

# STATE CENTENNIAL HISTORY

By Henry Holcomb Bennett

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This township was established by order of the county commissioners on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 1811. Its boundaries are irregular, with the exception of the southern, which borders on Pike county. The commissioners' order in establishing the township read as follows: "Ordered, that a part of Scioto township and a part of Twin be erected into a separate township, beginning at the mouth of Indian creek; thence up the Scioto river to the mouth of Paint creek; thence up Paint creek to the mouth of North Paint; thence up North Paint to the upper line of Scioto township; thence with said line to the mouth of Cattail run; thence with a line to include the inhabitants south of Vincent Haller's bottom on to the mouth of Fergus Moore's run; thence with Gilfillin's run, taking the Sulphur lick to the thirteen-mile tree on the State road; thence with Mifflin township line to the line of Franklin township; thence with said line to the place of beginning. Said township to be known as Huntington township. The place of elections to be the house of Charles Mitchell." At the first election held after the township organization on April 1, 1811, David Murphy, Frederick Bishop and Daniel Chestnut were elected justices of the peace.

Huntington, as a whole, may be characterized as very rough and broken land. The valleys are narrow, bounded by steep hillsides which are often rocky. The land which might be termed level consists principally of terraces or plateaus on the hillsides, and an occasional level spot on the summit of the hills. The soil is not generally as fertile as elsewhere in the county, though there are some fine farms in the township. The rock formation is mostly of sandstone, or freestone and shale. The hillsides sloping northward are covered with a rich deposit of black, sandy loam, mixed with gravel, and these are much more productive than the southern slopes, another evidence of the terminal moraine of the pre-historic glacial period. The diversified topography of this township renders it exceptionally rich in natural scenery. The highest pinnacles and bald knobs rising to a height of five hundred feet above the Scioto afford a commanding view which extends far beyond the boundaries of the township. Some of these, and other wild, romantic spots, have long been known as places of resort for picnicing parties and tourist.

Alum cliffs, on the western and southern banks of Paint creek, mark the edge of the ice in the glacial age, and the surface of the cliffs shows many horizontal marks of glaciation. Some of the most perfect examples of river-terraces in the country are along the creek in this township. Alum cliffs were once noted as a source of alum. Saltpeter was also found along these cliffs, and the two salts were taken out and prepared for market, on a limited scale, in the early days. General McArthur dug a salt well on land which was subsequently owned by John Dunn,

and this proved a feature of much importance in the early days when salt was expensive. The well yielded abundantly; but, with the ever restless spirit of American enterprise, he sought more, and in digging for an inexhaustible supply, lost what he had. ; A strong vein of fresh water was struck, and this neutralized the saline product.

The streams in Huntington are Paint creek, and its tributary, Ralston run, flowing north, while Indian creek and Crooked creek flow to the southeast into the Scioto. The interior streams are short, but the territory is well watered with excellent springs, particularly in the northern and western portions of the township. Huntington is specially adapted to grazing purposes, an industry which receives the careful attention of the provident farmers, with favorable results. Fruit culture is also carried on very profitable, apples and peaches being the staples in that line, though all kinds of small fruits succeed admirably. The dense forest, hills and caves afforded hiding places for all kinds of game.

The "Lost Race" has left several evidences of their pre-historic existence in Huntington township, but none of the works are large. On the east side of Black run, on the Minney farm, is a stone wall, enclosing about an acre of land. There are inner walls through the work, forming partitions, or divisions. The form of the outer wall is nearly that of a square. Much of the stone has been removed, and only a rude outline appears. When first observed by white men, the walls were from four to six feet high. To the south of this, about two hundred yards, is a stone circle one hundred feet in diameter and five or six

feet high. On the John Dunn farm, on Paint creek, is a circular earthwork, three or four feet high and about a hundred feet in diameter. On the adjoining farm are two mounds, one about eight feet high and twenty-five feet in diameter, the other considerably longer, being sixty feet long, forty feet wide, and eight to ten feet high. A large mound is located on the farm formerly owned by James Steele, which, for many years, was a breeding place for foxes, being completely honeycombed by their persistent burrowing.

