully the assistance of Charles Ames, Mayor of Bryan; H. C. Vannorsdall, County Superintendent of Schools; L. N. Nicholas, Superintendent of Bryan Schools; the principals of various schools in the county; and Cass Cullis, publisher of the Bryan Democrat, whose support was largely responsible for the publication of this manuscript.

HARRY GRAFF, STATE SUPERVISOR
The Ohio Writers’ Project
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PART I CROSS-SECTION

General Information

COUNTY

Location: Extreme NW. cor. of Ohio.
Boundaries: Hillsdale Co. (Mich.), N.; Defiance Co. (Ohio), S.; Fulton and Henry Cos. (Ohio), E.; Steuben and Dekalb Cos. (Ind.), W.
Area: 411 sq. m.
Population: 25,510
Bus Lines: Short Way, Trailways, Greyhound.
Accommodations: Hotels in principal towns; inspected tourist homes and cabin camps at frequent intervals.
Swimming: Nettle Lake: Goll’s Landing, Robb’s Landing, SW shore; Roanza Beach (no public accommodations), W. shore.
Tennis: Courts, some public, some private, in every town.
Hunting: Open season for rabbits, Nov. 15-Jan. 1; other fur-bearing animals, Nov. 15-Jan. 15. Pheasant season, Nov. 15-25.
Fishing: St. Joseph and Tiffin Rivers, with their tributaries, for black bass, carp, catfish, bullheads, crappies, sunfish, perch, and bluegills. Nettle Lake for Warmouth bass.
Game Propagation Areas: Three large ones and about fifty wild-game passes.
Annual Events: School operettas, Bryan, Edgerton, Edon, Kunkle, Montpelier, Stryker, West Unity, in February; county basketball tournament, in March; county fair, Montpelier, in September.

BRYAN

Bus Stations: Short Way Lines, Christman Hotel lobby, 139 E.
Main St., Bryan to Toledo and intermediate points. Railways Line, New York-Chicago division, Christman Hotel lobby, signal stop for interstate passengers.

Taxis: Rates, 25c per mile to points in city, 7c beyond city limits.

Traffic Regulations: Speed limit, 20 mph in business district, 25 mph in residential zones, as indicated by signs. Eight traffic lights synchronized to permit cars to pass through without stopping, if traveling less than 24 mph. No time limits on parking in business district. Parking permitted in center of street on all sides of courthouse.

Accommodations: Three hotels—the Christman, the Elder, and the Elder Inn. Rooms for tourists also available in approximately 50 private houses. Tourist cabins, $1.50 up.

Theaters: Two first-class motion picture houses.

Swimming: Moore Memorial Swimming Pool, Moore Park. Season fees, for adults, $2.50. Daily fees: for adults 25c, high school students 15c, children 10c.

Tennis: Six courts maintained in Garver Park; no charge.

Football and Track: Garver Park, concrete stadium and flood-lighted field, for Bryan High School spring track meets and early fall football games.

Baseball: Rolland St. Grounds.

Golf: Orchard Hills Country Club, US 6, 3½ m. W. of Bank Corner, club house and 9-hole golf course on right (N.) side of road. Professional golfer employed. Greens fees, 75c weekdays, $1.00 Sundays and holidays.

Riding: Bryan Riding Academy, end of N. Rolland St., saddle horses, 50c per hour, 8:30-5.

Shooting: Bryan Gun Club, adjoining the Orchard Hills Country Club on W.; club house, ranges, and traps. Shooting matches frequently arranged for members and others desiring to enter. Fees vary according to prizes offered in matches.

Annual Events: Bowling tournament, Palace Recreation Hall, E. High St. opp. Bryan Public Library, opening first week in April; Horse Breeders' Social, E. R. Halleck farm, four miles north of Bryan on State 15, third week in July; Bryan Horse Show, featuring street parades, judging, and sales of blooded animals, third week in August; Invitational Golf Tournament, varying dates in August.

MONTPELIER

Railroad Stations: Wabash R. R. Station, foot of Empire St.
Traffic Regulations: Speed limit 20 mph in business district, 25 mph in residential zones. No time limit or parking restrictions in business district.

Accommodations: Two hotels—the Allen and the Jones. Rooms for tourists available in many private homes.

Park: Montpelier Playground Park, W. Main St., one block W. of business section, overlooking St. Joseph River.

Golf: Hillcrest Country Club, N. side of US. Route 20, midway between Montpelier and West Unity, 9 holes.

Ice Skating: Montpelier Playground Park.

The County Character

In applying the surname of David Williams to Ohio's northwesternmost county, the State legislature of 1820 acted with more than ordinary inspiration, for it is seldom that the political units of today bear out the suggestions of their nomenclature. Williams, born to wooden shoes, lived and died a farmer. The part he played in the capture of Major Andre and the exposure of Arnold's treason was incidental to his preoccupation with the soil. Created in that tradition, Williams County has remained predominantly agricultural, and something of the resolute early character of the Dutch-American plowmen attaches to its population.

Two States, Indiana and Michigan, border the county. Along the Fulton, Henry, and Defiance County lines are level, fertile fields characteristic of the Maumee Valley. Higher ground rises in its central townships, and, in Northwest Township, lakes and swamps that continue from Indiana nestle under hills that stretch from Michigan. The soil is varied, making it possible to cultivate practically every crop known in the Middle West.

A typical farmer of the area represents a second or third generation of western European immigrants. His grandfather probably served during the Civil War, and he himself may be a veteran of 1917-18. Owning and operating a 90-acre farm valued at $9,500, he has a gross cash income of $1,500 a year. Through economical management, he provides for a family of five and buys an automobile at least once every four years. His home, on an improved road, has a radio and electric lights. Busses transport
his children to school. He has the equivalent of a grammar-school education, subscribes to a daily newspaper published in Indiana, Michigan, or Ohio, and takes a keen interest in politics, community problems, and sports. In county elections, he splits his vote. He is seldom influenced by racial and religious prejudices.

No less than 98 per cent of the 25,510 residents of the county depend directly or indirectly on farms for their livelihood. The total value of farm lands and buildings exceeds $20,000,000 and represents three-fourths of the county's wealth. Much of the remaining wealth is invested in industries so closely allied with agriculture as to be part of it.

Until recent years there was a slow decrease in population and number of farms but an increase in farm acreage. Since 1930, the county has gained 1194 inhabitants. Yet deaths often exceed births in the monthly reports of the health authorities; and from 10 to 15 farms are abandoned or merged with other tracts each year. In 1937, the farm acreage was the highest in Ohio, amounting to 98.6 per cent of all the land within the county limits. The 263,000 acres were divided into 2,700 farms occupied by nearly half the county's inhabitants. Four of the twelve townships have no villages.

Dairy products, hogs, poultry, sheep, and wheat are the chief sources of income, but there is a high acreage of onions, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, and sugar beets. General crops include wheat, corn, oats, barley, and alfalfa.

General farming has saved the county from several major disasters. When the drought of the early 1930's killed the crops on the uplands, the river bottoms along the St. Joseph and Tiffin Rivers kept up the average of production. During the summer of 1937 and spring of 1938, floods destroyed thousands of acres of corn in the lowlands, but the high ground yielded a bumper crop. Even the stock market crash of 1929 and the bank holiday had few permanently injurious effects. Of the few banks liquidated, two paid out 100 per cent and two returned 83 per cent to their depositors. The heaviest losses incurred were on loans negotiated by organizations outside the county.

Of the villages, Stryker, Edon, West Unity, Alvordton, and Pioneer are almost wholly farm centers. Edgerton has a large basket factory, and Montpelier, next to Bryan in population, is at a division point on the Wabash lines and derives part of its busi-
ness from railroad employment, although recently the number of resident workers has declined sharply. Seven canning factories operate in the county.

Bryan, the county seat, with a population of more than 5,000, is rated a city. Its ten small factories have not altered the rural aspects of the streets and business places. Rather, they supplement agriculture by giving seasonal employment to 1,200 men and women, many of whom are drawn from near-by farms and return to agricultural pursuits during lay-off periods. This balance between agriculture and light industries, in which unskilled and semiskilled labor can be utilized, has gone far toward solving the county’s unemployment and relief problems.

More than 32,000 acres of Williams County land remain in wooded tracts, but there is no great lumber industry. Almost the only sawmills in operation are those engaged in temporary jobs, such as turning out heavy timbers for barns. The exceptions are in Edgerton, with its basket factory, and in Bryan and Edon, where lumber is converted into handles for axes and other implements. The reluctance of the farmers to sell their timber is traceable to an Old World influence. A great many of the county’s first settlers were Frenchmen from the Province of Doubs and Germans from the Rhine country. Considering the woods too valuable for wanton destruction, they cleared only such land as was necessary. Their feeling for trees has been transmitted to the present generation.

Between Stryker and the Fulton and Henry County lines there lives a large colony of German Amish. Although the present Amish generation has abandoned many of the taboos laid down by the founders of the sect, the older men retain chin whiskers, flat black hats, and tieless shirts, and the women their bonnets and sweeping petticoats. The sect does not readily agree with the Government’s farm policy, but when a non-Amish neighbor makes a success of some project under the guidance of Federal or State officials, the Amishmen often adopt the methods used. By such roundabout acceptance of Government aid, the Amish maintain their places among the most progressive farmers in the region.

Another prosperous community of German origin but of Catholic faith has its center at Blakeslee. Several Lutheran groups live in the vicinity of Edon. Mexicans, recent immigrants, live near the onion fields of Northwest Township.
The intermingling of these groups has resulted in little friction. Even during the World War, when mob hysteria prevailed, and the civilian hunt for spies and slackers seemed likely to develop strong intolerance, the conscientious objectors among the Amish churchmen suffered neither indignity nor persecution.

Land and Water

Few Ohio counties present wider variety of surface characteristics than Williams, which includes within its boundary lines a portion of the level lake-plain area, two lake ridges (Maumee and Whittlesay) marking an ancient margin of old Lake Erie, and an extensive region of glacial hills and moraines. The altitude ranges from 700 feet above sea level, at a point in the lake-plain district near Stryker, to in excess of 1,000 feet in Northwest Township. The entire township lies between 400 and 450 feet above the level of Lake Erie.

Sloping south and east from the Michigan and Indiana State lines, the county is drained by two rivers. The St. Joseph, with its headwaters in Michigan, flows through the heart of the county in a southwesterly direction and joins the St. Mary's at Fort Wayne, Indiana, forming the Maumee River. The Tiffin, known locally as Bean Creek, cuts through the southeast corner from Fulton County and flows into Defiance County, where it joins the Maumee. Eagle, Bear, and Nettle Creeks are the chief tributaries of the St. Joseph River. The Tiffin River drains Pulaski, Springfield, Jefferson, and Brady Townships through Owl, Bear, and Beaver Creeks.

A ridge, 6 to 8 miles in width and some 50 feet in height, crosses the county east of the St. Joseph River, forming a watershed between that river and the Tiffin. It is only a swell in the surrounding plain and differs little from it in physical features.

Just south of the Michigan line, the channel of the St. Joseph River is deep and narrow, and the bed lies in drift. Elsewhere the river flows, as does the Tiffin, through a shallow course characterized by a clay bottom.

Included in the St. Joseph River system is Nettle Lake, said to be Ohio's largest natural inland lake, containing almost 300
acres of water. The lake is situated a mile south of the Michigan line and a mile east of Ohio-Michigan Route 49. It has several spring-fed inlets that rise in the surrounding wooded hills. Its outlet is Nettle Creek, which joins the St. Joseph River near Montpelier. Until the early years of this century, the lake had an area of some 500 acres. Then property owners in the vicinity dredged it, lowering its channel five feet and reducing the lake to two-thirds its original size.

Three miles east of Nettle Lake is Hayes Lake, which has no outlet and is privately owned. Because of the collapse of its muck and peat banks, this body of water has been growing in size. It now contains about six acres of water, and is said to be a hundred feet deep. Mud Lake, actually little more than a pond, lies several miles south and west of Nettle Lake. Like Hayes Lake, it has a muck bottom and a treacherous shore line. Two miles south and two miles east of Bryan is Power Lake, formerly a clay pit, which now contains about 20 acres of water and has a depth of 40 feet. Other artificial lakes and ponds are found in the vicinity of Stryker, Montpelier, and William Center.

Swamps, bogs, and sinkholes are numerous in Northwest Township. At one point on the Nettle Lake-Pioneer road, a half-century of effort has failed to establish a permanent fill. Another sinkhole has caused the collapse of the pavement on US 20 near Jim Town.

Glacial deposits of fieldstone and boulders are found at many points in the neighborhood of Nettle Lake. Elsewhere the rock debris of the ice sheet lies deeply buried.

About one-eighth of the county is wooded; heavy stands of timber mark the courses of the two rivers and surround the three natural lakes. Much of the hill country is bare and deeply eroded. The destruction of forests on the uplands has sped the drainage of the watershed, with the result that several streams that carried a year-round flow of water as recently as 1900 are now dry except in flood periods. Leatherwood Creek, formerly important in the drainage of Jefferson Township, now has its source ten miles from its original headwaters.

The county is poor in soil and rock formations that make for mineral wealth. Classified as belonging to the Devonian system, it lies on a primary stratum of Huron shale at all points except perhaps its southeast corner. There the shale may be subordinate to a rim of Devonian limestone that begins at the Michigan
State line a few miles west of Toledo and circles south and west to the Indiana line, including all or parts of Lucas, Paulding, Defiance, and Van Wert Counties.

The oil wells driven within the boundaries of Williams County have been few and closely spaced, but all the experimental drillings have encountered Huron shale as the top stratum. None, except a well at Stryker, disclosed evidence of coal, petroleum, gas, or other deposits of value. Bored in the hope of finding oil, the Stryker well brought in an intermittent flow of gas and later filled with mineral water of well-established medicinal properties. This water is believed to issue from limestone of the Hamilton group, which the bore passes at a depth of 230 feet.

The drill penetrated 129 feet of glacial drift before reaching the Huron shale. The stratum was found to be 68 feet thick and based on grits and shales belonging to the Waverly group. The drillers abandoned the project, after their pipe had been sunk into Ohio shale of unknown depth. This shale, productive of most of the oil and gas found in northwestern Ohio, was explored to a depth of 1,500 feet in subsequent drillings, but the results were even more discouraging than those at Stryker.

These test holes indicate that the county’s indurated rock dips to the north at the rate of 18 feet to the mile, continuing the decline into Michigan. Since the altitude at Stryker is 300 feet less than in Northwest Township, it is estimated that the glacial drift along the Michigan line has a depth of at least 500 feet.

The geology of the glacial drift is divided into two marked provinces by the Upper Beach (Maumee) Ridge, which enters Williams County from Defiance County at Williams Center and follows a northeast course, passing west of Bryan and Pulaski and through West Unity before entering Fulton County at a point a half-mile south of the Michigan line. As the post-glacial shore line of Lake Erie, the ridge is naturally sandy. The soil in some places is objectionably light, but the eastern slope is highly valued for a sandy loam that changes gradually into a clay loam on the lake plain.

West of the ridge, the surface soil consists largely of unmodified Erie clay, much of it yellow or buff clay containing just enough sand and gravel to make it arable. Patches of unmixed clay are frequent but small. Carbonate of lime was originally very abundant and to some extent still remains on level ground, but the deposits have washed from the slopes.
Northwest Township has a wide variety of soils created by glacial action. Deposits of white and yellow sand alternate with pits of gravel, peat and muck bogs, and tracts of marl in which the decomposition of shells is not complete.

Gravel deposits exist in all the county's central, western, and northern townships, the banks of the St. Joseph River furnishing much of the material for secondary roads. Clay for commercial purposes has been excavated at various times in the vicinity of Bryan and Stryker. Marl is mined in the neighborhood of Nettle Lake, but only for local use.

Artesian wells are common in the county. The first flowing wells in the Maumee Valley were developed in Bryan in 1840. Since then, the search for them has been extensive, and their belt has now been defined as following the Upper Beach Ridge through both Defiance and Williams Counties. The fountain area varies from two to ten miles in width in the central part of the county. Another, apparently unrelated, belt of flowing water exists in the northwest corner of the county. All well and fountain water in the county has its source in sand and gravel in Erie clay. Many wells have a depth of 100 to 200 feet. Iron, alum, and sulphur are present in many of the wells of Northwest Township.

**Wildlife**

Although Williams County was once a favorite hunting ground of the Wyandotte, Miami, and Pottawattomie tribes, its wildlife was destroyed largely by the pioneer white man. Fortunately, however, the present-day inhabitants acknowledge the need for measures to restore and conserve its natural resources. Aquatic species are on the increase in all the county's lakes and streams. Small game is multiplying rapidly, and even a few of the larger fur bearers have reappeared in localities where they were unknown for many years.

In the opinion of State conservation officials, the county's wildlife will continue to gain in number and variety, but only the complete collapse of the agricultural industry and reforestation of the land can restore the big game that once found a favorable habitat in the swamps and woods.
The first settlers in Williams County depended almost entirely on wild animals for their food. Deer, black bear, and wild turkey abounded in all the townships. Otter and beaver were so numerous that their pelts provided a medium of exchange in the absence of money, while the bobcat, wolf, and panther were a constant menace to domestic creatures and, on occasion, to the settlers themselves.

The folklore of the county is rich in tales of mighty hunters and savage beasts. Some of the stories follow the usual pattern of legends, but others are undoubtedly authentic and explain the wantonness with which the pioneers exterminated the forest creatures.

As a boy, the late Judge Charles A. Bowersox, jurist, legislator, and county historian, narrowly escaped being devoured by a wolf pack. While his dog, Caesar, stood off the ravening animals, young Bowersox sought refuge in a tree. Caesar then abandoned his unequal battle and ran to the family cabin, where he managed to indicate that his young master was in trouble. The boy’s mother sounded an alarm on a dinner horn, and neighbors, gathering to the call, routed the wolves.

In the same year, a young mother with a baby in her arms, setting out from a Florence Township cabin for the home of a friend, was pursued by a panther. As the mother fled, she dropped a bundle of diapers. The big cat halted, nosed the cloths, and tore them to pieces, giving the quarry time to reach the protection of an ashery along the trail.

Another, almost classical, animal tale has to do with the adventure of John Gillet, a Mill Creek Township settler who contracted to catch a pair of live bear cubs for a dealer in Adrian, Michigan. After a day of fruitless hunting, Gillet sat down to rest beside the butt of a huge beech that had broken off some 15 feet above the ground. Presently he was aware of a disturbance within the bole. Putting aside his rifle, he obtained a stout pole and leaned it against the snag, then “shinnied” to the top. The trunk proved to be hollow to the ground. At its base, two bear cubs were frolicking. In his excitement, Gillet dropped down upon them without considering the difficulty of climbing out. He caught the cubs, tied their snouts and paws, and slung them over his back on a buckskin belt.

Then, to his dismay, he discovered that the interior of the stump was too smooth and slippery to afford a foothold anywhere.
Worse still, it was too large to permit him to work his way to the top by bracing his feet against one side and his shoulders against the other. Knowing that there was hardly a chance that he could make his voice heard by a fellow hunter, Gillet resigned himself to death. Unless the mother bear returned and killed him, he was almost certain to starve.

After a half-day of agonizing suspense, the bear hunter heard the claws of the dam outside the stump. Then her shaggy body shut out the dim light that filtered through the hole. Gillet, watching breathlessly, perceived that she was descending tail-first, apparently unaware of his presence. For a moment he was tempted to throw himself down and permit her to maul him, thinking that such a death would be preferable to the torments of starvation. Then his hand fell on his only weapon, a hunting knife, and he felt a surge of hope.

When the bear reached a point just above his head, he grasped her tail with his left hand and drove the knife into her haunches with his right, at the same time yelling at the top of his voice. Roaring with pain and fright, the bear clawed her way upward, dragging Gillet with her. At the top of the stump, both the hunter and bear leaped for the ground.

"The last I saw of the old bear, she was still going," Gillet afterward related.

The hunter still had the cubs on his back. He sold them to the Michigan dealer for $5 each, and they were later shipped to a private zoo in Baltimore.

The Gillet adventure is accepted as the truth by the historian, Van Tassel, who includes it in his Story of Ohio. The hollow snag from which the woodsman claimed to have escaped so miraculously stood on the banks of Mill Creek and was frequently visited by sightseers in earlier days.

Two other noted hunters of the period were George Bible, of Superior Township, and Fred Mizer, of Center Township. Jealous of their reputations as deerslayers, the pair in 1840 entered a contest against each other. In two months, Bible killed 99 deer and Mizer 65.

The county's wildlife had suffered little from the Indians, who were true conservationists, but the white settlers contrived to destroy nearly all the large game animals within 20 years. At the outbreak of the Civil War, both deer and bear had vanished and most of the valuable fur bearers were approaching extinction.
Commercialized hunting and trapping, generally blamed for the disappearance of game, probably had less to do with the tragedy than the clearing of the hardwood forests and the draining of the swamps. The larger animals and many species of waterfowl could not adjust themselves to life in an era of cultivation. In 1900, most of the county's fields and woods were devoid of even the smallest game. Few fish remained in the rivers, which had been seined, trapped, dynamited, and polluted by sewage.

A little later, the enactment of conservation laws and the education of the populace through the schools, nature-study groups, sportsmen's clubs, and other organizations brought the county to a realization of its folly.

Between 1900 and 1914, the so-called farm game animals and birds had a period favorable to their propagation. Bob-white quails, fox squirrels, and rabbits, whose nature it is to feed close to their cover, profited, not only from legal protection, but also from the farming methods then generally in use.

The World War, inaugurating a system of intense cultivation, caused another decline in wildlife. The Osage-orange hedge rows and stake-and-rider rail fences that had once divided the farms into small fields were removed, and with them went attractive game shelter and lanes. Livestock was pastured in grain fields after the fall harvests, destroying what had previously been the feeding grounds of all birds and animals. The bob-whites and other birds and animals that had prospered with the expansion of early agriculture no longer had sufficient food or cover to survive in large numbers. Farms that had once provided for several coves of quail no longer afforded sustenance for more than a few birds, if any.

With the native game again facing extinction in spite of laws, game wardens, and attempts at State propagation, two species of exotic birds—the Hungarian partridge and the ringneck pheasant—were imported from foreign countries and introduced to northwestern Ohio. In many sections the results were discouraging, but in Williams County the birds became firmly established and increased rapidly.

The depression and the subsequent efforts of the Federal Government to aid agriculture were a boon to both the new and old game species. The withdrawal of thousands of acres of land from cultivation vastly increased food and cover. Foxes reappeared after an absence of more than a quarter of a century. The
spoor of otter was seen again in the neighborhood of Nettle Lake, where no fur bearer larger than a mink or muskrat had been taken within the memory of living inhabitants. Opossums, unknown in the county before the 1920's, became as numerous as rabbits in some districts, though no effort had ever been made to add them to the wildlife of the area.

In 1938, the State department of conservation began an experiment under the direction of Jack Sun. In less than a year, the planned economy in wildlife began to show desirable results. In Brady and Center Townships, refuges and propagation centers permitted birds and animals to benefit from agricultural activity without losing the protection of trees, brush, and weeds.