Unlike the older townships, Huntington was settled several years before the township was organized, the territory then being embraced within the townships of Scioto and Twin. A number of the earliest settlers removed from the malaria-infested bottoms of the Scioto and Paint to the higher and more healthful lands in Huntington. This movement was noticeable in the settlement of other townships, but the valleys of the county are now considered as healthful as any other locations.

William Richie was the first settler on Ralston's run, where he located and built his cabin before 1800, and where he spent his remaining years. Benjamin Ralston was the second to locate in that vicinity. He was a native of Vermont and emigrated to the Scioto country with his wife and one son. Two sons and three daughters were born to them after locating in Ross county. The youngest son, whose name was Robert, was born in 1804, and spent a long life in Huntington township, living within a few rods of his birthplace. In old age he took pleasure in stating.

that he had never been more than forty miles from home, and never rode on a railroad car. He married Maria Taylor, and came into possession of the parental home upon which his father had planted one of the first orchards in the county. Benjamin Ralston perished from exposure when lost in the forest while hunting.

Michael Thomas came on horseback from Pennsylvania in 1796. He bought one hundred acres of land near Chillicothe, but soon afterward traded that for five hundred acres in Huntington township. Mr. Thomas served as a scout under General Wayne, and was with that commander on his expedition to the Maumee valley. He had many narrow escapes from the Indian bullets and tomahawks in the discharge of his perilous duty. He was twice married, and had nine children.

Paul Streevey was a hero of the Revolution, and served from Brandywine to Yorktown. He came from Pennsylvania, and settled in Chillicothe in 1800, but a few years later took up his residence in Huntington township, locating near the Limestone road. His three sons, Daniel, Joseph and Peter, were soldiers in the war of 1812. Daniel died soon after being discharged, and Joseph mysteriously disappeared. Peter returned to Huntington, where he was an honored citizen and useful man. He was locally prominent as a hunter, and served many years as a supervisor of road building.

The Chesnut family was one prominent and early established in Ross county. Daniel Chestnut brought his family, consisting of wife and five children, to the Scioto valley in 1798, having first located at the site of the present city of Portsmouth.

From there they made the journey to Ross county on foot, following the old Indian trail to Chillicothe. They lived several years in the vicinity of that city, and finally Mr. Chesnut purchased two hundred and sixty acres of land from General Massie, and the family removed to their new home on Indian creek, in Huntington township, about 1805. Their first house was an abandoned cabin, and afterward they constructed a tent of an old wagon cover, and these they occupied until a cabin, sixteen by eighteen feet, was erected in the forest. Beds were arranged with crotches driven into the ground, cross sticks laid in the crotches, and clap-boards laid upon these for "mattress" and "strings." The family larder was supplied with bear meat, venison and wild turkey, through the effectiveness of the family rifle, and hominy was the staple article in the line of bread. Corn was ground in a hand-mill, whereat the members of the family took turns, and kept the implement in operation for the greater part of the time. The Chesnut family is descended from Scotch and Irish ancestors, who emigrated to this country prior to the Revolution. Daniel Chesnut served during the "Whiskey Insurrection" under Gen. Henry Lee in 1794. In later years he was a captain of militia, and was one of the three justices elected at the first election held in Huntington township. This position he held for seventeen years. An incident of his official life is related as follows: A man named Shears had been arrested and brought before Esquire Chesnut, on the charge of stealing a small sum of money from a Mr. Ogden. Shears plead guilty, and the court imposed a jail sentence. When starting to the county bastile, Shears remarked to the constable that he would prefer thirty lashes to a

prison sentence; whereupon Squire Chesnut was informed of the prisoner's request. The court, temporarily laying aside official dignity, repaired to the woods, and cut five hickory gads of the variety that do not break, and deputized the constable to administer "thirty lashes save one," the venerable squire standing by as a moderator or umpire. With the infliction of each five cuts hostilities ceased, the culprit's wounds were bathed with whiskey by the sympathetic magistrate, and the victim was admonished to lead a better life, and forsake his evil ways. In due time the twenty-nine lashes, "well laid on," had appeased the offended law, and Shears was permitted to go his way.