Hunters and trappers had their best season in many years during the fall and winter of 1938. More than 50,000 cottontail rabbits, 5,000 cock pheasants, 10,000 fox squirrels, and 2,000 partridges were bagged by some 10,000 hunters. Muskrat, mink, raccoon, skunk, and opossum furs valued at $30,000 were taken by trappers, who also snared a dozen red foxes and a coyote. Waterfowl and woodcock shooting along the St. Joseph and Tiffin Rivers and at Nettle Lake resulted in a few good bags, the hunters reporting an increase in the number of ducks nesting in the local area.

Williams County non-game and song birds are numerous; they include nearly every variety known in Ohio. Kangaroo mice and flying squirrels, seldom seen in other parts of Ohio, inhabit the wilder parts of Northwest Township. Predatory birds are common, marsh hawks and great horned owls being the most destructive. Crows, too, have come through the development of agriculture and perfection of gunnery without great loss in number. Six Bryan sportsmen, in order to amuse themselves without destroying more valuable forms of wildlife, shot more than 600 crows in 1938.

In the same year, 2,698 fishing licenses were issued to residents of Williams County. The biggest fish taken were a pickerel weighing 16 pounds and a black bass weighing 7 pounds, 2 ounces. Native fish include pike, pickerel, small-mouth and large-mouth black bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, perch, and rock bass. Warmouth bass, caught in great numbers at Nettle Lake, is unknown in any other body of water in the State. Brook trout are occasionally taken in streams along the Michigan State line.
Williams County History

When the legislature of 1820 created 14 counties in northwestern Ohio, it assigned to Williams a vast amount of territory, apparently on the principle that the least promising parts of the region should be in the largest units; at the time, no one had much faith in the future of the wilderness north of the Maumee River and west of Lake Erie. All the territory now designated as Defiance County and much of present-day Fulton County were included in the original Williams survey. For purposes of civil jurisdiction, Putnam and Henry Counties were attached to Williams County. In turn, Williams County functioned as a dependency of Wood County, sharing its seat at Maumee.

Previous to 1830, northwestern Ohio was claimed as a part of Wayne County, with Detroit its nominal center of government. Actually, law had been unknown except at a few Army posts, the existence of which was always problematical, until the War of 1812 eliminated both the Indians and the British as claimants to sovereignty in the Lake Erie region.

In 1824, the Williams County judicial and tax-collecting district established its own administrative center at Defiance, the scene of minor military activities during Wayne’s campaign and the War of 1812. A circuit court, sitting in the fortified village in that year, legalized one of the frontier marriages, which until then had been contracted without civil or religious formality.

In or near Defiance at that time lived 387 settlers, constituting the entire white population of the Williams-Defiance-Fulton County area. Within the present boundaries of Williams County, there was not a single inhabitant of Caucasian stock. The voyageurs, who are supposed to have traded along the St. Joseph River and Detroit-Wabash River trail during the French occupation of the Middle West, had vanished, leaving no trace of their activities.

Even the resident Indians were few. Groups of the Miami, Wyandotte, and Pottawattomi, thrown together by common adversity, had a wretched village near Denmark Bridge in present St. Joseph Township. At Nettle Lake and on the townsites of Stryker and Montpelier were more or less permanent camps. Little is
known about their tribal history or chieftains except that Sum­mendewat, a famous Christian chief, frequently visited them dur­ing his travels from the Wyandotte mission at Upper Sandusky. At a later period, during a return trip from the St. Joseph River, the chief and his wife, son, and niece (Nancy Grey Eyes) were robbed and murdered by henchmen of Sile Doty (see The Saga of Sile Doty).

The Indians had never engaged the whites in battle on Williams County soil and offered no resistance to the predatory traders and hunters who formed the spearhead of a movement northward from the Maumee Valley in the late 1820's. In 1827, James Guthrie, farmer-hunter, built a cabin north of the present Defiance-Williams County line, becoming the county's first per­manent resident. In the same year, Samuel Holton settled on Fish Creek, a tributary of the St. Joseph River, and he later erect­ed a sawmill and grist mill. Trading posts were established soon afterward at Pulaski and Denmark. By 1830, the southern part of the county had several hundred inhabitants.

Most of the early settlers arrived at their future homes on foot, carrying little else than their muskets and axes. Few were married; even fewer had money enough to take up land at pre­emption prices. Land to which clear titles had been established sold for $1 to $1.24 an acre, but titles were of no moment to the penniless adventurers. Clearing the woods and building cabins wherever their fancies led them, they formed colonies of squatters.

For the most part, the pioneers lived little better than the Indians they were dispossessing. Corn grown under girdled trees and ground by primitive devices supplied them with a year-round diet to which, in season, wild berries and roots were added. Bear, deer, wild turkey, and fish were abundant at the time, and no able-bodied man lacked meat. The pelts of beaver, otter, and mink afforded a medium of exchange.

During the early 1830's, ox-drawn wagons brought family groups northward along the trail that led from Defiance through Brunnersonsburg. Among the early arrivals was Judge John Perkins, who settled with his family and a group of friends at the Lafayette trading post (Pulaski) in 1833. The Judge—in those days every outstanding person had a judicial or military title—visualized the place as a future metropolis. On a site described by a contempor­ary as "the middle of a puddle half way between Boston and the Independence Mission at the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail,"
Perkins platted his dream city, laying out a courthouse square, parks, and parade grounds, with places for monuments to Lafayette, Washington, and other heroes of the Revolution.

While the judge built air castles, and his less imaginative sons erected a sawmill and grist mill, a military courier spurred a staggering horse into Lafayette. He was carrying to the Army commander at Detroit a report of the uprising of the Sac and Fox Indians, and he had been in the saddle constantly since leaving Illinois. Although the resident Indians had neither spirit nor strength left for another conflict with the whites, wild rumors spread through the settlements, and the veterans of 1812 grimly prepared for a repetition of the terror that had ended just 20 years before. The Williams County tribes remained peaceful, perhaps ignorant of Blackhawk's insurrection, and after a few weeks of uncertainty the settlers returned to their normal way of life.

Soon other towns were being platted by land speculators acting on a well-founded belief that the completion of the Miami and Erie, and the Wabash and Erie canals, soon to link the Ohio and Wabash Rivers with the Maumee, would open the new country to a rush of migrants from the East.

Most of the real-estate promotion schemes were confined to points no farther north than Lafayette, for it was not considered possible that the area along the Michigan line, 50 miles from transportation facilities, would ever be of much value. For that reason the settlers took little interest in the so-called Toledo War of 1835, although the county gained a strip of territory 10 miles wide, when Ohio pushed back the alleged Michigan frontier from the Fulton line to the Harris line. The Gore, as the ceded area was known, contained some 250 square miles of uninhabited and unexplored swamps and hills. Some of the pioneers were in favor of giving it to the Indians.

South of Lafayette, farmlands had so far succeeded the forests that the organization of a township became possible in 1835. On May 16 of that year, an election was held, introducing politics and the ballot to the area now known as Williams County. The commissioners of the existing county, meeting in Defiance, had previously selected Springfield as a name for the new unit of government. Colonizing in this township were the first alien immigrants to reach the county, most of them having come directly from the northwestern provinces of France and adjoining German and
Swiss provinces. On March 7, 1836, two townships were organized—Brady on the north side of Springfield and Center on the west. On the Tiffin River, Lockport, now a ghost town, was Brady’s community center. Center Township had its seat at Williams Center, a trading post believed at that time to be equidistant from the county lines.

Later in the year, a second city on paper was founded by another ambitious and visionary judge, Levi Parker, who chose the Indian trading post at Denmark in St. Joseph Township as a site for his metropolis. He platted an extensive area of woods near the Indian camp, and for several years the community, though doomed to quick extinction, ranked as the most prosperous and populous in the county.

Jefferson Township came into being at an election held on June 6, 1837. A month later the village of West Jefferson was laid out. Its promoters were pledged to make it even more magnificent than the Lafayette and Denmark pictured by Judges Perkins and Parker. Jefferson Township was almost completely inundated at this time, and much of the clearing was accomplished by axemen using rafts or standing knee-deep in water. Unable to convert his holdings in the swamp into a farm, one of the pioneers, George Washington Pelkey, is said to have departed for a more favorable county with the bitter observation: “It is written in the Bible that God divided the water and the earth. This is a place He forgot.”

About the same time the Post Office Department, in difficulty over the popularity of Lafayette in town nomenclature, forced a change of name on the Perkins townsite, permitting it to receive mail service only after the judge had rechristened it Pulaski. A township bearing the same name was immediately formed, with Pulaski as its seat.

A colony of New England Yankees that had established itself in the west-central portion of the county soon withdrew from St. Joseph Township and created Florence Township. Spring Lake, later Union Corners, was its principal community, although a great grist mill was in operation at West Buffalo.

The canal boom had now begun in all parts of western Ohio. Farmers were migrating by the thousands from the southeastern part of the State and from Pennsylvania, where the surface wealth of the soil had been exhausted even at this early date. Williams County’s heavy growth of timber indicated rich land and drew
many of the westward-moving families into permanent residence. Most of the newly arrived settlers were Pennsylvania “Dutchmen.” Undismayed by the prevalence of water, they cleared, drained, tilled, and stayed.

Even the “terrible winter” of 1837-38, which reduced the number of Indian inhabitants by two-thirds and resulted in the deaths of scores of white pioneers, did not shake the stubborn faith of the Teutonic farmers in the possibilities of the new country. Unprepared as they were for abnormal conditions, the settlements found themselves cut off from all outside help by a blizzard that continued for many days. Months of sub-zero weather followed. Fodder, hay, and food stores of corn and jerked venison were exhausted. All burrowing animals remained dormant in their dens. The deer herded and moved into remote swamps. Bird life almost vanished.

Followed by their lean cows and oxen, the settlers foraged in the woods, cutting twigs from the tops of saplings that barely reached the surface of the snow and feeding the animals on the spot. Unable to kill game, they fared little better than their livestock. Malnutrition and exposure induced disease, and in several outlying cabins the deaths of parents left young children to starve.

Snow birds, killed with arrows, and dog meat comprised the only food of bands lodged at Nettle Lake and in Benjamin C. Pickle’s ashery at Spring Lake. The plight of the Denmark village Indians was even worse. At a council of the chiefs, it was decided that the old and crippled tribesmen must die in order to conserve food for the women and children.

One of the victims of the primitive law of necessity was a brave who had been disabled at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Known as Indian Jim by the white settlers, who in better times had supplied him with food, the crippled warrior accepted the decree of the tribe with the stoicism of his race. On his last night, he was permitted a place of honor at the fire in the council house, where he recounted the dramatic story of his hunts and battles. In the morning, he was put to death with a volley of arrows. (Gunpowder was too scarce to waste on a human being who could not escape.) The inhabitants of Denmark believed that the tribe, reverting to cannibalism, ate Indian Jim. Many legends grew up around the incident (see Tales of Ghosts and People).

The bitter winter ended Indian life as a part of the county scene, for most of the survivors trekked westward as soon as the
weather permitted. It also delayed the development of the county. Not until the summer of 1839 did the settlers become hopeful enough to proceed with the organization of community life. Bridge-water, first of the northern tier of townships to be settled, was then admitted to the intracounty union. The father of Will Carleton, farmhand poet, is said to have been the first inhabitant of Bridge-water Township (see The Arts). Millcreek and Superior Townships were also established in 1839. In Florence Township, a village was platted. Named Weston, it soon became known among the settlers as Mudsock, because of the miry main street. To escape the disparaging sobriquet, the promoters changed the name of the townsite to Edon.

In 1840, Williams County, including the territory now incorporated in Defiance County, had a population of 4,465. The northern half of the area still remained sparsely inhabited; Pulaski Township led all other subdivisions with 279 inhabitants, most of whom lived near Judge Perkins' townsite.

The founder of the proposed county seat had been unable to interest many settlers in his scheme of moving the government from Defiance, but his argument that Pulaski was equidistant from all points in the county and would better serve as a courthouse site than Defiance had merits which land speculators and politicians did not overlook. John A. Bryan, State auditor, and the American Land Company, an investment organization backed by Eastern capital, began to urge the establishment of the county seat on a tract four miles south and west of Pulaski. Bryan and the land company of course owned the section. Partisans of Pulaski and Defiance furiously opposed the movement, claiming that Bryan, as the principal in the plan, wanted to build a courthouse "near a hackberry bush under a swamp elm," for the tract was virgin forest.

Pulaski was soon eliminated in the three-cornered fight, but the residents of Defiance continued to claim the county seat as their perquisite, subscribing $2,250 to a fund for home propaganda and lobbying activities in Columbus. On May 25, 1840, a plea signed "The People of Defiance" was addressed to the county commissioners, who had indicated that they would vote for the establishment of a county seat on the Bryan-American Land Company tract. "Who are to be the sufferers?" the petitioners asked rather plaintively. "Why, those who have had the folly to believe implicitly in the honor of the State of Ohio," they answered. Ad-
mitting that Defiance was far from the geographical center of the county, the residents of the Maumee River country declared that nevertheless they had been assured that the town would remain forever the seat of the rural government.

A few days later the commissioners, acting with the consent of the State legislature, approved establishment of a new county seat on the speculators’ land. Miller Arrowsmith completed a survey of the townsite on July 14, 1840. The plat included a courthouse square donated by Mr. Bryan; the main streets were to be 100 feet wide. The plat was recorded on September 14 of the same year, Arrowsmith naming the embryo town Bryan in honor of its promoter.

As part of the agreement under which he had succeeded in having the county seat removed to his townsite, Auditor Bryan erected log buildings to serve as temporary quarters for county officials and prisoners. The first courthouse, if such it could be called, stood at the corner of Main and Mulberry Streets. The jail occupied a lot on the west side of North Lynn Street between Bryan and Mulberry Streets. Logs cut by Volney Crocker in the proposed courthouse square were used in the construction of the buildings. Crocker felled every tree in the square, leaving it an ugly waste of stumps and brush. A century of tree planting and cultivation has since failed to replace the great oaks and elms.

Soon after the log courthouse and jail were erected, William Yates arrived from Defiance and built a grocery store. Thomas Shorthill erected a tavern. Cabins began to rise on lots, which sold at exceedingly high prices.

In the first stage of the town’s development, it was discovered that artesian wells could be brought in by sinking pipes 15 or 20 feet through light clay into a gravel subsoil. The abundance of pure water and the ease with which it could be obtained, at a time when dug wells were spreading typhoid and malaria in many parts of the county, contributed more to populating the townsite than did its political significance.

Meanwhile, ten voters had taken up farms in the northwest corner of the county. Meeting in 1840, they divided among themselves the offices necessary for the formation of a township and obtained the consent of the commissioners to the establishment of Northwest Township. John Billings, who had established a trading post near the Indiana-Michigan line soon after the Gore was made part of the county, became trustee and justice of the
peace. His store formed the nucleus of a settlement known as Billingstown. This village, together with a contemporary settlement founded a mile north of Nettle Lake and known as Gravel Hill or Northwest, is now extinct.

The settlers of Northwest Township were for the most part hunters and trappers; primitive modes of life survived longer among them than among the inhabitants of districts where there was less game. Deer and bear were numerous, and their hides, selling for $3 and $8 each, made woodcraft more profitable than farming. The most noted woodsmen of the period were the five sons of James Knight, a blind veteran of the War of 1812 who settled on the north shore of Nettle Lake. One of the Knight boys and a companion were mysteriously drowned while shooting deer from a dugout canoe in the lake (see Tales of Ghosts and People).

Aaron Burr Goodwin, a renegade with much ability and little principle, also managed to prosper in the new township. A whisky runner, Indian trader, gunsmith, surveyor, and mail carrier by turns, Goodwin appeared in the neighborhood of Billingstown with two orphan girls he had adopted informally. He had been expelled from other settlements, and soon found it expedient to flee to Indiana, when Big Jack, a resident Wyandotte, threatened to take his scalp in payment for a debt. One of the girls, remaining behind, married Hiram Russell and occupied the Goodwin cabin for many years.

Hardly had Goodwin quit the township, when the advance of law-enforcing government to the frontier drove Sile Doty and his band of border ruffians into the vicinity. Northwest Township and adjoining sections of Indiana and Michigan gave them sanctuary throughout the 1840's and 1850's (see The Saga of Sile Doty).

In February 1841 all court records and office supplies were moved from Defiance to the makeshift courthouse in Bryan. Two months later a circuit-riding judge urged a tired horse into the clearing. On April 19, he began hearing a half-dozen cases, most of which involved charges of assault and battery that had grown out of brawls, an inescapable part of frontier life. Later in the year, the community began to receive mail service; the village blacksmith, as postmaster, picked up letters deposited in a box nailed to one of the stumps in the square.

Previous to the establishment of the county seat in Bryan, few of the settlers and none of the squatters in the northern part
of the county had paid taxes. Money was still something of a curiosity in the backwoods, and, as the laws made no provision for the payment of assessments in pelts and other forms of exchange, there was much dissatisfaction when the county officials took legal measures to collect in cash. Unable to wring enough money out of the farmer population to offset increased expenses, the tax-gathering agencies imposed a special levy against the lawyers and doctors who comprised the county's only professional-income group. The preachers and schoolmasters of the day were rated little higher than other intinerants and so escaped the tax, which remained in effect several years in spite of its illegality.

Alvordton, on the Justus Alvord tract in Millcreek Township, and the Brady Township clearing, which its owner, John Rings, had named West Unity after his birthplace, Unity, Pennsylvania, were platted in 1842. The latter settlement grew rapidly, with lots selling for the then amazing sum of $40. Since 12 electors had established residence in the western portion of Millcreek Township in 1843, the county commissioners granted them the right to self-government in an area thereafter designated as Madison Township. This was the last township established in what is now Williams County.

When Cyrus Barrett had moved into the district in 1838 with a family of ten, he had found no evidence of settlement except a deserted cabin in a slashing near the present site of Kunkle, and a village of Pottawattomi at the confluence of the east and west branches of the St. Joseph River. The Indians had been camping at the fork for several generations, occupying bark lodges and growing corn in the neighboring bottom lands. A half-dozen trails from Indiana, Michigan, and the Maumee River converged there. The Madison Township voters met in Barrett's 18-by-20-foot cabin—a mansion among the dwellings—and divided the local offices among themselves, some assuming as many as three posts. A pewter teapot was used as a ballot box. Tallman Reasoner was named judge of elections as well as one of two overseers of the poor; Cyrus Barrett, Jr. shared the latter job with him.

Three months after the election, on July 10, 1843, the township government functioned for the first time in connection with the problem of relief. Overseer of the Poor Barrett issued a writ against Overseer Reasoner. The remarkable document, which is still on record, states:
Whereas complaint has been made to me, Cyrus Barrett, Jr., overseer of the poor of said township, that Tallmann Reasoner and his family are likely to become a township charge, you are therefore commanded to warn said Tallman Reasoner and his family to depart from said township forthwith, and of this writ make legal service and return.

The writ was served by Constable Daniel Barrett, another of the Barrett boys. Overseer of the Poor Reasoner left immediately, and the township was temporarily relieved of its responsibility of caring for the poor.

The town of Defiance had not been idle since the loss of the county seat. On March 4, 1845, it obtained permission from the State legislature to organize Defiance County. While Bryan protested vainly, eight southern townships were trimmed from Williams County for the creation of the new unit. Additional territory was obtained from Paulding and Henry Counties, giving Defiance an area large enough to meet the demands of the State constitution.

The partitioning of Williams County, accompanied by bitter debates and threats of armed reprisal, left Bryan only three miles from the new boundary line on the south. Its cry that it was centrally located no longer applied. Swiftly rising West Unity, seeing Bryan thus discomfited, seized its rival's old rallying cry and began to urge a claim for the county seat. The fight continued for five years, with newspaper editors and politicians in the two villages stirring up the popular clamor.

It was characteristic of that lusty period that the dissen­sion over the local government often flared into physical combats. Fists swung in taprooms, churches, newspaper offices, and even the courthouse. Court records disclose that, in 1845, Judge Thomas Kent was arrested for assault and battery. In the same year, the prosecuting attorney, E. H. Leland, was jailed for gambling.

Simultaneously, the problem of taxation was aggravated. The county's heaviest taxpayers had resided in the rich valley of the Maumee, and with their loss the assessments against the impoverished farmers of the northern townships skyrocketed. John Case, a Florence Township settler, paid 51 cents on his only taxable property, four cows and oxen valued at $28. This rate approached two cents on the dollar of assessed valuation.

While the county was being introduced to exorbitant taxes, graft, and political machinations, another and far more disturbing element of modern life entered the scene in 1847 with the
murder, for purposes of extortion, of five-year-old David Schamp, son of Peter Schamp, a well-to-do settler living four miles east of West Jefferson. David Schamp was slain by Daniel Heckerthorn at the instigation of Andrew Jackson Tyler, a criminal who posed as a clairvoyant and solved crimes of his own commission for a fee. Tyler specialized in recovering the bodies of children he or his cat’s-paws had drowned and in revealing the hiding places of harness and farm animals taken from barns with his knowledge. The Schamp boy vanished from the yard of his home while his father and mother were at work. When a search by several hundred farmers failed to solve the mystery of David’s disappearance, Tyler was called in from near-by Kunkle. By means of hints and pseudo-spiritualistic hocus-pocus, he indicated that the child was dead and would be found “near green leaves, under wood and beside water.” The mutilated body was discovered soon afterward inside a hollow tree near Leatherwood Creek.

Milton Plummer, Jefferson Township schoolmaster, suspected that Tyler had guilty knowledge of the murder and began an investigation. He tricked Heckerthorn, a youth of low intelligence, into making a confession. Tyler, who had fled from the Schamp home after collecting a considerable sum of money for his “services,” was captured in Kunkle by a posse. Heckerthorn and Tyler were tried in the log courthouse at Bryan. Found guilty, they were condemned to death. Heckerthorn’s sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

In 1848, the county appropriated money to build a board fence around the courthouse square—a move challenged by liberal citizens on the ground that it was designed to separate the people from their government. The commissioners said the fence was not intended to keep out the voters, but rather the voters’ domestic animals. On January 26, 1849, the murderous kidnaper, Tyler, was hanged from a scaffold outside a new county jail on High Street, opposite the north side of Court Square. Like the courthouse, the scaffold was enclosed by a board fence, but this was rather too much for the citizenry gathered for the hanging. All the jailyard enclosure and most of the pickets around the county buildings went into bonfires.

The conviction and hanging of Tyler gave Bryan a strong talking point for retention of the seat of government. The claims of the village were further strengthened when the State legislature authorized its incorporation on March 7, 1849. On June 5, the town held its first election.
The end of the second historic courthouse battle came in 1850, when the State approved the creation of Fulton County and trimmed a large strip of territory from the eastern end of Williams County for inclusion in the new unit. The second and last partitioning of the county left it with 450 square miles of territory, divided into its 12 present townships. By staggering the county's east line, the legislature placed Fulton County less than three miles from West Unity, and so deprived that community of its claim of being nearer the center of the county than Bryan.

The end of the second struggle for the courthouse only heralded another, however. Montpelier, which had been platted in 1845 and had then reverted to farmland when the lots failed to sell, was again striving for recognition. Its promoters offered the same argument that Bryan and West Unity had used in turn. The town, they pointed out, was nearest the center of the county and could be reached by horse within a day's ride from any of the boundary sections.