During the threatened border troubles with Indians, Captain Daniel Chesnut and William Richie were frontier guardsmen, whose mission it was to watch the Ross county Indians particularly, and to report on suspicious actions affecting the general safety. He left a family of three sons and two daughters, named in order of birth, William, Lemuel, Margaret, Polly, Benjamin and James. These married and located, for the most part, in Huntington. One descendant of the family, Austin Chesnut, is a pharmacist in Chillicothe, where he conducts an extensive and profitable drug business. Other descendants of the early stock still reside in Huntington. William Chesnut, son of Daniel, served in the war of 1812, in Captain Rutley's company, in the regiment commanded by Colonel Denny. This was a part of General Tupper's brigade at Fort Meigs and on the Maumee. For this service he received a land warrant which entitled him to a farm on the public domain.

Henry Bishop came to Ohio from Berkeley county, Va., in 1805.



A year later he purchased land in Huntington township, upon which he lived until his death in 1820, at the age of ninety-eight years. His son Robert, who was a lad of seventeen when he accompanied his father to Ohio, lived in Huntington until his death in 1875. Robert married Sarah Hill, a native of Maryland, who came to the county in 1807. They had a large family of children, of whom nine grew to maturity. Two of these remained in the township. Mr. Bishop was a sergeant in Captain Yoakem's company, in the war of 1812.

David Shotts was a Revolutionary hero, who came to Huntington township in 1809. He was also in service during the suppression of the Whiskey insurrection. He was killed by lightning in 1825, and left a family of ten children. L. Neborgall brought his wife and six children to Ross county in 1808, was an active pioneer in the days of township organization, and some of his children were prominent citizens of Huntington for over sixty years. Their names were Jacob, John, Catherine, George, James and Henry. MR. Neborgall, sr., was one of the earliest sheep raisers in the township, in which industry he found much difficulty in protecting his flock from the depredations of wolves. High and strong pens were constructed of logs or poles, in which the animals would instinctively seek shelter whenever alarmed, even in daylight, and they were always tightly shut in at night.

James Finley and family emigrated from Ireland to the United States about 1811. They landed in New England, whence they continued their migration until finally reaching Huntington township, a few years later. The family consisted of seven children. Isaac J. Finley was probably the best known of their descendants. He was for

many years a justice of the peace in Huntington township, and held other positions of trust and responsibility. He was a carpenter by trade, a vocation which he followed in early life. In 1868 he was a member of the Ohio legislature from Ross county, serving one term. The "Pioneer Record of Ross County" appeared in 1871, as the product of Isaac J. Finley and Rufus Putnam. Though it contains less than a hundred and fifty octavo pages, it nevertheless records much valuable pioneer history, which should have been lost but for its timely appearance in this little volume. Other members of the Finley family were prominent in the early days in Huntington. William was a soldier through the Mexican war. He died of cholera in Cincinnati. Moses was township treasurer of Huntington for many years. John, who married Mary Wentworth, died in 1858. These were the parents of Isaac J., mentioned above.

Aaron Vanscoy came with his father's family from Virginia in 1804. About 1809 they located in Huntington township, Ross county. He was a member of Captain Northup's company in the war of 1812. His only compensation for his services was a land warrant which he received a number of years after the war closed. Enoch Vanscoy was also an employe of the government during the war; while Rev. Isaac Murphy, John Campbell, Jacob Day, Benjamin Smith and David Ridgway were regularly enlisted soldiers from the Vanscoy neighborhood. Other patriots from Huntington township in the early wars of the country were: John Cochenour, Peter Streevey, David and Jacob Toops, John Scantlin (in Indian war of 1791, and also in war of 1812), Job Haynes, George Grove, Henry Long, David Elliott, George Ruffner, George Houseman, Stanley Seymour (in Indian war), Daniel Toops, David Shoemaker, Daniel