Despite the loss of half its territory, the county more than doubled its population during the decade of the 1840's. The Federal census of 1850 enumerated 8,078 inhabitants, approximately 1,500 of whom were foreign-born. The revolutionary disturbances in Middle Europe in 1848 had driven the petite bourgeoisie and landed peasantry from their homes, and Williams County, like the rest of the Nation, was benefitting from the immigration of these productive and thrifty classes. Most of the county's alien settlers arrived with far more money and personal property than the native-born pioneers had possessed during the previous decade. A sounder monetary system had been established, and currency acceptable at its face value increased the flow of trade. Wheat prices rose slightly.

With these improvements in its economy, the county turned gradually to animal husbandry. Horses, unknown in some townships until 1843, replaced oxen. Hogs and beef cattle appeared on nearly every farm, their flesh substituting for the wild game of the 1830's as a home food and commodity. Chickens, too, were adding to rural income and furnishing the farmers with a much-needed change of diet. A multitude of steam grist mills supplied flour for white bread, but cornmeal and hominy remained the chief items of food among the poorer families.

In the villages, log store buildings gave way to frame struc-
tures with false fronts. The cabins were succeeded by two-story dwellings sided with planed clapboard. A few of the more pretentious homes were painted. Slower and less showy were the changes in rural buildings. Often the log houses became the kitchens of more substantial houses or furnished the framework for houses sheeted with wide, rough boards, the unmatched edges of which required the covering of narrow strips. The same methods of carpentry were used in the replacement of the primitive barns.

Jean coats and pantaloons had long since supplanted buckskins, and the felt hat outmoded the coonskin cap except in winter. Among the frontier women, styles had changed little, but the ladies were beginning to experiment with dresses hand-sewn from bolts of goods, then procurable at every general store. Sewing machines of a crude type were being demonstrated by wandering salesmen, but only a few women believed them practical.

The county entered the 1850's with its populace much excited over the prospects of obtaining railroad transportation and shipping facilities (see Passengers and Freight). After the bursting of the Junction Line bubble, the Air Line Railroad (Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana), a corporation that was able to operate without local financing, surveyed a route through the southern part of the county. This line, now part of the New York Central system, linked Toledo with Elkhart, Indiana, eastern terminus of a Chicago railroad.

Hardly had the railroad surveyors set their stakes, when another town-plating epidemic began, this time along the right-of-way, which touched only one organized village—Bryan.

In the fall of 1853, John A. Sergeant and E. L. Barber platted a village on an old Indian campsite near the Tiffin River in Springfield Township, naming it Stryker in honor of John Stryker, one of the Air Line promoters. West of Bryan, in Center Township, the village of Melbern came into existence. Edgerton, named after A. P. Edgerton, canal and railroad financier, was platted at a point where the line crossed the St. Joseph River in St. Joseph Township.

On the northern fringe of the county, A. F. Norris, explorer, archaeologist, surveyor, and mechanic, able to build anything from a cabin to a steam sawmill, had decided that the time was auspicious for the founding of a town in Madison Township, even though no railroad had been planned for that part of the county. Acquiring a large tract on the west side of Clear Fork Creek a
mile above its junction with the St. Joseph River, Norris platted a village he called Pioneer. Actuated by family jealousy, G. R. Joy, who had married a sister of Norris' wife, bought the land on the east side of the creek and started a rival subdivision in 1853. Neither tract was favorable for building except on high ground, since Clear Fork frequently overflowed its banks and water stood in the hollows the year around.

For several years Norris and Joy battled for supremacy in the non-existent town. Then the lots began to sell, and their owners joined in the struggle. One of Joy's partisans, having built a house on the east bank, was persuaded to join the enemy, and attempted to take his dwelling with him. Joy obtained a court order against moving the structure. As a counter-stroke, the Norris faction crossed the stream in force and carried away the house.

In spite of the battle of the brothers-in-law, or perhaps because of it, Pioneer grew rapidly and was organized as a village as soon as a truce could be called. The disgruntled Norris moved west, where he fought Indians and immortalized his name by discovering Norris Basin, now a part of Yellowstone National Park.

In 1855, since railroad service between Bryan and Toledo had been inaugurated, the county felt that its future was assured and lent itself to a general boom. Land values increased, and the clearing of the forests was pressed with greater vigor. Through the fall and winter months, the countryside was noisy with the clang of axes and the crash of falling trees. Log-rolling parties combined pleasure with work, and every night the skies were red with the glow of burning timber dumps. Asheries worked 24 hours a day, turning out pearl ash for which the railroad had opened a market. Yearly, as the farmlands grew richer, they were scarred with muddy trails and leprous with patches of dead timber that had been girdled preparatory to complete destruction by axe and flame. The thousands of acres of new ground were like a vast cemetery, with their stumps like tombstones between the furrows.

Agriculture was being recognized as an industry and a science. The first harvesters had appeared in the county, selling at approximately $100 apiece; and farmers who could not buy them were eager to pay rental for their use. During the later 1850's, groups of farmers organized for the purpose of exhibiting their products and discussing their problems, indicating a con-
sciousness of their importance in the national scheme and a determination to make their lands yield something more than a meager living.

As if to mock the agrarian ideology and demonstrate the mastery of the weather over all farm activities, the elements combined to destroy the crops of 1859. After a hard frost on July 4, which killed all the fruit and much of the grain, a rainy period of long duration set in, rotting such produce as had survived. Backwoods prophets saw even more disastrous omens in the phenomenal weather, saying that it was only a token of the wrath to come. Revivalists expounded on apocalyptic signs. It is traditional that a general feeling of dread, accompanied by portents of nature, enveloped the county through 1860.

Then came the fall of Fort Sumter. Immediately, in the spring of 1861, the farms and villages began to pour their young men into the Union Army. The question of slavery and secession had not greatly disturbed the county, but the young men welcomed the war. They had been born too late for the pioneering age. Big game had vanished from the county, and farm life had become a dull round from which there was no escape, either through actual adventure or the sublimation of books and drama.

The Civil War stripped the county of its youth and held down the 10-year increase of its population to approximately half the gain of 8,555 credited to it between 1850 and 1860. Nevertheless, all communities prospered. The price of farm produce rose 100 per cent, and the value of land advanced proportionately. In 1865, with the war moving to a close, the county’s first national bank was chartered in Bryan. A year later its first large industrial enterprise, the West Unity Woolen Mills, opened for business. The mill displaced many carding machines and spinning wheels that had been household necessities in most homes, and it provided a convenient market for the wool that was now being produced in large quantities because of war prices.

The second county jail was demolished in 1867, when the county, no longer pinched for money, launched a building program. Sile Doty had been one of the last prisoners held in the structure that had been built to confine the condemned Andrew Jackson Tyler. “Tyler’s ghost flitted to new quarters at low twelve last night,” reported Robert N. Patterson, founder of the Bryan Democrat, after the supposedly haunted jailhouse had been wrecked. The third county prison, of brick construction, was erected at Bryan and Beach streets.
The county entered the 1870's with a population of 20,991. Good times continued, but the shadow of Grantism had fallen over many phases of community life. New homes, built in the so-called General Grant style, combined features of barn carpentry and the sometimes grotesquely ornamental architecture of the second French Empire. General Grant beards were popular. "We'll take it like Grant took Richmond" was a slogan that excused and encouraged brutal depredations of all kinds.

In that period, political corruption ranged from such activities as those of the "Boss" Tweed gang in New York, a criminal syndicate that stole $10,000,000 while building the walls of a $200,000 courts building, to petty graft and vote-buying at $2 a head in Williams County. However, with the softening influence of prosperity had come a sense of social responsibility. Previously the county had acted on the principle that the family, regardless of its circumstances, was entirely responsible for the care of the needy. In 1872, however, the county commissioners established a poor farm, and two years later erected an infirmary for the housing of the insane, infirm, and aged.

The postbellum prosperity ended in 1873 with a complete paralysis of the Nation's economic structure. The county, in common with other communities of the East and Middle West, had advanced too rapidly and too far to return to the primitive life of its pioneers. The "good old days" were already gone, but the reckless and often lawless will to conquer and acquire, evidenced in the "California or Bust" movement and other frontier demonstrations, still persisted, with the result that the new poverty was accompanied by an amazing outbreak of crime. In New York, it was estimated that one out of every seven inhabitants had a criminal record. Missouri had loosed the James and Younger Brothers on the Nation. The South was overrun with carpetbaggers.

In Williams County, where the proletarian outlaw-hero, Silé Doty, had now come to the end of his career, a type of bourgeois criminal was developing, and with a form of outlawry as new as the insurance companies against whom it was directed.

The post-war boom had brought to the county its first fire underwriters. Since there was little or no protection against fire in many communities, the policies had a wide sale among farmers and storekeepers. Most of the property was over-insured. In
1874, one of the policy holders, pressed by creditors, burned his barn without exciting suspicion and collected enough money to avert the loss of his land. He confided his secret to friends who were in need of financial aid, and soon farm and village fires became epidemic. Bryan found it necessary to buy a steam fire engine.

Many honest citizens lost original land grants through mortgages. Farm tenancy, almost unknown until the panic of 1873, increased at a rate that threatened for a time to make the peasant-landlord combination a permanent part of the economic structure. Unskilled and farm laborers worked for their board for a couple of dollars a month. The wages for skilled labor rarely exceeded 75 cents a day. Returned soldiers complained that they were faring worse than the enslaved Negroes they had fought to free.

In 1876, when the Philadelphia World's Fair was dramatizing the birth of the machine age with its amazing exhibits of artificial fertilizer and improved farm and factory equipment, Williams County was on its way to recovery. The process was accelerated by the introduction of some of the scientific marvels, such as steam threshing rigs. Telephones appeared in the county in 1879, although it was not until three years later that Bryan organized a company and established an exchange. About the same time, Montgomery-Ward catalogues became a part of every home library. Hard-surface roads and a local system of rural free delivery of mail had been tried and proved successful at Stryker.

At the beginning of the 1880's, the county had a population of 23,891, showing a gain of less than 3,000. All arable farm land was now occupied, and the once great forest had dwindled to a single section of virgin timber on the Fulton-Williams County line.

Another railroad boom had its beginning in 1880, when the Wabash Railroad system began work on its Detroit-St. Louis-Pacific line and designated Montpelier as a division point. The opening of the road in 1882 and the subsequent erection of a roundhouse and shop in the village vastly increased its population and made it a center of farm trade for all the north and middle townships. Montpelier immediately reasserted its claim for the county seat. Bryan countered by negotiating a place on the proposed Cincinnati, Jackson and Mackinaw Railroad.

The bitter rivalry of the two towns excited the county far more than had the assassination of President Garfield, and was a major issue in the local campaign of 1884. Marching clubs in
uniform led torchlight processions and nationally known spellbinders were brought to the county to speak for the opposing Presidential candidates, but the real fight was between Montpelier Democrats and Bryan Republicans over the selection of county commissioners. Montpelier's candidates lost, but the town succeeded in holding the county fair in 1885.

In 1887, the Cincinnati, Jackson and Mackinaw Railroad, now the Cincinnati and Northern, brought its steel to Bryan and pushed northward through Alvordton and West Unity. The Bryan partisans followed up their railroad victory by requesting the State legislature to authorize a county bond issue of $50,000 for repairs to the courthouse. Montpelier sent a delegation to Columbus to protest the enactment of such a bill, but Bryan's representatives succeeded in pushing through the measure.

During the following year, Bryan took time off from the fight to drill for gas and oil in the southeast part of town. The well brought in a flow of petroleum but failed to pay expenses. In Stryker and Edgerton, drillings were made with similar results.

Simultaneously, Montpelier carried the courthouse question to the high courts. The injunctions and appeals were dismissed eventually, and the county commissioners ordered the razing of the courthouse and the construction of an entirely new building, despite the fact that it had only $50,000 on hand for the project. Apparently the Bryanites were determined that their rivals should not be able to demolish the new structure, for its architecture had the massive lines of a fortress. Three years of labor and almost a quarter of a million dollars were expended on the building.

Meanwhile, private dwellings and business places had been burning merrily in all parts of the county. In several townships, whole hamlets were swept away. Charred and blackened ruins lined the country roads. The widespread destruction, perpetrated with great ingenuity and utter contempt for law and life, indicated the existence of a well organized gang of incendiaries. But the local officers lacked the training necessary to work up evidence acceptable by the courts. Moreover, witnesses who were in possession of damning facts feared to reveal their knowledge, for even the slightest question about the origin of a conflagration often brought swift retaliation. Families suspected by the arsonists of knowing or talking too much woke in the night to find their homes in flames, and they, in turn, were unjustly linked with the series of criminal fires.
Strangely, a building boom accompanied the outbreak of pyromania. Clay suitable for the manufacture of bricks and tile had been discovered at several points, and kilns at Stryker and Edon were profiting by the danger in which frame structures stood. Two- and three-story brick buildings replaced the false-front stores on the main streets of the villages. The commercial structures followed a pattern that was entirely utilitarian, but many of the town and farm residences built during the red-brick period had distinction and beauty.

The arson ring that had been applying the torch so successfully for a generation had brought several insurance companies to the verge of bankruptcy by the turn of the century. More than $1,500,000 worth of farm and village property had been consumed in incendiary fires. The Ohio State legislature of 1900 took cognizance of the condition and created the office of State fire marshal. A long period of detective work followed, with the State officers eventually capturing Jack Paige, a professional “torch” in the employ of arsonists. Paige, confessing, linked a score of prominent business men and farmers with the widespread plot. The conspirators were prosecuted by John M. Killitts, later judge of the Toledo district of the Federal Court.

Williams County, in 1900, had a population of 24,953 and had reached its major development as a farm area. Losses of population were to be registered in 1920 and 1930, after a slight rise in 1910 when the first present-day industries began operation (see Farm and Factory), but the population is again increasing.

The County in the Wars

Williams County’s contributions to the military activities of the Nation are symbolized in a blood-stained and tattered flag that hangs furled and almost hidden in the Bryan Public Library. Under it, the county’s own Thirty-eighth Ohio Volunteer Infantry lost a score of officers and about 65 per cent of its enlisted personnel during the Civil War.

The flag of the Thirty-eighth was designed and embroidered by a group of Bryan women, who presented it to the commanding officer, Colonel William Choate. The Colonel promised, after the
eloquent fashion of the time, that he and his men would defend it with their lives. Four corporals of the Thirty-eighth fell with the flag in their hands while storming the enemy positions at the Jonesboro railway junction outside Atlanta. A fifth corporal clung to it, although five bullets ripped through his uniform, while his comrades-in-arms swept Hardee's brigade from the field. The victory enabled Sherman to occupy Atlanta and begin his march to the sea.

The flag of the Thirty-eighth Ohio was not in the march to the sea. Reduced to 360 men before the attack, the regiment left 150 dead in the charge, and so was spared the duty of making war on civilians, women, and children.

At their reunions in later years, the surviving veterans frequently wept over their tattered colors and always spoke of Jonesboro as the "last battle." And so, perhaps, it was—in the sense that it concluded the long drama of men going forward to personal combat with drums, bugles, and streaming guidons. To be sure, Grant had not yet captured Richmond when Atlanta fell, but there, too, the modern war was being developed, with starvation and attrition taking the place of strategy and mines, entrenchments, and long-range bombardments; with rifled artillery supplanting the dashing charges of foot soldiers.

When the trumpeters of the Thirty-eighth Ohio sounded the charge at 4 p.m. of September 1, 1864, General Este's Federal troops, including the Ohio brigade, were in contact with the pickets of Hardee's Alabama troops. The main forces of the Confederate Army lay entrenched along the Jonesboro railroad tracks, determined to defend to the death the only means of transport and communication left to the city of Atlanta.

Corporal O. P. Randall was carrying the colors at the moment. Dashing to the head of the line, he was killed instantly by a sharpshooter's rifle. Corporal Baird snatched the flag from the dead man's hands and carried it forward a few paces. Volley fire from the Confederate lines cut him down.

Although it had now become apparent that any attempt to advance the standard was suicidal, Corporal Strawser, of Montpelier, caught it from the ground. A few seconds later he was wounded. Corporal Charles Donzey, of Stryker, continued the relay of death. He managed to remain on his feet long enough to plant the colors on the parapet of the Confederate works. Bayonets and rifle bullets hurled him back wounded, but the standard re-
mained, and he survived to wear the highest military honors the Government could grant. Corporal H. K. Brooks rallied the remnants of the regiment around the guidon; and, after a brief but furious fight with clubbing guns and lunging steel, the Alabama troops gave way. His center broken, Hardee was compelled to retreat all along the line. By evening, the Union forces were in possession of the railroad line, and the heart of the Confederacy lay open to the threat of thrust.

Until recently, only once since Jonesboro have the colors of the regiment been unfurled. During the burial service of Corporal Donzey, the regimental flag lay over his coffin. After the death of the last survivor of the Thirty-eighth and the passing of Hiram Louden Post of the G. A. R. at Bryan, it became the property of the library.

The Civil War action at Jonesboro is the high point in the long military history of Williams County. The history begins in pioneer times when every male inhabitant, holding himself to be a militiaman under the Constitution, got out his rifle on set days and reported at a township center. Bryan, at that period, had a brass cannon and a platoon of plowman-gunners.

At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Captain Daniel Chase and J. W. Wiley, a Bryan newspaper editor, recruited a company of infantry. The unit became part of the Regular Army and was attached to the Fifteenth United States Infantry as Company B. It participated in the Battle of Buena Vista and the march to Mexico City.

Although the total county population in 1860 was only 16,000, companies and troops composed wholly of Williams County men served in the 14th, 38th, 68th, 100th, and 111th volunteer infantry regiments, the 42d regiment of the National Guard, and the 3d and 9th cavalry regiments. During the Civil War, more than 1,500 men were drawn from the county for military service.

The first battalion of the Thirty-eighth was recruited entirely of three-year men who enrolled in the county. The first regimental commander was Colonel E. D. Bradley, of Stryker. The Eleventh Regiment, which saw action on a score of battlefields under Isaac R. Sherwood, had one entire company of men drawn from the county seat. Sherwood, the first man to enroll as a private in Williams County, joined the colors as soon as President Lincoln called for volunteers (see Gunpowder and Printer's Ink). Eight days after the fall of Fort Sumter, 112 of Sherwood's friends had followed his lead and were on their way to camp.
One or more of the Ohio regiments containing Williams County volunteers served in every major engagement of the Civil War. None lost its flag to the enemy, although a Confederate sergeant had his hands on the ensign of the 11th regiment during the desperate encounter at Franklin, Tennessee. A moment after the Confederate seized the flag, Sherwood’s men killed him and recovered it. Two weeks before the Battle of Jonesboro, the 38th Infantry captured three stands of colors.

William Knight, an infantry private who enrolled from Stryker, became one of the outstanding heroes of the Civil War after he offered himself for service as engineer in the Andrews railroad raid into the Confederacy. The raiders, operating in civilian clothes, stole a train from the enemy, tore up tracks, burned bridges, and delayed traffic on a vital line of communication. Later, all of them were captured or killed after a dramatic race and battle with a Confederate train. Captain Andrews and the other survivors were condemned to death under the laws of war. Eight of them, the leader included, were hanged outside Atlanta. Engineer Knight and a half-dozen others escaped a similar fate by tunneling their way out of prison. Knight was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

During the Spanish-American War, Company E of Bryan was part of the Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry and served with the army of occupation in Cuba. It participated in no major engagements but lost many men through disease. It was reorganized later as a unit of the Sixth Regiment, Ohio National Guard. With the rest of the national militia, this unit was called into Federal service in 1916 to defend the border against Mexican guerilla raids. In the spring of 1917, the Bryan company was recalled from the border, recruited to a strength of 300 men, and dispatched to Camp Sheridan, Alabama, for training.

Many other Williams County volunteers joined the artillery and medical outfits of the Thirty-seventh (Ohio) National Guard Division at the outbreak of hostilities with Germany, bringing the total number of volunteers to more than 500. Subsequently 1,200 men were drafted from the county. Most of the conscripts were assigned to the Eighty-third Division at Camp Sherman. Those who reached France and saw action were replacements in other divisions. Bryan’s Company E of the 147th Infantry was in action throughout the summer and fall of 1918, taking part in the St.
Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, and Flanders offensives. In common with the other units of the regiment, E Company suffered numerous casualties in the Verdun sector, particularly during the drive on Montfaucon. One of its officers, Lieutenant Charles E. Arnold, was killed in action. The Bryan post of the American Legion now bears his name.

The county no longer supports a unit of the National Guard. The farmer-soldier belongs to that glamorous past when men carrying flags charged gallantly to death. Yet Williams County is as patriotic as it ever was, and as ready to make sacrifices for what it believes right.

**A Vote For Better Weather**

The political issues that stirred Williams County a hundred years ago have been forgotten. No records remain to show how the citizens of the newly organized county seat cast their votes. It is significant, however, that in May 1838 they did vote, crawling half-famished from cabins that had been buried in snow since the preceding November and trekking to the township centers on creeks and rivers that were still ice-locked.

Historians of the period mention the election casually, seeming to feel that the settlers were doing nothing unusual when they fulfilled their obligations to the American political system under such desperate circumstances. Such devotion to the franchise, rare enough now, is perhaps best explained in the fact that many of the pioneers perhaps regarded voting as a sort of ritual and the May election as a spring festival. Subconsciously, they probably voted against winter and for the return of the sun.

The local office-holders of 1838 must have fared badly at the polls. The habit of making sacrificial goats of the partisans in power when bad weather, crop failures, or trade slumps decrease farm income—a habit implanted in a period when the Republic had yet to be tested—still persists in Williams County. In the 1938 elections, the county, which had gone strongly Democratic in 1932 and 1934 and divided its vote in 1936, gave the Republicans a majority of 3,000. It was a propitiatory vote to the gods of weather and trade. Forty-cent wheat had turned out the Republican officials. Sixty-cent wheat defeated their successors.
Unreasonable though the custom may be, it has the virtue of forcing an occasional turnover in offices, and it maintains in politics something of the democratic balance of nature.

Since 1865, the balance in Williams County is held between the Democrats and Republicans, with neither party losing many of its followers to rival organizations. The rural voter is inclined to guard his vote even more carefully than his money. He is frequently taken in by vendors of worthless stock, snake oil, and patent potato peelers, but he is skeptical about unorthodox political doctrines. The outright Socialists, Communists, and Farmer-Laborites among the voters can be numbered only by the dozen. The supporters of Dr. Francis Townsend and Father Charles Coughlin are more numerous, but their influence has remained negligible.

One of the benefits of the two-party, in-and-out system of government as practiced in the county has been the elimination of class and religious prejudice as a political factor. In its day, the Know-Nothing party had no adherents in local quarters. The Ku Klux Klan, which recruited a considerable membership during the early 1920's, had little appeal for the farmers, perhaps because men who follow plows all day seldom feel the urge to go night-riding. At no time were the klansmen able to control a single office.

The first political meeting known to have been held north of Fort Defiance in what is now Williams County took place at Lafayette (later Pulaski) in 1836, with Patrick J. Goode as the principal speaker. The county's first party convention was called at the home of Colonel J. B. Kimmel at Williams Center in 1840. "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" was the campaign slogan of those days. The local supporters of General William Henry Harrison proposed "two dollars a day and hard cider" for every worker.

During the pre-Civil War period, the Democrats seem to have had a majority in the county. There was little sentiment for the abolition of slavery at the price of civil slaughter. During John C. Fremont's campaign for the Presidency in 1856, Mrs. Abbie Bey Kelley, known as an "incendiary abolitionist," was mobbed in the streets of Bryan.

Later, as continued agitation led to the attack on Fort Sumter, a good many citizens who were passively opposed to human slavery found themselves being driven into the Copperhead camp by a belief that it was a State's right under the Constitution to secede at will.
The Democrats of the Civil War period were practically outlawed, but they continued their party organization in spite of the persecution of stay-at-home patriots. Knights of the Golden Circle were active in all the townships. Still standing are several of the houses and taverns where, tradition says, they met and drilled.

At the close of the hostilities, the ex-soldiers took over control of the county’s political life without much opposition. The Democrats among them put allegiance to the G. A. R. above party affiliation, and the G. A. R. allied itself with the Republican party. Military politics in Williams County continued until, in a year of general distress, the voters booted the regime out of office.

With the decay of the G. A. R., the national liquor question ushered in another era of political intolerance. The first active prohibitionists were the Good Templars, who organized in Pulaski in 1873. Composed of church women, the society followed the example of similar groups in Westerville and the towns of southern Ohio by crusading against the saloons, kneeling in prayer in front of the doors and singing hymns.

Their efforts were chiefly directed against the 11 tap-rooms in Bryan. The keepers, Germans for the most part, tried to put the “crazy Hausfrauen” in their places with a display of heavy Teutonic humor. Gottlieb Kunz, finding himself beleaguered in his saloon by a party of praying women, went out with a stein in his hand and knelt with them. Another tavern-keeper, Jacob Kissel, hired a German band to play while the crusaders sang outside his swinging doors. The counterpart of “Ach, du Lieber Augustin” and “Nearer, My God, to Thee” may be questionable, but the strange musical duel continued for some time. Flute player and tuba tooter blew with all the vigor that beer from Jake Halm’s local brewery could inspire, but the Good Templars could not be silenced or routed. The flutist, overcome by alcoholic memories of his mother in the Old Country, suddenly gave way to a burst of Germanic grief. The bassoon player caught the contagion and threw himself on the trombonist’s neck. The tuba gave a final despairing “Umpah,” and four sobbing musicians filed out to join the women on the walk.

This triumph of voice over wind instrument, and female determination over the traditional hardihood of men, was too much for Saloonkeeper Kissel. Thereafter, he closed his doors when-
ever the crusaders appeared, and was once frightened into a day’s abandonment of business by a parade of school teachers who knew nothing at all of his troubles.

The Good Templars were succeeded by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League. The methods of the later organizations were less picturesque but even more effective. At the turn of the century, they controlled the county committees of the Republican party, which was gaining in power. For a generation no man could be elected to a local office without subscribing to the doctrines of the prohibitionists. Local-option elections drove all drinking places out of business except a saloon in Blakeslee. (It continued until national prohibition dried the entire country.)

Ironically, the county had more petticoat government and prohibition before the enactment of woman-suffrage legislation and the Eighteenth Amendment than it ever experienced afterward. The Good Templars and the ladies of the W. C. T. U. rustle across the modern political scene only as ineffectual ghosts in bustles and trailing skirts. Their grand-daughters perch at the bar where their ancestors once knelt on the walk.

Williams County’s contributions to the development of the political ideology of the State and Nation have been few. Judge Joshua Dobbs, Captain D. M. McKinley, and Schuyler E. Blakeslee were the leading political figures in pre-Civil War days. In General Isaac R. Sherwood (see Gunpowder and Printer’s Ink), the county had its war-hero politician.

Of the early twentieth-century politicians, Charles A. Bowersox and John N. Killits most embodied the Republican conservative sentiment. Bowersox served as State legislator and common pleas judge for many years. Killits, who began his career as prosecuting attorney, was appointed Federal judge by President Taft. His service on the bench in the northwestern Ohio district was marked by unrelenting opposition to organized labor and municipal ownership of utilities. During periods when the trend was toward liberalism, Judge William H. Shinn and Henry L. Goll represented the county as Democratic legislators. The latter was credited with aiding the enactment of initiative-and-referendum legislation.

The county’s best-known political leaders of the present day are Cass Cullis, editor of the Bryan Democrat, and Congressman Cliff Clevenger, also a resident of Bryan. Editor Cullis’
biweekly newspaper has won several notable prizes for style and content, and his shrewd and humorous articles on politics are nationally quoted. Clevenger defeated Frank C. Kniffin, incumbent Congressman and former resident of Williams County, in the 1938 election. Clevenger's platform frankly opposed every measure of the New Deal. He startled his most optimistic supporters by carrying every county in the Fifth District. Williams County gave Clevenger and the other Republican candidate an overwhelming majority, further indicating the fluid political sentiment of the county.

Passengers and Freight

"Here," wrote an early Williams County commentator, "mud is unanimous." Since that time, things have happened, and transportation is today an important phase of local life. Situated on routes that directly link the Atlantic seaboarding and eastern Great Lakes cities with Chicago, St. Louis, and the Mississippi Valley, Williams County has easy and rapid access to the great urban markets in America. In this respect, the county's peculiar geography, often a handicap to its progress, gives it advantages enjoyed by few other rural districts of corresponding size in Ohio. To the millions of tons of rail and highway freight that flow across its boundaries yearly, it adds its own products and profits by their expeditious delivery to the markets, at the same time deriving considerable income through the employment of residents in transportation work. Under normal conditions, no less than 1,000 men are engaged in railroad and truck operation and allied occupations. The freight-hauling companies are the county's biggest tax-payers; their investments rank them next to agriculture in the wealth of the area.

The favorable position Williams County now occupies in overland transportation presents a dramatic contrast with the past. The first passable overland routes followed Indian trails that meandered along the glacial ridges, taking advantage of every elevation. Such roads were satisfactory then and still are. Ohio-Michigan 127, winding northeastward through the county from Fort Wayne to Jackson, has its bed on a trail established by the
aborigines. In the lowlands, however, efforts to cut and grade roads along the lines established by surveyors met with tremendous difficulties. Because of the heavy stands of timber and lack of drainage, the road beds quickly became impassable quagmires where water stood the year around. The construction of corduroy grades topped with tree trunks partially solved the problem, although the pontoon surfaces frequently sank in the muck or floated away, interrupting vehicular traffic and forcing pedestrians to walk on top of rail fences.

High-wheeled, ox-drawn carts were employed in all heavy freighting; horses were not used in several of the townships until as late as 1845. One of the earliest photographs taken in northwestern Ohio shows a wagon stalled in Bryan’s muddy Main Street, with four teams of oxen straining in their wooden yokes.

Most of the villages were known less by their populations and business places than by the depth of the oozy clay between their board walks. Edon achieved the nickname of Mudsock, which still lingers. In Bryan, where artesian wells came in at a depth of 30 or 40 feet and sometimes threw streams an equal distance into the air, the first inhabitants were often alarmed by predictions that the village would some time sink into an underground lake. Practical jokers sometimes stole the boots and hats of prominent citizens and placed them in the streets in a manner that suggested the owners were buried head—or feet—first.

A reporter for the Toledo Blade, viewing Bryan at that period, wrote in a believe-it-or-not vein that the town had swamps in its streets and wells that were actively liquid. “This is a most singular place,” he declared. “Wells spout fifteen or twenty feet high, and still Bryan is 108 feet higher than Toledo—a singular phenomenon, and who can account for it?”

The board of commissioners of 1837 planned and authorized the first cross-county road, designing it as a link between the Fulton County and Indiana State lines. Labor for construction work was impressed, every male of voting age being required to work two days or hire a substitute. Eighty years later, the road was still at times impassable.

The difficulties of overland transportation and travel compelled the settlers to make all the use possible of the two rivers, the St. Joseph and the Tiffin. Grain was poled to the water-wheel mills in flatboats, and, during flood waters, log drives on both streams carried timber to the mills in Defiance and Fort Wayne.
Sand bars and shallows impeded river traffic, however, and no regular form of navigation was ever established.

The construction of the Miami and Erie and the Wabash and Erie canals gave the backwoodsmen some hope of reaching a permanent solution of their transportation problem. At that time the county extended to the banks of the Maumee, and the settlers contemplated the building of at least one corduroy-and-gravel highway from the Michigan line to the canals. When the State legislature partitioned the county and set up Defiance County as an independent unit, the scheme collapsed.

The loss of canal contracts was followed by the promotion of a railway that was to link the Williams County-Indiana line with the Maumee River at a point below the rapids. The backers of this so-called Junction Line asked the county for a subscription of $100,000, which the commissioners approved. The Junction Line, however, lost its supporters, when a group of experienced railroad men in 1852 began a survey proposing to connect Toledo with the Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana railroad at Elkhart. They were not interested in selling stock and asked no local aid.

Under the direction of Amasa Stone, the new railroad was completed in 1857 and became known as the Air Line, for between Toledo and Kendallville, Indiana, it was supposed to have the longest stretch of straight track in the world. Later it became part of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. Now a unit of the triple-tracked New York Central system, the road passes through Stryker, Bryan, Melberrn, and Edgerton.

The first Air Line passenger train, offering free tickets to any county residents who cared to ride, took 12 hours to travel from Bryan to Toledo, a distance of 60 miles. A few weeks later, the line announced an average of 13 miles an hour for its locals.

A few years after the completion of the Air Line, the Canada Southern proposed to build a line through Williams County, with a division point at Montpelier. The plan failed, but during the early 1880's the Wabash brought its steel to that town in a line that connected Detroit and Butler, Indiana. As the Wabash system grew, lines were established between Montpelier and St. Louis and Montpelier and Chicago. In 1901, another line was opened, connecting it with Toledo. Seven years later, the carrier established a roundhouse and car-repair shop in the town, making it the most important railroad center between Toledo and Elkhart.
Soon afterward, Bryan made a bid for railroad importance by subscribing $53,000 toward the construction of the Cincinnati, Jackson and Mackinaw line, now known as the Cincinnati Northern Railway. The shops were established in Van Wert. The road added little to community business, and passenger traffic, after a series of free rides, fell off so sharply that coach trains were soon limited to one a day each way. In 1938, the company obtained permission to abandon passenger service completely.

In 1903, cheap electricity made possible the establishment of the Toledo and Western Electric Line, which operated as far west as Pioneer, the one important town in the county that had no steam railroad service. During the first years of the depression, loss of revenue forced the road into the hands of receivers, and it suspended operation. To save the village from commercial isolation, a group of Pioneer business men took over enough of the track to make a connection with the Wabash in Fayette. They obtained a Government grant, and have since succeeded in maintaining daily operation with motor-driven trains. The Toledo and Indiana Electric Line, completed in 1905, gave Bryan and Stryker freight and travel outlets to Toledo.

The two townships in the county that have neither an incorporated village nor a railroad, either electric or steam, are Northwest and Bridgewater. However, US 20 Alt. has kept them open to trade and traffic; it has taken the place of the ill-fated St. Joseph Valley Railroad, which Bucklin, the Arnica Salve king, had dreamed of driving into the virgin territory between Columbia and Pioneer. When the patent-medicine manufacturer died, his heirs ripped up the steel from the uncompleted road and sold it to World War munitions makers. The only evidence of his railroad venture that remains is a crumbling embankment.

Williams County's modern highway-building program began in 1910, after the railroads had known their best days and automobile owners had begun to clamor for roads that could be traveled at least in summer. A majority of farmers bitterly opposed the improvement of highways, but when the World War increased farm values and incomes to the point where the rural taxpayers could own cars, the good-roads idea broke down all resistance. By 1920, more than $2,500,000 had been spent on hard-surface and gravel roads. Since that time, an additional $10,000,000 has been expended in the construction and improvement of highways. Practically all R. F. D. and school-bus roads in the
county have been improved, and there are few farms that do not touch on at least one gravel highway.

Waterways play no part in contemporary transportation, for the rivers have fallen to a point that makes it impossible to use even a rowboat except after freshets. The last "broadhorn" flatboat is said to have passed down the St. Joseph River to Fort Wayne with a cargo of grain in the late 1840's.

Although air lines, too, have been lost to the county, local ones contributed much to the pioneering of aviation. As early as 1860, at least one of the settlers was dreaming of escaping from the mud by means of wings (see The Doctor and the Mud). In 1900, A. Roy Knabenshue, a Bryan youth, turned from telephone-line repair work to a study of aerodynamics and soon succeeded in launching gliders from the stage of the Old Bryan Opera House. A little later, he made Beer Cellar Hill, on the western outskirts of the town, a base for experimentation, and flew both motorless planes and dirigibles from its summit. Abandoning heavier-than-air craft for power-driven balloons, young Knabenshue moved to Toledo, obtained financial aid, and built the famous non-rigid airship, Toledo No. 1, which he piloted to a successful landing atop the Spitzer Building. In 1904, he exhibited an airship at the St. Louis World's Fair. New Yorkers were astounded in the same year when he circled a building with his ship. During the World War, Knabenshue built dirigibles for the United States Navy.

The enthusiasm for aviation aroused locally by Knabenshue led to the construction of an airdrome near Bryan in 1919. A steel-and-concrete hangar, cement apron, and large landing field gave the county the most complete, if not the first, airport in northwestern Ohio. The field was placed at the disposal of the Federal Government, when it inaugurated air mail service between Cleveland and Chicago on May 15, 1919. Later, a company interested in the development of radial airplane motors took over the hangar and used it as a factory. The enterprise failed, and the field eventually returned to pasturage. The hangar is now a garage.

Another flying field, fully equipped with beacons, weather observatory, and radio station, was established on State 15, five miles north of Bryan, but after a few years the operators abandoned it and dismantled the buildings.

Today, the county's chief service in aviation is supplied by revolving tower lights and ground panels at Edon and on State 15, to guide planes that cross the county.
Farm and Factory

Closely linked to transportation are the agriculture and industry of Williams County. The county has always placed its chief reliance in the soil, which is excellently suited to general farming; and the combination of conservatism and good soil has made farming a steady source of income in the county. The farmers have benefited from the variety of their products, finding it possible to profit from at least one crop of annual yield when others fail or the market collapses. Few of the romantic “get-rich-quick” movements that sometimes arise among farmers, turning corn lands into turkey ranches or fur farms, usually with disastrous results, have appeared in the county. Even the World War, which revolutionized agricultural practices in many parts of the Nation, had little lasting effect on the balance of produce. Crops and farm animals, introduced by the pioneers at a time when the soil had to satisfy every need, remain the leading products of the county.

A picture of the generalized agriculture of the locality is afforded by a 1937 survey. Of a total of 2,700 farms, 2,434 grow corn; 2,507, hay; 2,326, oats; 1,959, wheat; 1,595, apples; 1,031, grapes. The yearly oat yield amounts to approximately 750,000 bushels; corn, 500,000 bushels; and wheat, 300,000 bushels. No farm was reported to be planted entirely in a special crop, but 65 have fields on which onions are cultivated, and 547 grow potatoes for the city markets. On 65 farms, sugar beets are “side” crops, and 12 have buckwheat acreage. On 90 per cent of the farms, dairying, livestock breeding, and poultry raising are major activities.

Blooded draft horses and quality eggs have made the county known throughout the Nation. Members of the Williams County Horse Breeders’ Association import Belgian and French stock annually. George W. Bond, the poultry expert, was the first farmer in the United States to produce and ship quality eggs.

Dairy cattle are kept on 2,213 farms, beef cattle on 540, hogs on 1,964, horses and mules on 2,383, and chickens on 2,447. Investments in livestock and poultry are as follows: cattle,
$1,067,433; horses, $703,224; mules, $22,000; swine, $341,041; and chickens, $341,128.

The average farm is stocked with 3 horses, 4 dairy cows, 3 calves, 7 sheep, 12 hogs, and 114 chickens. It grows 14 acres of corn, 12 of oats, 17 of hay, and 8 of wheat. The yield of wheat is 20 bushels an acre; corn, 40; and oats, 41. The value of produce raised on the average farm in 1937 was $1,500.

Approximately 80 per cent of the Williams County terrain is upland. The soil is undulating and slightly acid and has fair natural drainage (see Land and Water). The productivity is slightly below the average of soils in northwestern Ohio. This factor has made grain farming unprofitable under modern conditions, and the crops are utilized chiefly in maintaining livestock. With so many animals on each farm, it has been necessary to leave a large acreage of both field and wood in pasture. Only 60 per cent of the land is tilled; a third of the remainder is in hay.

In spite of the conservative methods employed in farming, the fertility of the soil has been gradually declining, chiefly because of erosion. An improvement in this condition was noted in 1934, when the national agricultural agencies began to encourage the permanent seeding of nonproductive land.

From 1900 to 1929, the number of farms decreased by 300. With the coming of the depression, the number increased slowly. The year 1934 saw an increase of 5 per cent, but during the last few years the rate has become less. With the increase in the number of farms came augmented production, ranging from 3 per cent in hay to 29 in corn over a 4-year period, despite the efforts to limit agricultural productivity in several branches. Idle and fallow land decreased 3,650 acres during the same period. At the present time, it is estimated that only 6,690 acres are not in cultivation in the county.

Many Williams County farmers are members of the Ohio Farm Bureau Cooperative Association or of local cooperatives and exchanges such as those in Alvordton, Blakeslee, Brady Township, Edon, Pioneer, and Superior Townships. These organizations are principally marketing groups of the farmers themselves. The farmers sell their produce to the association in which they own stock; the cooperative either sells the produce or stores it to await a better market. The chief advantage of this collective selling is that the group can choose its markets, instead of sacrificing future prospects for immediate individual needs.
The Farm Bureau cooperative is, of course, the most influential of these groups. Unlike some of the associations, however, this cooperative, which has some 80 local groups in the State, is mainly a wholesale purchasing organization, with marketing as a subsidiary function. Its value to Williams County lies not only in these activities, but also in the encouragement that the organization gives to cooperation among the farmers.

Besides sponsoring the cooperative movement, the Farm Bureau has a rural educational program that profoundly affects the county's farm life. The farm extension program is carried on in 13 townships and communities, with 468 local leaders.

This progressive aspect of Williams County farm life is also indicated in the fact that agricultural courses are taught in 8 high and centralized schools and in 25 rural schools. Fifty-two boys' and girls' clubs, with 650 members and 75 leaders, are active in all of the county, participating in State-wide contests featuring agricultural products, health, and home beautification, as well as needlework and other manual crafts. The county ranks tenth in the State in 4-H membership, and the season attendance at the 10 annual farmers' institutes always exceeds 15,000.

The Williams County Fair, held each September at Montpelier, was acclaimed the best in Ohio in 1937. It is known for its horse races, in which Williams County farmers are keenly interested. The county's love of fine horses finds expression, also, in the annual Bryan Horse Show, at which thoroughbred draft and riding-horses are exhibited in parades and in contests of strength and speed. The Bryan spectacle is one of the few old-fashioned horse fairs that have survived the mechanical age.

Although the county fair dates from 1857, a Tri-State fair, at which farmers from Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana displayed their choice produce, was held earlier in Northwest Township near the Michigan line. The Northwest Fairgrounds has vanished; gone, too, are the farm centers of Northeast (sometimes called Gravel Hill) and Billingstown, that thrived near by. In other parts of the county, changes in roads, trade, and rural life have led to the extinction or almost complete abandonment of the hamlets of Denmark, Lockport, Pulaski, West Jefferson, Union Corners, Hamer, Primrose, and Farmer. Several other villages around which activities centered during the latter part of the nineteenth century are dying.

The early industries of Williams County were based upon
the soil. In nearly every town, the shells of old sawmills and grist mills are reminders of those pioneer times, when there was little demand for anything except food and shelter; nowadays, portable feed grinders, moving from farm to farm, bring mill services to the barn in many localities.

Native lumber is still in great demand. Edgerton's oak manufacturing company and Bryan's handle company draw largely from local woods for material. The handle company, normally engaged in the production of ax and hammer handles, in 1939 contracted to mill wooden handles for "potatomasher" hand grenades for Central European powers. Until a few years ago, Stryker was noted for its boat-oar manufacturing. Oars and paddles of all types were made from native timber and shipped to distant parts of the world; Williams County lumber served to propel kayaks of the Eskimo North, sampans of the Orient, and out-rigger canoes of the South Sea Islands. The company moved to Archbold after fire destroyed the Stryker plant.

Another Williams County farm product that once had wide distribution is pearl ash. During the early days, when the forests were being cleared and the logs burned, the ashes were collected, leached, and boiled. The product was barreled and shipped to factories in need of potash and allied chemicals. During the first years of the recent depression, the pioneer method of leaching ashes was revived on many farms, and used in manufacturing soap for home use.

A few factories originally designed to process farm products or supply farm needs have turned, since 1914, to the manufacture of novelties, toys, and automobile accessories. The Trumbull Wagon Works at Montpelier, once famous for its horse-drawn vehicles, is now engaged in making auto and truck bodies. In Bryan, other shops, that formerly limited their activities to woodwork for the rural market, have branched out into the production of bric-a-brac and toys. The novelty-making enterprises had their inception during the World War. In 1939, these firms were barely able to meet the demand, although production had been greatly increased. Since most of their work requires little skill, they draw on the farms and farm communities for labor.

Except for the widespread railroad strike in 1921-22, that involved several hundred Wabash shop workers in Montpelier, and an unsuccessful attempt to organize the novelty-factory workers in Bryan in 1937, no notable labor disputes have occurred in
the county. Neither the A. F. of L. nor the C. I. O. have Williams County branches; the few union members in the county belong to the international railroad organizations or to the building-trades locals in Defiance. The problem of relief, arising in 1932, was largely solved by the employment of some 300 workers on Federal projects.

**Fighting Parsons and Others**

Before Williams County was formed in 1830, the spiritual needs of the people in the area were not attended by ordained ministers, but largely by the circuit riders. These were usually gusty men, filled with a high sense of duty to God and man, but often intemperate in their personal habits and their methods. Some of them could uncork a jug or a punch with equal dexterity, and liked nothing better than a good fight.

There was a close affinity between some pioneer circuit riders and the virile journalists of that day. Like Editor William Hunter (*see Gunpowder and Printer's Ink*), the gentlemen of the cloth frequently stepped out of their calling to seek full expression of their fierce individualism. The first church records note many instances in which parsons published weeklies, acted as judges, detected criminals, and traded blows with religious opponents. Tavern-keepers were the leading laymen of the times, and sometimes the temporal affairs of the churches found their solution in the taproom.

In sharing the strong virtues and vices of their male parishioners—the feminine influence had not yet made itself felt in religion—the clergymen did the county a better turn than they themselves may have realized. None of the tree-climbing and dancing sects that appeared at the time ever gained headway in the parishes of the two-fisted circuit riders. When a traveling preacher appeared to have a gift of tongues or "cooned a tree," it was, more often than not, John Barleycorn who had touched him off, as the laity well knew.

One of the most notable of the early fights took place at a Baptist mission in St. Joseph Township during the winter of 1852-53. At that time the Air Line Railroad, now the New York
Central, was in the process of construction, and an army of Irish immigrants had camps along the right-of-way. The farm inhabitants resented the invasion, and the circuit rider making the rounds of the mission took occasion to make some derogatory remarks about the bearded, red-shirted Irishmen. The "gandy-dancers" heard about it, armed themselves with pickax handles and railroad spikes, and marched in a body to the St. Joseph Township Church.

When the mob appeared, the preacher was expounding the pacific principles of Christianity. Dropping his Bible, he grabbed up a length of stove wood and yelled to his congregation to strike hard for the Lord. The battle was joined with such fury that the Irishmen, veterans of many a Kilkenny scrap, fled from the mission and back to the safety of their box-car camp.

Later an attempt was made to hang one of the church elders, Alexander Wright, but the club-wielding pastor and a posse of citizens saved him and carried away some of the railroad laborers as hostages. The Irishmen were reported to have offered a prayer of thanks when the steel tracks reached Indiana.

Actually, the pugnacious preachers were a force for honesty and sincerity in religious practices, as well as decency in community life. One of the earliest church records extant tells of the trial of a prominent member of a Lafayette congregation, charged with "harboring and working a stray horse." In this unusual case, the preacher sat as ex officio judge, and the owner of a near-by taproom acted as recording steward and clerk of court. The defendant was fined and his name stricken from the rolls of the church. Having settled the business of a stray horse and an errant soul, the ecclesiastical court adjourned to the tavern.

Apparently witch and heretic hunting did not appeal to the frontier parsons, but they were hard on thieves. Many of them followed the example of Lorenzo Dow, a wandering preacher famous in those days for his ability to point out hog and horse snatchers at his camp meetings; and it was customary for the congregation to attend services with ropes and horse pistols, prepared to seize any lay brother who came under the accusing finger of the preacher.

A good many of the old fighting parsons outlived their churches. Rev. Mr. Scranton, reputed to have been the first circuit rider to make his home in the county, died at the age of 104 and is buried in the yard of a long-deserted church. Reverend
G. M. Miller, who preached for 40 years at West Bethesda, has his grave near the site of a vanished church and village. Rev. John Poucher, of West Unity, another noted preacher of the early days, served as chaplain of the Thirty-eighth Ohio Volunteer Infantry (see The County in the Wars).

After Williams County was formed, many people in the county began to work toward the organization of orthodox denominations in the towns. The Reverend Elijah Stoddard, who preached in Edgerton and Denmark villages in 1836, was probably the county’s first trained clergyman (see School Bells). In 1839, a lay group of the Methodist Episcopal Church organized at Pulaski. A year later a class was formed in Bryan under the auspices of the same church, with Zara Norton as the class leader. The members gathered for services in the taproom of Shorthill’s Tavern; later the class met in the first courthouse. The Bryan Methodists, whose present church dates from 1895, erected their first place of worship in 1853.

Rev. J. M. Crabb organized the First Presbyterian Church and Society of Bryan in 1854, receiving ten members into the church after his first sermon. The church now serving the congregation is generally considered the most beautiful building in the county.

St. Paul’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in Bryan in 1861 by the Reverend Herman Schmidt. Several years later, an English Lutheran church was founded. Reverend J. F. Rice established the county’s first Universalist church in Bryan in 1870, and, six years later, the congregation erected the brick edifice in which it still worships.

The period between 1880 and the early 1900’s was one of intense activity among the town churches. New congregations, drawing much of their membership from the rural districts, were formed in all the incorporated communities.

The county church, as a center of social and cultural as well as religious exercises, passed from the picture as automobiles and good roads were developed and rural youths found it possible to mingle at other places. Of the county’s 90 church buildings, 22 stood deserted in 1939. At more than 20 other country churches, services were being held at infrequent intervals. Church communicants numbered about 5,000, one-fifth the county’s population.

The active churches are predominantly Protestant, but the Roman Catholics support three churches and two chapels. Two
Dunkard missions and one Mennonite church are also in Williams County; however, many of the Williams County Amish living in Springfield and Millcreek townships attend services in Fulton County. The Mennonite community, one of the wealthiest and most closely knit religious organizations in the northwestern section of the State, still clings to many of its Old World traditions. Of the vanishing sects, the Weinbrennarians, members of the Church of God, have suffered most from the inroads of modern life. Only five crossroads churches are left to this once-powerful denomination.

School Bells

At eight o'clock on an autumn morning in 1837, a bell pealed briefly from a tall hickory pole in the settlement called Denmark.

Since the founding of the settlement, any great event affecting the existence of the inhabitants had been signaled by the ringing of the bell: rung furiously, it had meant the presence of strange Indians or a fire; a long and steady roll announced an election or a militia muster day; solemn tolling called the neighbors to church services and burials.

Its sound on this day was new to listening ears. Woodsmen took a firmer grip on their rifles. Farmers afield scanned the sky above their homes for traces of smoke. Spinning women stopped their wheels and wondered whether a funeral was held at such an unseemly hour. Then it was recalled that Reverend Elijah Stoddard, that lank, dour New England Yankee, had scheduled the beginning of a school term for this day and hour.

Although the Ohio legislature had authorized the establishment of a system of public education in 1825, formal schooling was heretofore unknown in Williams County. There had been no demand for a school. The settlers and their children had been engaged in a day-to-day struggle for food and clothing, their lot little better than that of the wretched Indians in the camp outside Denmark village. But conditions were changing; everyone admitted that. The Indians had degenerated into dog-stealers, too poor to buy powder for their muskets. The great forest was re-
treating north and west, leaving a wide tract open to cultivation. Immigrants from the “Dutch” districts of Pennsylvania were pouring into the eastern townships. And new institutions were being set up in each community.

The gaunt preacher, who lived on the beneficence of the settlement and had volunteered to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and shooting to all youngsters who cared to learn, loosed the bell rope and stalked through the mud. He carried a rifle, a birch rod, a Bible, and two text books—Webster’s Speller and DaFoe’s Arithmetic—and he was on his way to the Town Building. This log structure, which served as the seat of the village government, church, and sometimes jail, had been transformed into a schoolhouse by a rearrangement of benches and tables made from halves of basswood logs mounted on hickory legs. Outside the door grew an apple tree from which the resident Indians gathered fruit, claiming that one of their tribesmen, a disciple of Johnny Appleseed, had planted it.

Contemporary historians have nothing to say of the success of Rev. Mr. Stoddard’s venture into education. It is known that he taught several terms, and it can be imagined that his pupils, schooled in musketry with a hard-kicking flintlock and birched for failure in spelling and addition, often went home sore in body if not elevated in mind.

Neighboring communities rapidly took up the experiment of the pedagogic parson in Denmark. In other log structures, too, the young pupils droned the lessons, while their copper-toed boots sizzled in rows before the open fires. Schoolmasters even more picturesque and formidable than Rev. Mr. Stoddard had their days and passed, leaving impressions of their personalities more enduring than their lessons.

Colonel J. B. Kimmell, an early settler in the vicinity of Williams Center, set himself up as a teacher in Center Township’s first school. As head of the county militia, the redoubtable colonel thought to bring military discipline to the class room. His favorite mode of punishment was to tie a boy and girl together and stand them on top of his tall desk. His teaching equipment included, not only a rifle and whip, but also a huge cavalry sabre.

A less fearful, but more fantastic, figure than Colonel Kimmell was a pedagogue of the same township whom the records of the period dignify with neither a Christian name nor title. Known only as Southworth, he is described as being “eminent in scholar-
ship, but unbalanced in mind; an old man, tall, spare, and with long grey hair and beard. He traveled constantly, supporting himself with a long staff in each hand, and carrying his budget on his back . . .”

Another of the original schoolmasters was known as “Old Barney, the Yankee.” He, too, might have stepped out of Grimm’s fairy tales. He wandered around the settlement in rags, begging his way when there were no teaching jobs open. Being unable to swim, he crossed the unbridged rivers by walking on the bottom, carrying a couple of cider jugs or huge stones to balance his natural buoyancy. “Old Barney” taught a winter term at Melbern village during the early 1840’s. When spring came, he was even more affected than his pupils, who took off their boots and played hookey. Off came the schoolmaster’s boots, too. He stowed them in a bag with his books and quitted the classroom for the open road.

Some of the settlers maintained that he had joined a caravan bound West. Others claimed to have seen the prints of his big splayed feet on the bank of the “St. Joe,” then in flood and much deeper than a man’s head. Long afterward, a water-swollen copy of Webster’s Speller was found in a bayou downriver, and shards of broken jugs appeared among the pebbles at the ford. There is a legend that Old Barney slipped in mid-stream and lost ballast—two full jugs of cider—and that, on summer nights when the water is low, his ghost, still walking on the bottom with spectral arms outthrust, sometimes appears at the ford.

Not all the frontier schoolmasters were eccentrics, however. Milton B. Plummer, a Jefferson Township teacher, was largely instrumental in solving America’s first case of child stealing and murder for purposes of extortion. In 1849, Plummer’s keen deductions sent Andrew Jackson Tyler to the gallows in Bryan, for the slaying of five-year-old David Schamp (see Williams County History). In Florence Township, Johann Adam Simon, a native of Germany, tried to add classical and scientific education to the three R’s. Herr Doktor Simon taught in a log building donated by Benjamin C. Pickle, founder of the vanished village of Spring Lake (also known as Union Corners).

Most of the settlers preferred Yankee teachers and methods to the German. The myths of ancient Greece and Rome struck them as being sillier than the aberrations of their Ichabod Cranes. Female teachers were generally in disfavor, owing in part to their
inability to maintain order among the backwoods pupils. The regulations of the period permitted the attendance at all schools of "boys and girls between the ages of six and twenty-one." Often a majority of the pupils were older than the teacher, for most of the girl teachers were under 16. Incredible as it now seems, Arvilla Wisman, of Bridgewater, began teaching school at the age of 13 and had among her first-graders several hulking youths with mustaches. A number of the pupils, attending classes only for sport, counted it to their credit whenever they could drive a teacher from the neighborhood. In districts where such conditions prevailed, a "whipping master" was frequently engaged. Subject to call at all times, the disciplinary assistant furnished his own lash and inflicted such punishment as the teacher ordered.

The morals of the female teachers were often questioned. Neighborhood gossips watched their activities in school and out. It is a matter of record that buxom Mary McCrillus, Bridgewater's first teacher, faced an inquisition into her domestic habits following a report that she fell asleep in school. The board of inquiry found that she sometimes sat up at night with a sweetheart. "In consequence of such nocturnal habits the young woman becomes drowsy the next day and sleeps in her chair until pupils waken her," the reports states. The sleeping beauty of Bridgewater offered a defense—valid, no doubt—that poor ventilation and overheating of the stove in the schoolhouse, combined with the droning of the pupils, was enough to put anyone to sleep. Mary lost her job and was replaced by a man.

The average pay for a Williams County schoolteacher in the pre-Civil War period was $1 a week. The teachers were hired from a fund to which all parents subscribed according to the number and ages of their children. Beginners were rated as "half-scholars," and the fees for their instruction were proportionately reduced.

Bryan's first schoolmaster was A. J. Tressler, who had helped clear the public square of timber. He taught in a building constructed of logs taken from the courthouse site, remaining on the job until the village eventually paid him the then astounding sum of $15 a month. A frame schoolhouse was built in Bryan in 1845, serving the needs of the town until January 1, 1864, when the Bryan Normal School was founded. Under the direction of Professor Charles W. Mykrantz, one of the county's best-beloved teachers, the school had an attendance that reached 200.
It is generally remembered as the Mykrantz Academy. In 1874, the school was united with the Bryan High School, and the professor was placed at the head of the merged units.

A normal school, established in Williams Center in 1852 by the Maumee Presbytery, flourished until the Civil War, when sectarian strife ended its usefulness and led to its withdrawal from the community.

Standardization of the Williams County schools began during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Higher qualifications were demanded from would-be teachers. Uniform methods of education were recommended, and, later, were made mandatory. Under county and State-wide systems, the colorful tramp teachers vanished. Teaching became a profession instead of a step toward a profession.

In 1914, nearly 100 one- and two-room schoolhouses squatted at the crossroads of the county, usually on clay knobs, grassless and unshaded. They still served as community centers, providing entertainment in the form of box socials, spelling bees, and holiday programs. But, like the rural churches, their day was in decline. Legislation providing for a county superintendent, centralization of rural teaching establishments, and bus transportation for pupils added impetus to the movement toward instruction at village centers. One by one, the bells were silenced. In 1920, the number of rural schools in operation had fallen to 81. Many of those that continued to function had fewer pupils than attended the opening session of the Reverend Elijah Stoddard's makeshift school. Center and Northwest Townships discontinued the use of one-room schools in 1939, and other rural districts are planning to shift the entire burden of grade education to modernized establishments.

During the last few years, eight towns and villages in Williams County, accommodating the influx of country scholars, have built new elementary and high schools or remodeled their original structures. The enlargement of their teaching facilities is being continued. Under Public Works Administration grants, the Bryan, Edon, and Montpelier schools engaged in a building program in 1939. At Cooney, Northwest Township center, a consolidated grade school was erected.

More than 1,000 students attend the high schools, which now offer not only the courses required for college entrance, but also special training in agriculture, business, woodworking, and
secretarial methods. Night schools for adults, supervised by Work Projects Administration instructors, began operating in several of the high schools in 1938.

Eighty-five per cent of the scholars who enter the higher grades are granted diplomas. In the country grade schools, almost 95 per cent of the entrants are graduated. This represents a slow upward trend that may be expected to continue, as popular interest in education grows and the streamlined town schools increase their appeal to youth.

The entire educational machine of Williams County represents an investment of $1,000,000 and affords full- or part-time employment to 400 men and women at wages that compare favorably with those paid in other parts of the State. With the teachers are included many special employees, whose work ranges from bus driving to furnace stoking.

The demands of the new schools have brought into existence a bus-body plant at Bryan and are directly influencing the construction and maintenance of roads. Thus, the educational system that began with such little promise in 1837 has become one of the county's major industries, as well as its chief public institution.

No trace of the village of Denmark now remains. Where the bell-pole and schoolhouse stood, weeds and brush have reclaimed their home. Along the river banks, where Old Barney is still supposed to be looking for his lost speller, roar huge yellow busses, filled with school children, most of whom no longer believe in ghosts and would hardly be frightened by the ancient pedagogue were they to meet him.

Fraternal Life

Rope and rifle were the symbols of Williams County's first organization of citizens, and horse stealing was a factor in the rise of a community spirit that now finds expression in no less than 500 clubs, leagues, and orders for the advancement of society.

The county's early settlers were not, in any sense, "joiners." These representatives of many races and cultures had migrated on their own, and they looked with suspicion on any movement
that circumscribed their individualism. During the period before the Civil War, this independence from social obligations carried some of the inhabitants to the point of open lawlessness. The peculiar geography of the county favored the criminal element, particularly horsethieves. Making their headquarters in thickly wooded hills around the juncture of the Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan State lines, the outlaws raided farms periodically. When county officers smoked them from their lairs, they fled to one of the neighboring States.

Sile Doty was the most annoying of these thieves (see The Saga of Sile Doty). As Doty’s depredations became a serious threat throughout the Tri-State area, the upper-class landowners overcame their repugnance for organization and formed the Franklin Vigilance Committee at West Unity, inviting the settlers of Fulton and Defiance counties to join them.

The vigilantes were active for many years, but apparently they neither caught nor “regulated” many horsethieves. “Old Sile” is said to have stolen the mounts of several of the lynch-law supporters while they were discussing means of catching him.

When border outlawry declined, the vigilance committee-men abandoned the rope for the cider jug. Their meetings featured social entertainment, and their discussions turned from horse stealing to horse breeding. The organization of farm sentiment for the benefit of agriculture soon followed. In 1857, the Williams County Agriculture Association was founded at West Unity. Like the vigilance committee, it accepted members from adjoining counties. The Union Agricultural Society came into existence the same year. Later the rival groups united and sponsored several horse shows and fairs in the public square at Bryan. At the outbreak of the Civil War, both disbanded, and it was not until the 1870’s that further efforts were made to promote farm interests through organization.

The county’s first grange of the Patrons of Husbandry had its origin in 1874—seven years after the founding of the national order. In membership and property holdings, the grange organization tops all other rural societies, with the Gleaners taking second place.

County Life Clubs, formed in several townships in 1910, flourished until 1920, when the Farm Bureau absorbed their members in a drive that enlisted 1,525 farmers. The Farm Bureau, with its allied societies, is now the county’s dominant farm organization (see Farm and Factory).
All the older national fraternal orders are represented in the urban centers. The powerful Masonic Lodge has temples in both Montpelier and Bryan, maintaining a $25,000 building and five branches of the order in the latter town. Other wealthy and influential lodges include the Modern Woodmen, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Elks, and Eagles. The B. P. O. E. operates bars and clubrooms in Montpelier and Bryan.

The American Legion, with posts in Bryan, Montpelier, Edgerton, West Unity, and Pioneer, ranks among the patriotic societies. Charles E. Arnold Post at Bryan has an elaborate Memorial Home on East Butler Street, completed in 1936. Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars function in Bryan and Montpelier. Both organizations are active in promoting projects for the betterment of community life. Youth societies include the Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, and numerous clubs sponsored by the American Legion and the Farm Bureau.

Women's organizations, comprising literary, sewing, and civic clubs, number more than 20. Four of them, the Carnation Club of West Unity and the Taine, Fortnightly, and Progress Clubs of Bryan, are affiliated with the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs, of which Mrs. Chauncey Newcomer, wife of a former Williams County judge, is president.

Although the G. A. R. has become extinct, its auxiliary, the Women's Relief Corps, composed of daughters and grand-daughters of Civil War veterans, continues to function; and the county chapter of the American Red Cross has offices in Bryan. Other organizations in the county are of a professional, commercial, or sports character.

_Gunpowder and Printer's Ink_

Dull as were Williams County's early newspapers—and they were dull indeed, judged by present standards of news—the editors seemed to have made up in personal color all that their publications lacked. The first county papers were little more than political broadsides, one or two pages in size, five columns in width. Local news rarely, and neighborhood items
never, appeared. Many issues carried less than a column of advertising. Reports of events of national importance were buried in editorial comment. Indeed, the publishers placed editorial policy above all else, and, when they lacked space for what they wanted to say or sought to reach more people than they had on their subscription lists, it was customary for them to harangue all passers-by from the doors of their printshops.

It was a period when citizens took their politics almost as seriously as the editors did; so the paladins of the press usually carried horse pistols and loaded canes. Frequently they suspended publication, either as a strategic move in their political and personal feuds, or because of a slump in subscriptions—paid in cord wood, potatoes, and 'coon skins.

National wars in those days of two-fisted journalism always disrupted newspaper enterprise. During both the Mexican and Civil Wars, the county press folded up, while the editors, who apparently were as handy with the sword as they were with the pistol and the ink pot, drilled troops or went off to the war.

Between military campaigns, Presidential election battles, and private encounters with libeled readers, the robust newspapermen managed to promote strife between various towns in the county, particularly over the location of the courthouse, an issue that smoldered for 40 years, needing only a poke from a printshop to flame into violence.

The first newspaper issued in what is now Williams County was called the Northwestern, a name borrowed from a sheet that had been published at Defiance while Defiance and Williams Counties were a single county. The editor of the original Northwestern had loaded his press on a flatboat and gone adventuring along the canal, printing a paper wherever and whenever he thought a paper was needed. It is quite likely that this true pirate of the press carried his journalistic forays also down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

Thomas H. Blacker financed the new paper, moving the press, type, and other fixtures from Columbus in 1845. It took a 4-horse team 17 days to move the outfit—almost as long as the paper remained in existence after it was launched. For Sheriff Dan Langel soon attached the press, and Editor Blacker went back to Columbus.

In 1846, J. W. Wiley, who had been connected with the publication of the Northwestern in Defiance, moved to Bryan and
launched the *Williams County Democrat*. A few months later, the war with Mexico began, and Wiley headed for the border with a troop of cavalry. Meanwhile, a group of local citizens had bought Blacker’s press and appropriated the name, the *Northwestern*. Blacker returned and started an opposition sheet, the *Democratic Standard*; but his second venture was no more successful than the first. The *Standard* died in six months, taking the *Northwestern* with it.

The mechanical equipment of the two defunct sheets fell into the hands of William C. Hunter, as lusty a journalist as Ohio has ever known. Hunter named his publication the *Equal Rights*; the first issue carried the news of General Cass’ nomination as a Democratic candidate for the Presidency. Editor Hunter was a man of parts. He could sing, preach, and fight, as well as publish a paper. At the execution of Andrew Jackson Tyler, January 26, 1849, Hunter did volunteer as a hangman.

About that time, it was discovered that Bryan’s new courthouse was ready to collapse. This condition gave the village of West Unity a chance to claim the county seat, because it was nearer the center of the county than was Bryan. Although he must have realized the hazards of such an opinion in Bryan, Editor Hunter sided with West Unity in the controversy. Bryan won the first round of the courthouse battle, and Hunter found it necessary to leave town hastily. He moved to the camp of the enemy and set up his shop on the second floor of a foundry. There he molded public opinion and hammered his adversaries with a gusto he did not have to acquire from the workmen downstairs.

During the Tyler trial and the first stage of the county-seat conflict, nearly every public official and political leader in the county became financially interested in a paper that would express his views. Bryan soon had as many printshops as saloons. Doctors, lawyers, and merchants railed at one another with printer’s ink. A half-dozen papers, the names of which have been forgotten, appeared on the streets and vanished after a few weeks.

When the slavery question began to cause dissension in the Nation, the *Republican Standard* was founded in West Unity. This newspaper, the first organ of the Republican party to be printed in the county, came from Hunter’s foundry-printshop in 1853 and lived less than a year.

In 1854, David Stauffer and Aaron Crissey bought Hunter’s wandering equipment and took it to Montpelier, where they began
publishing the *Star of the West*. With the press must have gone the county-seat issue, for Montpelier began demanding the removal of the county government to a site within its corporation limits. The *Star of the West* blazed for a few months, then fell, and the press went traveling again—this time to Fulton County.

The Democrats brought out their first party periodical in Bryan in 1855, with Judge Joshua Dobbs and Captain D. M. McKinley as publishers. This paper, the *Fountain City News*, lasted two years. In the meantime, the Republicans had resurrected the *Standard*.

Then the irrepressible Hunter reappeared on the scene, launching the *Abolitionist*. The life of this anti-slavery publication was short and strenuous. After stirring up considerable mob violence, the editor-preacher-basso-hangman did one of those about-faces so characteristic of journalism. Suspending the *Abolitionist*, he started the *Business Bulletin*, with an eye on advertising. By that time, Hunter had succeeded in antagonizing every citizen in the county; so his paper did little business. Hunter abandoned it, turning now to the practice of law. His brilliant but erratic career ended soon afterward in sudden death in Napoleon.

After Hunter’s death, another remarkable person appeared in the tournament of editors. He was Isaac R. Sherwood, later to become famous General “Ike” of the Civil War and habitual Congressman afterwards. With his wife, Kate Brownlee Sherwood, a poet (see The Arts), Sherwood established himself in Bryan in 1859 and began publishing the *Williams County Gazette*, direct ancestor of the present *Bryan Press*.

When the *Gazette* building burned on September 7, 1859, its supporters hinted that political enemies had put a torch to it. Schuyler E. Blakeslee, who had defended Andrew Jackson Tyler and lost money in several newspaper ventures, called a community meeting for the purpose of raising funds to buy Sherwood a new press. An attempt was made to force Sherwood out of the editorship, but this move failed. He named the sheet the *Williams County Leader* and continued its publication until President Lincoln called for volunteers in 1861. Sherwood threw down his pen in the middle of an editorial, stomped out of the office, and did not return. Enrolling in the Union forces, he began recruiting an infantry regiment.

The *Leader* went the way of its predecessors. An attempt
was made to get it started again as the *Press and Leader*, but it was not until Sherwood's return from the war in 1867 as a breveted brigadier general that the paper became firmly re-established. General Sherwood dropped the word, “Leader,” from the masthead and remained in active charge until 1869, when he began a half-century of political life. Since 1886, the *Bryan Press* has been published under the firm name of G. S. Roe and Son.

Williams County’s only other biweekly paper, the *Bryan Democrat*, was founded in 1863. Robert N. Patterson started it as a county weekly and continued in charge until 1900. William Behne published it from 1905 to 1923. At the present time, Cass Cullis is editor and publisher.

At various times, several religious and semireligious weeklies have been published in the county, one issuing from the press of a preacher who later became an editor of the notorious *Menace*. A sect of occultists also printed a periodical in Montpelier for a few months, reporting activities in the ghost world.

The county’s most remarkable contribution to journalistic curiosa was the *Brush Creek Herald*, which appeared in Pioneer and its immediate vicinity during the 1870’s. This ribald and libelous sheet was printed and distributed secretly. In it, the editors professed to expose the haymow romances of various self-righteous citizens. It is said to have been responsible for numerous fights and divorces. The identity of the editor was never made public.

The Arts

Cultural development in Williams County, as in most rural districts of the Middle West, has been circumscribed by the hardship, drudgery, and isolation of farm life.

Until the turn of the century, the inhabitants, building their social and economic structure on a foundation of hard labor, had no leisure for any activity beyond those required to meet their immediate need for food, clothing, and shelter. The accepted methods by which a youth could achieve any kind of self-expression during the period of settlement were few. He could be a parson, schoolteacher, lawyer, politician, or editor. But, even
in such professions he was subjected to discrimination. At one
time the rural voters forced the passage of a special county levy
against professional men (see Williams County History), in
effect putting a nuisance tax on ability.

Recent attempts of educators to stress mental achieve-
ment and encourage appreciation of intellectual work have not
impressed the Williams County farmer. Both rural and village
schools emphasize utilitarian studies, and displays of county
products; the accent is usually on agricultural and industrial suc-
cess.

Political controversies in the pre-Civil War period absorbed
local thought. The editorial wars produced much picturesque
writing, such as Isaac R. Sherwood’s tirades against secession in
his newspaper (see Gunpowder and Printer’s Ink), but little
of permanent value. Kate Brownlee Sherwood, wife of the edi-
tor-general, wrote sentimental and patriotic poems. Some of the
verses in her once-popular book, Campfire and Other Poems, were
written while she was a resident of Bryan.

The post-war years were more conducive to literary efforts,
both good and bad. In Williams Center, Dr. Daniel Caulkins
wrote medical treatises, then turned from his anatomical studies to
speculations on the possibilities of aviation (see The Doctor and
the Mud). Writing anonymously and assuming the style of an
uneducated person, an author living in or near Melbern grossly libeled
his neighbors with a book called Foaks and Peepul,
wherein family fights, the delinquencies of hired girls, and the
moral lapses of leading citizens were chronicled with malicious
glee.

During the 1930’s, clergymen were active in the writing of
inspirational literature. Reverend Henry W. Stough produced two
volumes, The Breaking of the Drought and Across the Deadline
of Amusement. His wife, Helen Ross Stough, an evangelist, wrote
A Mother’s Years. Three other religious and semireligious works
were sent forth by Cornelia Atwood Pratt Comer under the titles,
A Book of Martyrs, The Daughters of a Stoic, and The Preliminari-
ies and Other Stories.

Histories of Williams County were written by Weston A.
Goodspeed, Judge William Shinn, and Judge Charles A. Bowersox,
who was aided by Nevin O. Winter. Other books by Williams
County authors displayed at the Public Library in Bryan during
the 1938 Northwest Territory celebration included Farm and
School Problems, by Henry L. Goll; Travel Notes, by Solomon Johnson; Shoot and be Damned, by Ralph Goll and Sergeant Ed M. Halyburton; and several books on Antarctic exploration by Paul Seiple.

Poetry, ranging from lugubrious obituaries and epitaphs to rather polished sonnets, has long been a favorite medium of expression among the writing farmers and villagers. Will Carleton (1845-1912), poet-farmhand, born in Hudson, Michigan, wandered among the hills of Northwest Township about the time he wrote his best-known poem, “Over the Hill to the Poorhouse.” Many of his relatives still live along the State line.

Perhaps the best-known Williams County writer of the present century was Max Ewing, musician and poet, born in Pioneer. Mr. Ewing studied under Alexander Siloti, a teacher of Rachmaninov and other noted musicians, and, while in New York in the late 1920’s, wrote The Grand Street Follies, a well-received departure from the conventional show of that type. His novel, Going Somewhere, was published in 1933, and shortly thereafter appeared his Twenty-seven Sonnets. The years of Mr. Ewing’s life were the same in number as his sonnets, and his tragic death occurred soon after the publication of the book.

Frank Mallory, adventurer in the Yukon and later storekeeper in Pulaski, is widely known for his witty, impromptu rhymes. Dewey Rockefeller, Montpelier mechanic, broadcasts his compositions in verse over a homemade radio station. Other versifiers contribute to the weekly newspapers. A file of press contributions in prose and poetry, kept at the library in Bryan, represents Mandana Willett, Mrs. G. W. Harding, Anna Tressler Long, Millard Lutz (Peter Penn), Charles Leedy, Eva Marie Ramsey, Silas Peoples, and other local writers.

The county has produced several nationally known artists. Allen B. Doggett, a native of Bryan, did the original illustrations for Mary Mapes Dodge’s Hans Brinker. California Vineyard Erwin, another former resident of the county seat, is one of the few women in the country who have specialized in tapestry painting.

Cullen Yates, son of one of Bryan’s pioneer businessmen, gathered some of his inspiration from Williams County scenes. One of his early efforts is on display in the Bryan library. Yates, who studied under Laurens and Constant in Paris, has won several important awards and is represented in many great galleries;
his seascape, The Rock Bound Coast—Cape Ann, hangs in the National Gallery in Washington, D. C.

It was John H. Stubbs who brought music to the county. He played his fiddle—damned as the devil's own instrument by fanatics—with all the fervor he put into his teachings, and is said to have originated several folk tunes. A school of old-time fiddlers grew up around him and carried on the tradition of square-dance music. Some of his melodies are still heard at country hoe-downs, which remain popular in all localities.

Another of the county's early musicians, a contemporary and neighbor of Stubbs, was John A. Baird, who became fife-major of the Thirty-eighth Ohio Volunteer Infantry and piped the regiment to battle on the bloodiest fields of the Civil War.

The first printed music, carrying both words and score, appeared among the settlements in 1852 in the form of The Ohio Harmonist. Its "buckwheat" notes and doleful ballads caught the fancy of the pioneers, and choral groups began to organize. A favorite number of the backwoods singers was the "White Pilgrim," which ran

I came to the spot where the White Pilgrim lay
And pensively stood by the tomb, by the tomb.

During the same year, the county's first band came into being at Bryan. Under one name or another, it has had an almost continuous existence, at one time serving as part of the Sixth Ohio Infantry of the National Guard. As bandmaster of this organization, Professor F. A. Tubbs established himself in the county in 1882. For almost a half-century thereafter, he shaped the musical life of the people in nearly all the rural districts of northwestern Ohio, organizing municipal and school bands and orchestras and conducting group singing as a part of public education.

During this time, the Bryan school board introduced music into the high school curriculum with a system of credits, and other villages of the county soon adopted the plan. Thus, Professor Tubb's program, continued after his death, is Williams County's most successful cultural endeavor.
PART II LORE

Tales of Ghosts and People

THE NETTLE LAKE KRAKEN

In Northwest Township the whisky-peddling Aaron Burr Goodwin and later the hunters, awed by the great depth of Nettle Lake and the apparently bottomless quagmires that surrounded it, originated or borrowed from the Indians a legend that the mucky netherworld was inhabited by a monster who preyed on unwary fishermen and trappers.

This horrible kraken, huge-eyed and tentacled, would seem to have been inspired by some of Goodwin's homicidal cocktails, particularly since it never appeared to any two woodsmen in quite the same shape. They heard its threshing in the reeds, saw the waving of its arms, and smelled its mucky stench, but its body variously resembled that of an ox, a bear, a stump, and a huge stone.

James Knight, a blind veteran of the War of 1812 and the first white man to settle in the vicinity of Nettle Lake, doubted the existence of the monster, as did his five sons, all noted woodsmen. Learning that, because of the boggy shores, there was but one path by which thirsty deer could reach the water, the brothers kept continuous watch over the trail and bagged enough venison to supply the needs of numerous buyers in the settlements. Frequently they lay in ambush in a dugout canoe.

One night during the early 1840's, Philip Knight, oldest of the boys, and a friend, John Crum, poled off for the usual vigil in the log canoe. The weather was warm and both were expert swimmers. The next day, the Knight boys, who had remained on the shore, found that Phillip and his partner had vanished. The canoe, too, was gone.
Some hours later the dugout craft, floating upside down, reappeared on the lake. A search was started, the results of which are still debated, some authorities on local history maintaining that both bodies were recovered, others claiming that no trace of either man was ever found.

Whatever the outcome of the investigation may have been, it led to a general acceptance of the story of the Nettle Lake demon. Many old inhabitants of the countryside still refuse to enter a boat on the lake; they are fearful lest the monster drag them down into his retreat in the unplumbed ooze.

THE VOGELGEIST

The spring break-up in 1838 did not occur until late in April. Settlers going to the spring election crossed rivers on ice that had not yet begun to thaw; and even pussy-willows did not bud until May. For years afterward, little wildlife was found in the district.

According to the tradition, however, when mild weather came it brought to Williams County the first visitation of the “ghost bird,” or Vogelgeist, as the Pennsylvania “Dutchmen” called it. Heard only at dusk and never seen, the bird, if bird it was, had a call unlike anything in the experience of the observant woodsmen. Some likened the notes to the trill of a flute. To others the song suggested the tapping of a bell of marvelous clarity.

Various superstitions grew up about the “ghost bird,” the most popular being that it was a reincarnation of the spirit of Injun Jim, the crippled brave who had been slain and presumably eaten by starving tribesmen near Denmark village. The “Dutchmen” thought that the call signalized some dire event and devised hex charms against it.

The creature frequented inaccessible marshes, where attempts to approach it proved hazardous. In many folk tales, it was reported that two adventurous youths, seeking to trace the origin of the mysterious cry, found themselves being lured into a bog that had swallowed many wild and domestic animals. Dogs
were said to be terrified by the call.

One night the strange twilight calls stopped as suddenly as they had begun. Some people laughed nervously and said this showed they had come from a nocturnal bird that had strayed from its native habitat. Among old residents of the St. "Joe" bottoms, however, such an explanation is totally rejected. It is their notion that the spirit of the slain warrior has merely changed its form and still haunts the dark recesses around Denmark Bridge.

THE HOMES OF MANITOU

Soon after the passing of the Indians, one of Ohio’s mightiest trees was felled in Jefferson Township. With it died another myth. The tree, a walnut, measured 9 feet in diameter at its butt and was more than 100 feet tall. A single log cut from the trunk below the limbs was 60 feet long.

In the legends of the Miami Indians the great walnut was the meeting place of tree and animal spirits, who assembled there in the moon of corn planting to hear the commands of Manitou.

Whether or not the Great Spirit dwelt in its trunk, the butchered walnut had a strange history after it thundered to the earth. Its bole was loaded on three flat-cars in Bryan a few months after the completion of the Air Line Railroad. From the county seat, it traveled to New York, and from New York to Germany, still intact. The German firm that had bargained for it became involved in financial difficulties and was unable to pay for the log. The big walnut stick wandered from port to port and was finally returned to New York, where the Bryan shippers lost trace of it.

Another group of walnut trees venerated by the Indians stood in Pulaski Township. Their stumps, ranging from five to seven feet in diameter, were still to be seen a few years ago, as solid as the day they were cut. When walnut timber became valuable, they were dug up and sold.
THE BREWER'S GHOST

In life, Jake Halm, Bryan's first and only brewmaster, was a kindly man concerned with little except his craft. In death, it would seem, he remains a most inoffensive ghost, desiring only to be left alone with his spectral kegs in the dark recesses of Beer Cellar Hill.

The good brewmaster, who manufactured and sold beer and wine to the county's saloons for many years during the pre-prohibition era, was famed among lovers of light beverages for the quality of his products. The Anti-Saloon League condemned him as the community's worst citizen.

Halm's formulae for making Pilsener and port originated in medieval Germany; they had been secrets of his family for generations. With this mysterious knowledge he combined a system for aging his products naturally. Digging a vast cellar in a hill one mile west of Bryan's Court Square on what is now US 6, Halm filled it with choice brews and vintages. Here he spent most of his time, walking solemnly to and fro among the kegs and casks, testing the contents and listening for leaks.

He would say, "In anoder year dot vill be gute, in two years it vill be besser, in dree years I let mine customers haf it . . . . einz, zwei, drei."

Beer Cellar Hill, later the scene of some of A. Roy Knabenshue's successful experiments with aircraft, began to share the brewmaster's evil repute among the fanatical drys. Preachers thundered against this treasury of Bacchus, calling down upon it and its master the wrath of heaven. Children on their way to school looked askance at it. No longer did they dare slide down its slopes in winter or gather its wild strawberries in summer.

When the gentle Halm was accidentally killed in his subterranean "hell" during the early 1900's, there were many prohibitionists who believed he had been properly punished. Perhaps they were also pleased, for with him died his ancient secrets.

Beer Cellar Hill was emptied of its stores. Venturesome boys began to explore its musty recesses, where a few barrels still reposed, rotting and empty. Rats of enormous size scampered
through the shadows, and surface water, seeping through the stones, pattered on the floor. That was all.

Then prohibition became effective and it was affirmed that John Barleycorn himself was dead. But John was not dead, and neither was Jake, it soon appeared. About the time that the brewmaster’s old customers began to poison themselves with day-old bootleg liquor, his ghost showed itself in the cellar. Several boys saw it, and heard the slow fall of feet, the roll of kegs, and a heavy Teutonic voice repeating, “In anoder year it vill be gute. . . . enz, zwei, drei.”

Their stories were enough to start a legend. Jake’s friends vowed, somewhat alcoholically, that he had come back to tell them how to make good homebrew. Cynics offered the explanation that a local bootlegger had appropriated the cellar once consecrated to the art of the vintner-brewer, but admitted that such sacrilege might be enough to bring Jake back from the grave.

Even since repeal, it is said, the “ha’nt” has walked in the hollow hill. On still nights you can hear the drip of fermenting wine—very faintly, of course—and you can catch, if your nose is keen, the odor of malt. You may even hear the ghost counting the years. At least, that is the story.

THE RAINMAKER’S DRUM

If when fishing the north shore of Nettle Lake in the dusk you hear, far off, a slow and measured thumping, be not deceived into thinking that a procession of cars is crossing a distant bridge, or that a cock partridge is signaling his mate. The sound comes from the Rainmaker’s Drum, and tomorrow it will rain.

The source of the fancy is easy to trace. Until a few years ago, there lived in a gaunt house overlooking the ravine of Nettle Creek outlet on State 567 a bachelor trapper named Sam Coon. In his latter years Sam had all the appearance of a resurrected Visigoth; the hair was long on his head and around his face, his legs were tied up in gaiters made of burlap sacking, and his head and shoulders were cloaked in the pelts of woodchucks and badgers.

He believed profoundly in spirits and often spoke of meet-
ing, during his woodland excursions, the ghosts of Indian chieftains who knew where buried treasure might be found. The hills along Nettle Creek were pockmarked with holes dug by the trapper, but whether it was gold he sought or the hides of denned skunks and groundhogs no one knew.

Among his possessions, Sam had a huge drum of uncertain history, which he frequently carried into the woods for an hour or two of ominous pounding. He had two reasons for his solos, he said. When the beats were quick and furious, he summoned the Indian shades to council. In slower rhythm he made rain.

Men who sat with the rainmaker in his last hours were horrified when he shook off for a moment the grip of death and spoke of treasures to fantastic creatures he thought he saw around his bed. As soon as the body could be moved, his filthy mattress was burned. Later a nephew of the dead man, idly kicking aside the ashes, found several hundred dollars in old gold and remnants of banknotes that indicated a considerable amount of currency had been destroyed. The trapper had never engaged in any remunerative work, and it was not supposed that he ever possessed more than enough money to meet his immediate needs. His excited heirs searched the house and recovered more than $1,000 from cans and boxes. When they examined his drum, they found a head broken. Whatever the instrument had contained was gone.

What was old Sam's secret? Nobody knows. So there is drum-talk when silence and shadow thicken in Nettle Lake Woods. You may not hear it pulsing in your ears like heartbeats, but the old men of the countryside do, and they tell you, "Rain tomorrow."

TWO FANTASTICS

Pioneers of Williams County, like primitive people everywhere, were fond of their fools. The wandering halfwits relieved the tedium of life in those hard days and were as welcome as the itinerant peddlers, schoolmasters, and preachers who brought news of the outside world.

John N. Free, better known as "the Immortal J. N.,"
stopped often at the taverns in Bryan and West Unity, where he never found it necessary to pay more than half his bill for lodging, the landlord assuming the other half—and at a profit. For the arrival of the Immortal J. N. was an event that boosted business, particularly in the taprooms. Settlers gathered to hear him "marshal the forces, lift the veil, and relieve the pressure." Some of them attached weighty meaning to his incoherent discourse; it sounded important.

To know the immortal madman was to hold an open sesame to the hearts of publicans. Everyone loved him, and any new legend about his bizarre doings and sayings excited attention.

About the time J. N. tried to stop the Civil War by interviewing Abe Lincoln and Jeff Davis in their executive mansions and wandering back and forth through the lines of the embattled armies in Virginia, with no other passport than the right of a fool to wander where angels fear to tread, Williams County produced its own beloved crackpot in Jim Anspaugh, a native of Spring Lake in Florence Township.

Jim, bearded and hairy as a prophet of old, followed in the footsteps of the immortal J. N.—within the county lines. He suffered from a peculiar psychosis which made his journey difficult. After an hour or two on the road, he inevitably reached a point beyond which some barrier of mind would not let him pass. To break the spell he gathered stones and built small circles and mounds. When he had placed the last rock, the thrall was lifted and he was able to continue.

Settlers driving through the countryside often saw works of stone along the way and knew that somewhere ahead of them Jim Anspaugh was on the march, making his way by a series of sorties from his little fortifications. Where stones were not available, the madman used sticks.

For all salutations Jim had a stock reply: "That's-what-too-by-Heaven-you're-mighty-right-there-my-boy." The lilting expression became a catchphrase in the county far more popular than the "Ishkabibble" and "Where's Elmer" of later periods. No one could venture a "Good morning" without having his ears assaulted by a "That's-what-too-by-Heaven." First-graders babbled it in school. Lovers whispered it in the straw-ride and bobsled parties. Venerable squires handed down judgments with an appendage: "Five dollars and cost, that's-what-too-by-Heaven." Even the oxen, horses, and dogs got to know the sound of it.
When the recruiting officers came to the county to enroll volunteers to Lincoln's first call, they found every able-bodied man at Spring Lake ready to be sworn.

"Do you swear to support the Constitution?"

Cried the sweetheart of the regiment: "Bring me back some rebel buttons."


At Antietam, Missionary Ridge, Gettysburg, and Atlanta, and in the terrible stockade at Andersonville, the fantastic utterance was repeated as a battle cry, a prayer, a last farewell. It meant nothing—and everything.

In Spring Lake, which had now become Union Corners with the establishment of a post office, only a few old men and the addlebrained Jim remained. Jim had wanted to go along with the boys, but there was no place in the Army for a private soldier who might stop in the rush of an attack to build a talisman. So he stayed at home and invented a game of euchre which he played alone, his right hand against his left, the North against the South.

Don't you ever cheat?" asked a neighbor. "You know what's in each hand."

"That's-what-too-by-heaven-you're-mighty-right-there-my-boy, but I'm a Christian and I don't let my right hand know what my left hand doeth," said Jim.

And the men of the North fought the men of the South as Jim played euchre.

**The Saga of Sile Doty**

If he were alive today, Sile Doty would hardly figure in newspaper headlines as the "Robin Hood of the Borderlands," although he brought to Williams County and the adjoining districts of Michigan and Indiana—his haunts for nearly 40 years—some of the traditions of Sherwood Forest and the Scottish Highlands. He consistently robbed the "haves" and gave to the "have-
nots," excusing his felonies on the grounds that they contributed
to an equal distribution of wealth. A good many inhabitants
of the Tri-State area who grew wealthy were indebted to the
border brigand for their actual sustenance during the hard years
that preceded the Civil War.

The outlaw's philanthropy, however, was incidental to his
depredations. He seems to have pursued crime for crime's sake,
finding his greatest satisfaction in being able to defy the law.
He became a thief in childhood and continued to rob and steal
until his death from the infirmities of age. During his last days,
the unregenerate rogue compiled a book of his adventures, taking
time off from his literary labors to indulge in a little larceny now
and then. In his memoirs, he violated the laws of grammar with
all the disdain he showed for the "whosoevers" of the criminal
code, but succeeded in telling his story with admirable humor,
philosophy, and frankness. The saga ends on the thesis that he
was never interested in making crime pay, that he looked upon
his "job" from the point of view of an artist. He had no regrets
in his penniless old age, for, as he stated, "not even the certainty
of being hanged would have prevented me for one moment from
taking something I wanted."

Doty is chiefly remembered around Williams County as
"Old Sile, the Horsethief," but it does not appear, either from his
life story or the numerous legends that still persist, that horse
stealing was more than a hobby with him. The outlaw loved
horses, made it a point of pride to steal the most valuable steeds
within reach, and performed some memorable riding feats; but
his forte was burglary combined with counterfeiting and highway
robbery. Side excursions also made him, at various times, a river
pirate, a slave stealer, and a military freebooter. When he found
it expedient, he turned murderer with little or no compunction.

His flights and forays took him to Canada, Mexico, Eng­
land, and Scotland for brief periods, making him something of an
international adventurer as well as a plebeian bandit. Always he
returned to the neighborhood of the Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana
State lines; for there he had his family and hundreds of friends
and confederates.

Doty's hauls rarely exceeded two or three thousand dollars
in value, but his coups were so frequent and his career so long
that it is altogether likely that, in aggregate, his loot exceeded
that taken by Jesse James in more spectacular crimes. In one
other respect, also, the border bad man probably set a record. He escaped, or aided companions in crime to escape, from no less than 20 jails and prisons.

Born in 1800 at Albans, Vermont, of honest parents, Sile stole from his brothers before he had learned to talk, and, a little later, from his schoolmaster and teacher. The Doty family moved to New York State in 1809, and young Sile was apprenticed to a blacksmith. The boy had an aptitude for iron working. As he learned to use tools, he found opportunities to experiment with locks and to fabricate master keys and other devices for burglary. He began breaking into houses and stores. The community was completely mystified until he betrayed himself by pilfering from his own employer, exhibiting the strange indifference to self-protection that afterward often brought him grief.

The elder Doty, unable to correct Sile’s larcenous instincts with a birch rod, resolved to give him a taste of the rope. He dragged the problem child to the barn, knotted a noose around his neck, and swung him from a beam three times, letting him down only when he had reached the point of strangulation. Far from frightening the boy, the fearful experience only served to confirm him as a gallows bird. From that day forward he lived constantly in peril of hanging by State vigilantes and executioners.

Sile’s skill with tools brought him customers from both sides of the law. He made picklocks and keys for burglars, shackles and handcuffs for officers. While operating his own shop in St. Lawrence County, New York, he contracted to make a set of escape-proof handcuffs for the high sheriff. The manacles vastly pleased the peace officer, who had no idea that the cunning workman had manufactured and sold a hundred keys to potential wearers of the “darbies.” A few weeks later he took one of the local lawbreakers into custody, handcuffed him, and started for the jailhouse. En route the prisoner made use of one of Sile’s keys, slipped off the heavy iron cuffs, and used them to brain the sheriff.

As a result of this atrocity, Doty abandoned his smithy for counterfeiting operations, in which he was aided by Ed Cooper and Lyman Parks, two of the most notorious coiners of the period. Later, he and Cooper turned to piracy on Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence River. An expedition into England followed.

Returning to the United States, Doty married and threw himself into the war against society with increased fury. His
wife, well aware of his crimes, apparently bowed to his will and remained faithful, while he absented himself for years at a time, plundering, carousing, and philandering as he pleased.

In 1836, Doty appeared in Adrian accompanied by his family. The outlaw found his new surroundings entirely to his liking. He learned that a gang of counterfeiters had a cave along the River Raisin near Blissfield. At Tamarack House in LaGrange County, Indiana, at Jamestown in Steuben County, and at Drink-
er's Mills in Williams County, horsethieves and highwaymen had their hangouts. Outlaw trails, rarely traveled by anyone with legitimate business, led southward to the Maumee River and the Black Swamp. Most of the settlers and innkeepers of the region were in sympathy with the thieves, for the general poverty of the period had given them an elastic conscience.

Under such conditions, Doty conceived the idea of setting up an empire of crime that would extend from Detroit to Chicago and from the southern counties of Michigan to the Ohio River. He established his headquarters on the Patch farm near Tecumseh, Michigan, built up contacts in Detroit, Chicago, and Cincinnati, and selected agents for the disposal of stolen property and the distribution of "queer" money.

The profits of his gang rule were large, but they did not alter his method of life. He continued as an actual participant in most of the big jobs, frequently distributing his share of the loot among the squalid cabins of his neighbors. Settlers who needed a plough, a farm animal, a set of harness, grain for planting, or provisions had only to hint their wants in one of the taprooms where Doty and his border brigands made regular calls. Within a few days the necessities would appear at their doors—myster-
iously, of course.

Doty's extensive domain of pillage and charity did not prevent him from descending at times to petty larceny in its mean-
est form, or from stealing from his own friends when some piece of property evoked his urge to commit theft.

In his memoirs, he records instances of the violation of the fundamental laws of hospitality and sanctuary. In Hillsdale, Michigan, where he enjoyed almost complete protection for a time, the amazing knave noticed a new two-seated carriage with bright red pole and whippetree. Without troubling to learn the owner's name, he detached the pulling gear and hid it in a nearby swamp. Later he told a needy acquaintance where the accesso-ies could be found. They promptly vanished.
When Doty learned afterward that he had robbed an old friend, Thomas Peck, he volunteered to get Peck a new pole and whippletree.

“No, thanks,” said the outraged townsman. “If you come back with the gear you’d take the carriage.”

The outlaw found certain politicians of his time to be quite corrupt. A newly elected State legislator (from Hillsdale County, Michigan), with big feet and a slim purse, appealed to Doty for a pair of boots in which to appear at the statehouse, then in Detroit. Doty took the measurement of the politico’s feet and set forth on a long and hazardous search for a pair of boots that would fit him. He broke into a dozen stores and engaged in a pistol battle with a merchant, before he found the right size; but find them he did, and the barefooted legislator was able to take office with dignity.

Having thus become interested in lawmakers, Doty soon afterward visited Detroit. He learned that the legislature lodged at the United States Hotel in a state of perpetual drunkenness. Registering as a guest, the thief prowled the rooms. The next day a sober and penniless State assembly convened for a discussion of methods by which the payment of its salaries might be advanced.

In 1838, Doty found it expedient to move to the vicinity of Angola, Indiana. Buying a farm, he sought to give his establishment the guise of respectability by hiring an honest hand, Lorenzo Dow Noyes, named after Lorenzo Dow, the famous frontier evangelist and thief-catcher.

Perhaps Noyes, a young man in his twenties, wished to emulate his namesake. In any event, he learned his employer’s true profession, bundled his clothes on a stick, and started for Angola on foot. Doty, fearing that Noyes meant to betray him to Sheriff George Wilder, followed the farm hand and caught up with him near a Tamarack swamp.

“Where are you bound for, Noyes?” asked Doty.

“To town, to swear out a warrant for you, you damned old thief!” said Noyes.

Doty, armed with a loaded cane, brained the farm hand on the spot, then pushed him headfirst into a sinkhole.

Confident that the body would never be recovered, the outlaw remained in Steuben County for several years, continuing his
raids and extending them to Kentucky, where, on one occasion, he stole not only two blooded race horses, but also their groom, a Negro slave. Captured in West Virginia, Doty broke jail and fled back to Michigan. In Port Huron, he was arrested and lodged in a hotel room pending his removal to Detroit on a counterfeiting charge. The arresting officers took more than ordinary precautions, stripping him of all clothing except his undershirt, chaining him, and posting a guard outside his locked door. Nevertheless, Doty freed himself from his shackles, jumped from a window, and rode to freedom on one of the officer's horses, nearly freezing to death during a wild gallop over the muddy winter roads.

During the summer of 1842, a skeleton was discovered in a swamp on the Bliss farm in Jamestown Township, Steuben County, Indiana, near the homestead which the Doty family had occupied. The gruesome remains were immediately linked with the strange disappearance of Lorenzo Dow Noyes, but Sheriff Wilder took no action, feeling that it would be impossible to identify the bones.

Meanwhile Doty, free on a $1,200 bond fixed as a result of theft charges brought against him by residents of Hillsdale, Michigan, engaged even more openly in his depredations. After a store burglary and the theft of a wagon and team in Detroit, the outlaw set out for the borderlands with a wagonload of boots and shoes. He gave away much of the footwear to impoverished settlers along the road, eventually holing up in Johnson's Hotel in Hillsdale.

R. Johnson, the proprietor, had long been a close friend of the outlaw, providing him with shelter when he was ill and hunted. Doty fitted out the landlord with several pairs of fine shoes, then remembered that there were neither beds nor bed clothing in one of the shacks where he had stopped on his journey. That night he loaded the furnishings from several of Johnson's rooms into his wagon and carried them to the squatter's cabin.

Perhaps as a result of this exploit, Doty was delivered to the county jail by his bondsmen. Convicted on a grand larceny charge growing out of one of the old cases pending against him, he received a short prison sentence.

Just as he was starting his term in Jackson Prison, Prosecuting Attorney Robert Douglas, recently elected to office in Steuben County, revived the Noyes case and charged him with murder.
Several of Doty's old neighbors—men who had benefitted from his crimes, we may believe—were now willing to testify against him, believing that he would never again regain his freedom.

The eloquent David H. Colerick defended Doty in a dramatic trial, in which evidence of Noyes' murder played a minor part. The brigand was actually in court on an issue involving the question of whether the total of his crimes outweighed the good he had done. The jury failed to reach a verdict, although 11 members voted for acquittal.

Colerick obtained a change of venue to Fort Wayne, Indiana. This time the jurors found Doty guilty of murder in the second degree. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in the penitentiary at Jeffersonville, Indiana.

During the spring of 1846, a year after the outlaw's commitment, the Indiana court of appeals reversed the lower court and ordered a new trial. Doty, desperate after his first real taste of prison life, had been ready to stage an escape when the appellate court acted.

The prospect of a third trial pleased him little. He was remanded to the LaGrange County Jail to await further court action. There he promptly cut a hole through the wall, and fled to Logansport, Indiana, where a Negro identified him. Recaptured, he was handcuffed, chained, and confined to a canal boat for transportation to Fort Wayne.

While the boat scudded along behind a four-horse team, and the officers slept, Doty freed himself from his shackles and jumped out of a window into the canal. Reaching shore, he unhooked the horses and set out for his hiding places in the border counties. A day later, he was captured and imprisoned in the Angola (Indiana) jail. Leg-irons weighing 19 ½ pounds were riveted to his ankles and linked with a foot of heavy log chain.

Having sewed two thin-bladed knives inside his belt, the desperado was able to cut a hole through the log wall, but he could not immediately rid himself of the enormous leg-irons. Crawling out of the jailhouse, he hobbled to the near-by barn of Prosecuting Attorney Douglas, intending to kill him.

Doty failed to find the official but discovered a fine horse in the stable. Mounting side-saddle, he evaded a posse and reached a farm where he had cached a set of burglar's tools. The implements enabled him to remove his leg-irons.
Free again, the desperado turned Army agent. A keen judge of horses as well as thief, he soon collected several hundred cavalry mounts for the United States Army, then at war with Mexico. About this time, Congress passed an act pardoning all criminals who volunteered for service in the war. Doty desired to take advantage of the law, but the idea of military service as a private was not to his fancy. So, as a civilian employee of the Government, he shipped on a horse-boat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and across the Gulf to General Zachary Taylor's Army base. There he became a camp follower, selling his services to the officers as cook and hostler and retaining civilian status. He says ironically in his book that he immediately went to robbing, stealing, and killing Mexicans, “and in every way acting in keeping with the will of the people of the United States.”

When Taylor captured Monterey, Doty and several revengeful Texan freebooters plundered and butchered the non-combatants of the city. Later, as Taylor was moving forward to the Battle of Buena Vista, the outlaw stole a valuable watch and a blooded horse from the commander of the cavalry brigade.

In another of the mad rides that make Doty's story also an epic of brave horses, the bandit crossed hundreds of miles of hostile country and joined General Winfield Scott's army on the Rio Grande. Scott did not look with much favor on camp followers, but Doty overcame the difficulty by presenting the stolen cavalry charger to the general. Scott, much pleased with the gift, gave his official approval of the outlaw's presence in the Army.

During the campaign, which Doty saw only as a magnification of his own criminal operations, Sheriff Wilder and Prosecuting Attorney Douglas received several letters from the fugitive and were convinced that he had put himself beyond their reach. However, they did not dare hope that he would return to his old haunts and tricks. In 1848, Doty came back to Angola with all the show of a conquering hero. He had a bag of Mexican gold, a silver-mounted knife, a serape, and a command of Spanish curses—enough proof to convince even his most skeptical friends that he had been with the Army. No one troubled to look up his service record.

It is possible that Doty tried to live within the law for a while, now that the slate had been wiped clean. But if he had such an intention, it did not long persist. During 1849, he sought revenge for his being convicted of murder in Fort Wayne by rob-
bing the jurors who sat in the case. Three horses, two teams of oxen, and much other property fell into his hands before the authorities in Fort Wayne brought him into court again. The jurors, profiting from the experience of the men who had previously voted to convict Doty, promptly acquitted him on a horse-stealing charge.

Exasperated officers, despairing of ever ridding themselves of the outlaw by legal means, rearrested him, and carried him to the Michigan line, where the sheriff of Hillsdale County was waiting with one of a hundred unserved warrants that had been issued against him. The charge, which had grown out of the robbery of a freight wagon, listed among the articles stolen a bale of grain sacks. The Hillsdale County prosecutor was in no hurry to proceed with Doty's case and permitted his release in 1850 on a bond of $1,500 furnished by Ira Brown, a prominent citizen. The bandit, returning to his farm, found that two horse-thieves named Pierce and Walters had made off with a span of French ponies belonging to him. Assuming the role of detective, Sile chased the thieves to Cleveland and recovered his property.

Doty had now been a law unto himself for almost half a century. The sheriffs of Hillsdale, Steuben, and Williams Counties were tired of trailing him. His remarkable about-faces had made his companions-in-crime suspicious, and a good many of the inherently honest people who had shared his loot were ready to salve their conscience by turning against him. When his case was called for trial in Hillsdale in 1851, Sile surrendered himself, apparently assured that he could again cheat justice. The jurors, equally loath to find him guilty as charged or turn him loose again, returned a compromise verdict, holding that he had stolen one grain sack. Such a finding called for a sentence for petty larceny.

Judge E. H. C. Wilson called the defendant before his bench. According to Doty, the judge looked "like Nero," and the outlaw knew that the magistrate intended to shake something very unpleasant out of that single empty sack.

"I sentence you to the penitentiary, and to hard labor, for a term of 17 years," said Judge Wilson. "Sheriff, take him away."

In point of law, such a judgment was grossly unjust; but Doty did not appeal his case. The attitude of his old friends hurt him. He entered Jackson Prison with more of the feeling of a recluse than a convict.

Opportunities for escape were many, and Doty, the ex-
THE DOCTOR AND THE MUD
experienced jailbreaker and lockpick, probably could have regained his freedom whenever he wished. But he made no effort to get away, exhibiting another of the many paradoxical qualities in his nature. Even after he became a trusty at the end of two years and was permitted to tend a hog farm outside the penitentiary walls, Sile stayed on. The rogue was enjoying a good many of the liberties of his previous life and none of the hardships. His assignment to the hog farm brought him into contact with the outside world, and he was able to exercise his proclivities for theft by stealing State property and disposing of it to farmers who visited the prison area.

For 15 years the aging Doty remained a model prisoner in the eyes of his keepers. Indeed, he was so popular with his warden, who had grown old with him, that the two wept when his term expired, shortened by two years for good behavior.

Doty had now become "Old Sile," but he showed few traces of age. He could still "crack a strong-box," "fork" a stolen horse, ride hell-to-leather with a posse in pursuit. But his old gang had scattered, some of the members pushing West to die at a rope's end. Tamarack House and the other hangouts had passed into the hands of strangers.

"Old Sile" looked around and decided that, since thievery could not be accomplished successfully, he would hunt down some of his ancient enemies and revenge himself in the fashion of Monte Cristo. He had marked three men for death—Lawyer Parsons, of Coldwater, and two Kinderhood vigilantes named Addison Knott and Fred Fowler. Doty thought he had been double-crossed by the attorney; the vigilantes had clubbed him after he had peaceably submitted to arrest.

Two weeks after his release from Jackson, Doty appeared in Coldwater. Preparing for the lawyer's murder, he scouted the premises and discovered a thoroughbred horse in the barn. The temptation to steal the beast was too much for the old rustler. Forgetting his feud with the owner, he mounted and rode for the Ohio line, following one of the old outlaw trails that led south through the hills to Nettle Lake and thence through Bryan to the Maumee River and Black Swamp.

The countryside and roads had changed so much during his imprisonment that he soon lost his way. The villages, too, were strange. Arriving in Bryan at night, he believed he had reached one of the river towns and engaged a room at a tavern, probably
the Yates House. "Old Sile," changed far less than the country, was readily identified. As the Williams County sheriff approached him, he whipped out a revolver, defying capture. An instant later, he dropped the weapon and meekly submitted to arrest. The unpredictable Doty was afterwards unable to explain why he chose to surrender.

The outlaw was taken back to Coldwater, where he pleaded guilty to a charge of stealing Lawyer Parsons' horse. Perhaps the theft secretly amused other members of the bar, for Doty did not lack defense counsel. A tolerant judge gave him a sentence of four years. Sile found his old cell in Jackson Prison still unoccupied. The warden and inmates welcomed him "home" and he soon regained all the privileges he had enjoyed during his first stretch.

Released at the end of three years, he remained at large only long enough to steal another horse. Doty again pleaded guilty and, this time, he drew only a two-year term. He reflected that, if his sentences continued to diminish, he would at length be able to steal without danger of punishment.

Doty was discharged from Jackson, for the third time, in 1875. Manufacturing a kit of burglar tools, the ancient, but irrepressible, rascal immediately formed a partnership with a young thief named Davis and in his company rode the outlaw trails for the last time. Passing through the neighborhood of Blissfield, he viewed the Barrett farm, where one of his old accomplices had been shot to death by a posse. He visited the cave of the counterfeiters in the banks of the River Raisin and saw that it had been long abandoned. The old taverns where he and his men had roistered were falling into ruins.

Grimly, he raided the suburbs of Toledo, gathering up a wagon load of loot, then started west through Fulton and Williams Counties, plundering stores and barns as he passed. When he reached the sanctuary of the Tri-State country, he was exhausted and had to depend on Davis to hide the swag.

Instead of caching the plunder, the young thief boxed it and shipped it to a "fence," cheating Doty of his share. The old desperado attempted to hunt him down, vowing to shoot him on sight. On March 2, 1876, the man who had stolen thousands of horses found himself without means of traveling except by foot. Walking ten miles, he reached the home of a son in Reading, Michigan. The next day he was dead.
The Angolo Herald of March 15 of the same year carried the news of his passing under a banner headline:

THE LAST OF SILE DOTY!
The Death of a Wonderful Man.

Silas Doty departed this life on last Sunday ... at the advanced age of seventy-six years. Wonderful man! What an eventful life ... !

The Doctor and The Mud

The young doctor riding horseback through southern Williams County that day in 1865 had plenty of time for observation and reflection. Over roads even worse than usual, his round of the scattered farms seemed long and lonely. While his arms jerked at the reins, his mind, curiously detached, abandoned the dripping trees, the clinging mud, the plunging horse. A woman would soon become a mother in one of the wretched log cabins on his list of calls, and another life would be spanked into breath.

His mind paused there. Life, he told himself, was strange. He, Daniel Caulkins, M. D., might be on his way to bring a child of destiny into the world where the great President had so recently been compelled to finish his life tragically. One never knew to what a road might lead—except, of course, mud. That was always ahead—in Williams County, anyway—rutted and sticky clay in one place, treacherous muck in another.

Young Doc Caulkins reined up and gave his horse a breathing space. It had been rearing and wallowing belly-deep through sinkholes, and was nearly spent. He wiped slime from his beard and eyes and searched the sky for signs of weather.

Up ahead, above the heavily timbered countryside, a half-dozen buzzards were wheeling on stiff wings. The sight was not unusual and in itself meant little to the doctor. It was the season when retreating snows often revealed the carcasses of dead animals to the keen eyes of the scavengers. While his mount panted and trembled, Doc Caulkins eyed the birds with a mixture of repugnance and envy. Their ominous gyrations suggested the immutable cycles of fate. Then he was struck by another thought.
and asked himself the age-old question of how such creatures were able to support themselves in midair without apparent physical effort.

The doctor was a man of vast curiosity, and he went prepared to study nature, whatever phenomenon he came upon. Dragging a battered telescope from a saddlebag, he focussed it on the carrion hunters. The lens was powerful enough to reveal the details of their movements, and suddenly he had the answer to his question.

"It became apparent," he wrote years later, "that the primary force in flight is momentum and that lifting power of the wing lies in the angle of its resistance to the opposing force of air."

He had hit upon the elementary law of aerodynamics; but his discovery, if discovery it was, did not seem important to him at the moment. He merely wondered why he had never associated the law with the kites he had flown in childhood.

Doc Caulkins made his calls, saw a baby born, and returned to his home near Williams Center. But often afterward, journeying long miles over fearful roads and trails, he pondered the problem of human flight, eventually concluding that it was entirely practicable if the proper kind of motive power could be developed. He did not take seriously the scheme of contemporaries who believed that flying machines could operate by beating the air with birdlike pinions. Neither did he regard the steam engine, cumbersome and weighty, as a possibility in powering such a machine. Instead, he made a mental picture of a machine that could not have been much different from those in use at the present time—a birdlike craft with fixed wings.

Doc Caulkins rarely discussed his dream with neighbors and patients. Pill-rolling was his profession, and on it his livelihood depended. He was enough of a realist to know that no successful practitioner ever compounded pills of dreams or talked of flying machines to a farmer with ague. He simply went his rounds and awaited the development of a new form of machine power. Apparently he never became greatly interested in the experiment in gasoline motors Otto was making at that time, nor did he anticipate the perfection of the automobile. Probably he was too familiar with mud roads for that; his fancies were built on a desire to escape land ways entirely.

During the late 1860's, Doc Caulkins became interested in
electricity as a solution to the problem of powering an aerial machine. Long before the construction of a successful electric motor, he drew plans for an “electro-magnetic circular power unit,” which might have worked had he taken time off from his practice to build a model. But between births and deaths, chills and fever, pills and mud, he found no time to advance the idea beyond the stage of drawings.

Strangely enough, it was through observation of another natural phenomenon that the doctor hit on his plan for an electric power unit. He had dissected a frog and was studying its heart under a microscope, hoping to trace the nerves to their termination in the muscles, when he evolved a theory of the “circulation of nerves.” Later he conceived the idea that all animals are essentially electric dynamos—an idea that apparently had not occurred to the philosophers and physiologists of the period.

About 1890 Doc Caulkins, his beard now gray, found leisure to elaborate on his pet theories, but he was still afraid of the public, dreading ridicule. Secretly he began writing a little book under the title, Aerial Navigation. Into it he poured the fruit of a quarter of a century of meditation. The treatise (now exceedingly rare) was brought out at his own expense in 1895 after many delays. The Blade Printing and Paper Company of Toledo was the publisher.

Instead of ridiculing the brochure, the public largely ignored it. Although he offered his ideas freely and urged inventors and engineers to take full advantage of them, the doctor’s proposals were too abstract and too advanced to arouse popular interest or even provide jests for fun-makers. Indeed, much of it might have been written today.

Although Aerial Navigation was a failure and the good doctor failed to follow it up, as he had promised, with an “atlas containing complete plans for flying machines,” it undoubtedly establishes him as one of the prophets of aviation. But he waited too long to do any constructive work on the models he had designed. Williams Center was far from the machine shops necessary for their fabrication. And he had grown old with his dream.

It is questionable whether Professor Langley, at work in his laboratory, or the Wright Brothers, tinkering in their bicycle shop, read the book or drew upon it indirectly; it is significant that Doc Caulkins had advocated the use of screw propellers, stream-line bodies, and well-braced wings on flying machines, a
BRYAN AND WILLIAMS COUNTY

decade before the miraculous Wright craft left the ground under its own power at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. In his book the doctor foresaw the stratosphere balloon, the dirigible, the polar flights of exploration, and, more astounding still, the invention of radio and its adaptation for two-way communication between aircraft.

Caulkins even went so far as to consider the place aircraft would take in wars of the future; some of his observations are just now becoming timely. He wrote:

The best constructed airships will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and some of them millions. They will be immense palaces with wings whose natural element is the atmosphere. They will be by far the safest method of transportation. The greatest prime mover that underlies the changes taking place in the world is war. All the nations of the earth are now doing their utmost to keep themselves armed and equipped on a war basis. The great conflict of our age is yearly expected. This aerial navigation being the greatest war power, and being in itself a humanitarian institution, will eventually put an end to all wars, establishing social harmony, universal justice, peace and plenty. The airship will be the enlightener of the world. The steam engine, telegraph, telephone, harvester and sewing machine have done more in fifty years to enlighten humanity than all law, preaching and prisons have done in five hundred years. Aerial navigation will make possible surveys of the great rivers of electricity that flow through the atmosphere and the discovery of the laws of their movements. Expeditions to the north and south pole by air will be a certainty. Telegraph instruments in machines in the air will be brought into rapport, making possible communication between different airships and with stations on the ground.

The Caulkins dream ship, as shown by designs in his book, had three wings and four propellers, two in front and two in the rear. Thus it was both a pusher and a tractor ship. For family use he recommended a small craft, naively declaring that the machine would be “much better than buggies passing over rough roads and through mud.” Mud! The county physician could never quite get away from it, even while he dreamed of “palaces with wings.”

He concluded his book with the statement that no enterprise in the world offered such promises of honor and profit as aviation. Honor and profits were to come to many men and women; but, long before the Wrights, Byrd, and Lindbergh became famous, the Williams Center doctor had died in obscurity.

Daniel Caulkins is remembered by a good many Williams
County people of advanced years as a kindly graybeard, bent with hard journeys, who brought them and their children into the world and sat sadly at the deathbeds; one may wonder whether he also assisted in the birth and death of a new world.

PART III PLACES TO VISIT

Bryan

BRYAN (792.46 alt., 5,386 pop.), in the southeastern part of Williams County, is the seat of government of that county, as well as the largest municipality. Surrounded by the flat lake plain, it lies along the main lines of the New York Central and the Cincinnati Northern railroads and at the junction of US 6 and US 127.

Bryan looks much like other cities of equal size in northwestern Ohio and northeastern Indiana. The tall spire and clock tower of its courthouse overlook the countryside. Its streets are lined with elms, oaks, and maples, which throw a deep shade over the broad, well-kept lawns. Most of the houses are large, generously provided with gables, and lavish with porches. All principal thoroughfares lead to the courthouse square.

The square, in spirit as well as geography, is the heart of the town. The courthouse, with its shaded lawn, stands in the center, like a fortress of leisure, with the wide brick pavement for a moat. Beyond the pavement are the varied ranks of business, housed in one-, two-, and three-story structures, some ultra-modern, others Victorian, and still others nondescript. Drugstores, department stores, restaurants, furniture stores, a poolroom, theaters, hotels—all cluster about the square, the citadel of less active days, when land was not too valuable to leave a breathing space. They seem ready to close in and take over the square.

The final assault may never come, for present-day Bryan, building upon solid foundations, is in little danger of the hysterical overexpansion that leaves so many towns with blighted areas of tumble-down dwellings and business blocks. Much of its commercial activity is directed toward supplying the needs of the surrounding farms, while its industry is diversified enough to
avoid the evils of seasonal employment and consequent seasonal relief rolls. The city's banking facilities are ample, and its financial position is sound.

Bryan's social structure is equally well based. The population is stable and homogeneous, being a community of interest too infrequently found in modern American cities. Factions do exist, of course, but their divisions are not so deep as to defy adjustment. There are no extremes of poverty and wealth, no clashes of tradition. Political enemies can still be personal friends; the benches on the courthouse lawn are still respectable.

Bryan's background as a county seat, in which mingle agricultural and industrial interests, old habits of thought and today's ideologies, has given its citizens the rather surprising distinction of being devotees of politics and horseflesh. It has been said that no other community north of the Ohio River ever demonstrated Bryan's enthusiasm over the ballot box and the stable. The fierce political contests that centered on possession of the courthouse and county offices in the nineteenth century, and produced such nationally known men as General Isaac R. Sherwood and Federal Judge John M. Killits, have engendered an exceptionally keen interest in public affairs.

The townspeople's enthusiasm over horses is more difficult to understand, but it exists in such measure that Bryan has become a horse-breeding and sales center and annually conducts a horse fair, for which special barns have been built. Many of the professional and business men own saddle horses, and a riding academy rents animals in large numbers. The yearly horse show of 1940 was so scheduled as to become part of the town's centennial celebration.

Most of the inhabitants are connected with at least one organization for the advancement of religion, education, or community welfare. The town, which in the year of its founding had its sole religious outlet in a "class" meeting in a tavern, now supports eleven churches, representing almost as many denominations. Its patriotic and fraternal societies number nine, not including auxiliaries, and its other organizations fifteen. The modern educational plant includes a grade school, a junior high school, and a senior high school—with a total enrollment in 1940 of 1,185. Two newspapers, the biweekly Bryan Democrat and weekly Bryan Press, circulate throughout the county. The Bryan Carnegie Library (35,000 volumes) also has a county-wide circulation.
In its climb to the status of a city, Bryan has been aided by transportation facilities that include two railroads and a network of Federal, State, and improved county highways. The New York Central and the Cincinnati Northern lines give the community rail connections in four directions. The Toledo and Indiana Traction Company, of which Bryan was the western terminus, suspended operations in 1939, but a Bryan-Toledo bus line immediately took up the passenger-carrying schedule, giving the town contact with all villages through which the interurban electric line had passed. Bryan was one of the first towns in Ohio to have an airport, but the mail planes soon abandoned it. In 1940, however, local aviators were developing a landing field two miles south of the corporation limits.

Bryan operates its own power plant and has equipment capable of producing all the wattage that private and industrial consumers will need for many years to come. The local fire department, operating with three trucks and a new pumper, has one full-time employee and fifteen volunteers. The street department has fifteen miles of pavement under its supervision. The police force consists of three full-time officers.

POINTS OF INTEREST

1. WILLIAMS COUNTY COURTHOUSE, Court Square, the county's most pretentious public building, was erected between 1898 and 1900 at a cost of $250,000. Modified Gothic in design, with slender spires at its battlemented corners and a clock tower crowning the central portion, the building resembles a medieval castle. A wide lawn, shaded by numerous trees, surrounds it. At the northwest corner of the park is a large NAVAL CANNON, a monument to the county's Civil War and World War dead.

2. FOUNTAIN CITY CREAMERY (not open to visitors), 702 W. Butler St., occupying a one-story white-brick building, has a daily churning capacity of 1,500 pounds of butter. It employs five persons.

3. BRYAN HIGH SCHOOL, S. Beech St., was built in 1903 at a cost of $140,000. Adjoining the school building is the BRYAN AUDITORIUM, in which community and school gatherings are held. The Bryan High School has on display the skeleton of a mastodon found in 1930 on the Ed. Fix Farm, six miles west of Bryan on US 6.
4. The RAMSEY RESIDENCE, 118 S. Portland St., was the birthplace of Cullen Yates, widely known artist, whose painting, Rock Bound Coast—Cape Ann, hangs in the National Gallery in Washington. One of his earlier works is on exhibit in the Bryan Library.

5. BRYAN HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM, Park Field, behind Park Grade School, was built in 1936 at a cost of $11,500. The stadium, of steel-and-concrete construction, overlooks a football field, baseball diamond, and circular track.

6. GARVER PARK, from Court Square three blocks W. on W. High St., is a wooded and landscaped municipal park of five acres, having picnic and playground equipment and tennis courts. CAMERON HOSPITAL, in Garver Park, a three-story white brick structure erected in 1935, provides a complete nursing staff and a resident surgeon. It has 18 beds.

7. The SWIMMING POOL (adults 25c; high school students 15c; children 10c), William H. Moore Memorial Park, completely modern both in design and construction, was built by the Work Projects Administration at a cost of $40,000, of which $20,000 was supplied by the municipality from a bequest of William H. Moore. It was dedicated in June 1939. The designers, Kermit E. Grose and O. H. Hines, made extensive use of glass block in the otherwise concrete structure, and thus obtained exceptionally good conditions for lighting and sanitation. The swimming pool is 45 by 100 feet; the wading pool, 15 by 28 feet.

8. ARO EQUIPMENT COMPANY (not open to visitors), Enterprise St., employs 200 workers in the manufacture of automobile lubricating equipment. Its $30,000 brick building, erected in 1919, has 72,000 square feet of floor space.

9. SPANGLER CANDY COMPANY (open on request), N. Portland and W. Trevitt Sts., manufacturer of confections, uses 7,500 square feet of floor space and employs 100 men and women.

10. BRYAN HANDLE COMPANY (not open to visitors), W. Trevitt St., established in 1910, occupies a two-story brick building and three one-story frame curing sheds, a total of 35,000 square feet of floor space. It employs 55 operatives engaged in the manufacture of various types of wooden handles.

11. WILLIAMS COUNTY JAIL, from Court Square N. two blocks on N. Lynn St., W. one-half block, one of the town's oldest landmarks, was remodeled by means of a Public Works Administration grant during 1938-39. It is one of the most modern county penal institutions in the State, adequately equipped to provide sanitary quarters for men, women, and juvenile offenders, and escape-proof cells for desperate inmates. The sheriff's residence is connected with the jail building by a covered passage.
12. MYKRANTZ BUILDING, 233 N. Lynn St., built in 1863, once housed Professor Mykrantz’s Normal School (see School Bells). Many of Bryan’s noted citizens attended classes under the pioneer educator. The old school building is now used as a private residence.

13. HOLABIRD FURNITURE COMPANY (not open to visitors), E. Edgerton St., occupies a two-story brick building and two frame structures, with a total floor space of 68,000 square feet. Here 300 men and women make novelty furniture.

14. FREDERICK HENKELMANN COLLECTION (open), 321 N. Cherry St., is a display of weapons and tools collected in New Guinea by Reverend Frederick Henkelmann, a Lutheran missionary in Australia.

15. POST OFFICE BUILDING, N. Main St., is a one-story red brick building erected by the Public Works Administration in 1935-36.

16. BRYAN PUBLIC LIBRARY (9-9 weekdays), E. High St., just off Court Square, is a one-and-one-half story white brick-and-stone structure with a domed roof. Constructed in 1903, with the aid of the Carnegie Foundation, at a cost of $10,000, the library contains 35,000 volumes. An alcove adjacent to the reading room holds a display of Indian, pioneer, and war relics, including the flag of the Thirty-eighth Ohio Volunteer Infantry, which figured so gallantly in the memorable charge on the Confederate works at Jonesboro (see The County in the Wars). MEMORIAL ELM, in front of the library building, dedicated to the memory of Bryan’s extinct G. A. R. post, is distinguished by a stone-and-bronze marker.

17. YATES HOUSE (open), 133 S. Walnut St., a frame structure erected in 1844 as a hotel, is still a rooming house. It was built by John Will, a pioneer resident of Bryan; and members of the Yates family have occupied it for more than 80 years. Sile Doty (see The Saga of Sile Doty) was captured in a livery stable near Yates House.

18. MEMORIAL BUILDING (open 9-4 weekdays), Allen and E. Butler Sts., a two-story white stone structure, houses the Bryan Post of the American Legion. The Works Progress Administration provided labor for its construction. Completed in 1936, it was dedicated on Memorial Day of that year to the county’s war veterans.

19. VAN CAMP PACKING COMPANY (open on request), E. High St., occupies two brick buildings, both two stories high, constructed in 1916; they contain 7,500 square feet of floor space. The company, a subsidiary of the Van Camp Corporation, employs 30 persons in the production of evaporated milk.

20. OHIO ART COMPANY (not open to visitors), E. High St.,
established in 1914, manufactures toys. The factory is a two-story brick structure, with 72,000 square feet of floor space. About 250 men and women are employed.

Montpelier

MONTPELIER (910 alt., 3,677 pop.), second-largest community in Williams County, is on US 20 Alt. about 10 miles north of Bryan. With four divisions of the Wabash Railroad meeting in its extensive yards, the town has direct rail communication with Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, and St. Louis. In addition, the Safe Way Bus Line operating between Chicago and Toledo on US 20 stops at Montpelier.

As a farm trading settlement, Montpelier had its beginning in 1835 in the establishment of a mill, operated by Dan Tucker, on the banks of the St. Joseph River. A little later, G. & R. Brown opened a general store near the mill. The townsite had been platted by Jesse Tucker and I. K. Brimer on a contract, but as they failed to record the lots, the land reverted to the original owner, W. S. Miller. Thereafter, Montpelier remained a crossroads trading point until 1875, when it became certain that a railroad would pass through the community. With Montpelier's future now apparently bright, the town was incorporated. At the first election, on April 5, 1875, Joel B. Briebel was chosen as mayor.

After the Wabash line was completed, Montpelier grew steadily, drawing agricultural shipping from all parts of the county. Industry, too, was attracted by transportation facilities. Combining agriculture with manufacturing, Montpelier now has a vegetable-canning factory and a creamery, as well as factories for the manufacture of toys, auto accessories, and store fixtures.

Montpelier children attend a grade school and a high school. In addition to its fraternal organizations, the town supports an American Legion post and Women's Auxiliary, a business men's association, and the Ladies Historical Society, established in 1883. The biweekly Leader Enterprise is read in Montpelier and environs.
1. WILLIAMS COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS, E. Main St. at the corporation limits, occupies two acres on the banks of the St. Joseph River. Its permanent structures include a steel-and-concrete grandstand, with a seating capacity of 1,500; race horse barns; and administration, Red Cross, Four H Club, Merchandise, and Stock buildings. One of Ohio's outstanding fairs is conducted here annually. The first fair association was organized in 1885, and the grounds were purchased in 1900.

2. WALDING CANNING COMPANY (not open to visitors), E. Wabash St., occupying a one-story building on E. Wabash Street, has 2,300 feet of floor space. In season, the company employs 23 workers in the canning of corn and tomatoes.

3. WENZLER STAMPING COMPANY (not open to visitors), W. Wabash St., with 6,500 feet of floor space in a one-story, cement-block plant, employs 35 men in the manufacture of toys and auto accessories.

4. HELLER COMPANY (not open to visitors), W. Wabash St., with 75,000 feet of floor space in its brick building, employs 65 persons in the making and assembling of show cases and other store fixtures.

5. JOHN FRIEND COLLECTION (open 9-4), Empire St., is housed in a three-story, red-brick structure, erected as a residence but now used as a funeral home. The collection consists of antiques, paintings, and lamps of many periods and nations.

6. MONTPELIER PLAYGROUND PARK, W. Main St., a two-acre tract overlooking the St. Joseph River, was developed with the aid of the Civil Works Administration and Work Projects Administration. It is landscaped and well-equipped with recreational facilities for children and adults. During the winter months the flooded grounds serve as a skating rink.

7. RIVERSIDE CEMETERY, extending over 54 acres along State 107 on the bank of St. Joseph River in the western part of Montpelier, is the largest burial place in the county. The center of the grounds is called CIRCLE PARK. William Shinn, author of the County of Williams, is buried in Riverside. The first burial recorded is that of John Belver, in January 1859.

8. MONTPELIER CREAMERY COMPANY (not open to visitors), Monroe St., occupies a two-story brick building, where it manufactures dairy products. It has 750 feet of floor space and employs 4 men.

9. OLD EMPIRE HOUSE, Main St., one-half block west of the intersection of Jonesville and Main Sts., now used as a food store, was Montpelier's first large tavern. It was the scene of a murder soon after its erection in the 1870's. The skeleton of the victim,
a traveling man, was found under the building when it was being moved to its present location from the original site at Jonesville and Main Sts. The old house was said to be haunted.

Other Towns

ALVORDTON (817 alt., 327 pop.), US 20 about four miles from the Fulton County line, has no industries; and such commerce as exists is purely local. Alvordton does possess one of the best-known landmarks in Williams County: the Alvordton Home (private), a three-story, red-brick Early American residence surrounded by tall trees and evergreen thickets. Built by H. D. Alvordton in 1895 at a cost of $15,000, it is still occupied by members of the family.

BLAKESLEE (876 alt., 164 pop.), State 34 about five miles SE. of Edon, is entirely dependent on the countryside. In the days of prohibition, the number of its establishments for the sale of liquor gave Blakeslee somewhat of a reputation as an oasis.

EDGERTON (830 alt., 1,078 pop.), third-largest town in Williams County, is situated at the junction of US 6 and State 49. Aided by its location on the main line of the New York Central Railroad, Edgerton has more industries than most towns in the county; a canning factory, a basket factory, and a mill offer seasonal employment.

The village has the largest monument in Williams County, a marble column topped by the bronze figure of a Union soldier standing at parade rest and gazing toward the south.

At the public library on Main Street, one block east of the monument, is a collection of Indian, pioneer, and war relics.

EDON (960 alt., 631 pop.), stands at the intersection of State 49 and State 34. Its business life revolves about agriculture. Like most Williams County villages, it has its grain elevator and markets, from which the Wabash Railroad hauls Edon’s products to more populous centers. Founded about 1839, Edon reflects the solid, conservative virtues of the Germanic settlers who found a wilderness and left a garden. Their descendants carry on in the same tradition.
PIONEER (809 alt., 757 pop.), State 15 about one mile S. of the Michigan line, is predominantly agricultural. The town was founded in 1853 by A. F. Norris, the explorer, who later gave his name to Norris Basin in Yellowstone National Park.

Pioneer is sometimes called the “Town-on-a-Bridge,” for the intersection of its two principal streets overlies Clear Creek, and its business district likewise straddles the stream. The Pioneer-Fayette R. R., only 12½ miles long, is said to be the shortest in the United States.

A collection of Indian relics, including many well-preserved stone implements and tools, gathered by Reverend F. J. Slough, may be seen in the Slough home in Pioneer.

STRYKER (714 alt., 922 pop.), State 2 about eight miles east of Bryan, is on the main line of the New York Central. Its location in the center of a rich grazing area and along a principal railroad has given the town considerable importance as a shipping point for livestock.

Platted in 1853, and named in honor of a railroad official, Stryker at one time hoped to duplicate for its citizens the prosperity that came to towns in the Lima area with the discovery of oil. Although the drillers did not find oil, they did tap a spring of valuable mineral water which has since given Stryker one of its minor activities, the operation of a spa. Industries include the manufacture of cars and of tile and cement blocks.

WEST UNITY (880 alt., 915 pop.), junction of US 20 Alt. and US 127, about 11 miles northeast of Bryan, depends largely upon the surrounding farms and their products for its commercial and industrial life. It is a national center for the shipment of eggs. Of almost equal importance to the town are the West Unity Woolen Mills. Two railroads, the Wabash and the Cincinnati Northern, carry the products to the large urban markets.

Although first settled about 1836, West Unity was not incorporated until 30 years later. It then became a thriving village with a sawmill, flour mill, and various other enterprises; but, after the disappearance of the big timber, the town gradually became the stable little farm center that it is today.
County Points of Interest

1. The BENJAMIN SHIFFLER HOME (open), E. Side of US 127, 5 ¼ m. NE. of Bryan (1 m. N. of Pulaski), constructed by Benjamin Shiffler in 1844 at a cost of $10,000, was the third brick residence erected in Williams County. It is Early American in style; the floors are hardwood, the interior walls of oak.

2. The CENTURY-OLD APPLE TREE, Asa Crawford property in Kunkle, 1 block S., ½ block W. of the main corners, figures in local legends as one of the Johnny Appleseed plantings. Its original fruit has disappeared, but it bears more than 30 varieties of apples on grafted limbs. Grafts are still being made by the owner.

3. FOUNTAIN GROVE CEMETERY, US 127, 2 m. S. of Bryan, serves both Roman Catholics and Protestants. It derives its name from three fountains in the center of its 20-acre area. Two winding drives enter from the west and south. Earliest burial is that of Sara Middeffer, who died in 1878. Prominent persons buried here include Judge Charles Bowersox, historian; Cornelia Pratt, authoress; and Dr. James Long, pioneer physician.

4. GOLL’S FOREST, 4 m. SE. of West Unity, contains one of the largest stands of virgin timber in Ohio. It was acquired by Peter Goll during the 1840's, and, throughout the rest of his life, Mr. Goll jealously guarded the trees, replanting whenever one died. His heirs have carried on the tradition. Many picnicking places are in the neighborhood. Hunting is not permitted.

5. The J. J. EDDY STONE BUILDING, West Jefferson, on State 15 (7 m. N. of Bryan and 1 m. S. of junction of State 15 and State 20), the oldest building in the community, was erected by Jonathan Tressler in 1851. It was first a tavern, accommodating travelers bound West to seek gold or take up homesteads, and was the scene of many bloody brawls. It later combined post office business with the dispensing of food, drink, and shelter, receiving mail for delivery in Montpelier. During its long history, the building has housed such different establishments as a doctor’s office and a wagon repair shop.

6. NETTLE LAKE covers 260 acres near State 49 (10 m. W. of Pioneer, 1½ m. S. of Ohio-Michigan line, 12 m. E. of the Ohio-Indiana line; from Cooney, 2½ m. N., ½ m. E., and ½ m. S.). This L-shaped lake derives its name from a rank growth of nettles that, in the early days, filled adjacent swamps and provided settlers with a substitute for flax. It is one mile long, a quarter- to half-
mile wide, and thirty feet deep, and is fed by springs and streams. Its largest inlet, Nettle Creek, flows from its source at Marsh Lake across the State boundary near Ohio-Michigan 49. The same creek is also Nettle Lake's outlet, emptying into the St. Joseph River and linking it with the Maumee River System.

Through the dredging of the outlet in 1895, Nettle Lake lost half its original area and most of its fish life. In recent years, the State conservation department has added millions of catfish, perch, blue gills, black bass, and crappies to its waters. The annual catch amounts to several hundred thousand. A State dam and screen in the mouth of its outlet, Nettle Creek, prevents escape of new stock.

The development of this lake as a recreational center and watering place did not begin until 1920. Since then, about 75 cabins and cottages have been constructed at Goll's Landing and Robb's Landing on the southwest shore and at Roanza Beach (no public accommodations) on the west bank. Goll's Landing, open the year around, has tavern, restaurant, bath house, icehouse, indoor and outdoor dance floors, baseball diamonds, sleeping rooms, tourist cabins, and cottages. At Robb's Landing, open only in summer, cabins and cottages are rented. Both establishments have camp sites and fountain water, which has been approved by State health authorities. Motorboats, rowboats, and canoes are available for public use at the two resort colonies.

7. NETTLE LAKE INDIAN MOUNDS, 6 m. W. of Pioneer, lie in the John Kintigh woods, a tract that has never been cleared or cultivated. These mounds have escaped leveling. Some archaeologists believe that the Nettle Lake mounds are the work of the ancient Indians or Mound Builders, but the point is still disputed. Some of them have been opened and improperly excavated by inexperienced persons, and, in almost every instance, human bones, charcoal, copper spearheads, and arrowheads were discovered.

8. NORTHEASTERN WILLIAMS COUNTY INDIAN MOUNDS lie on the banks of the St. Joseph River, 2 m. E. of Pioneer, near Hayjay Corners, on State Route 567. The largest mound of this group, perhaps the one ancient work in the county that has never been opened, stands alone in a flat field. It is oval in shape, 100 feet long and 30 feet high. Several trees on its slopes have reached maturity. Bones and stone implements have been found near its base. It is the opinion of Harrison Arkwright, surveyor and antiquarian, that the large Hayjay Mound marks the site of what was once a sizable Indian village.

9. SHIFFLER CEMETERY, US 127, 5½ m. NE. of Bryan, covers 18 acres. The cemetery, established in 1849, serves all denominations. Many pioneers are buried here; the oldest grave (1849) is that of Alphaus Moss.
10. TRI-STATE POINT, 4 m. NW. of Columbia in extreme NW. part of the county, is the junction of the State boundaries of Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. It is marked by the HARRIS STONE, erected after the "Toledo War."

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