Grubb, Isaac Jordan, Richard Elliott, Henry Wilt, George Myers, Benning Wentworth (served five years in the Revolution, and three years in the French and Indian war), Robert McCann (a Revolutionary soldier), Reuben Elliott (also in Revolutionary war), William Heness, David Ogden, James Wilson, Stacey Deviney, Peter Cockerell, William Lockwood, William Selby, Larkin Selby, Hockery McAllister, Michawl Thomas, William Chandler, Solomon Trego, George Funk, Francis Kile, Henry Strong, Lewis Wheaton, Uriah Hurley, Ebenezer Rozell, Simon Johnson, Henry Cramer, Jacob Grubb.

Jacob Selig, born in Lancaster, Pa., came to Huntington township with his family before 1808, and being a gunsmith by trade, he was the armorer under Captain Richardson at the state armory at Chillicothe during the war of 1812, and he was also on arsenal duty at Columbus and Newport, Ky. His son, Joseph Selig, made his home upon the original farm in later years.

William Hewitt, the hermit, passed his first years in Ohio in the seclusion and isolation of the Huntington forests, and it seems proper to mention him in this connection. He came from Virginia about 1808, and spent the intervening years between that date and his occupancy of the celebrated cave on the Portsmouth pike, as an eccentric nomad in Huntington township. His only associates there, as far as is known, was the family of Mr. L. Neborgall, with whom he seemed to be on friendly, though not intimate, terms. He is described as a man of rather prepossessing appearance, intelligent, temperate and inoffensive, moral in his habits, a student of the Bible, and a close observer of the Sabbath. He carefully guarded his life secret, barely hinting that he had chosen his peculiar life because of the infidelity of a loved wife, whom he often mentioned. He carried a long rifle and tomahawk,

and was an expert in the use of each. A physical giant in his mature years, he has been known to carry the carcasses of two deer, besides his gun and accoutrements, from the hunting ground, where slaughtered, to his lonely cabin in the woods. On one occasion an energetic seeker after information rode up to Hewitt's domicile and, without ceremony, said, "Well, old man, I have come to get a history of your life." Hewitt replied, "You leave here quick. or I'll give you a history of hell!" The interviewer did not stand on the order of his going.

In the days of exciting discussion on the slavery question, Huntington was the scene of some novel performance. There was a strong pro-slavery sentiment among some of the active young men of the township, and they decided to not only prevent the spread of abolition doctrine, but to have some rough sport with those public speakers who came into the township in the interests of the abolition party. The "Blackhawks" came into existence with some thirty-five members. Their depredations were confined to the commission of acts of malicious mischief, such as tearing down fences and overturning small buildings, prying down chimneys, and occasionally throwing eggs, but no personal violence was committed or tolerated. Public sentiment ran high, and numerous prosecutions followed the commission of these lawless acts. But the Blackhawks were always able to prove an alibi, and after dallying in the courts for some years, the cases filed against individual members of the mysterious organization were finally thrown out. Every malicious act committed in the community, as well as some accidents attributable to natural causes, were charged to the

Blackhawks. The organization went out of existence about 1843, and some of the most active members, in later years, deplored the fact that it ever did exist. Another somewhat simiar organization came into existence in the southern part of the township about 1845. They chose the name of "Weehawk," and the organization, had for its object the intimidation of prosective colored settlers, and the expulsion of those who had already located. Two colored men lost their lives through the existence of this organization, though certain extenuating circumstances prevented successful prosecution.

Many amusing things were brought to light through attempted prosecutions of both the Blackhawks and Weehawks. When the feeling against the former was at its height, the organization, in their council chamber, decided upon a course of action which, they hoped, would decide matters pending in the courts. On a certain night the leaders, and others of the band known to be active, were to leave the county, at least repair to localities far removed from the scene of depredations. A chosen few of those whose membership was only suspected were deputized to do the work. These, by diligent effort and great industry, accomplished a deal of mischief. Arrests followed, but in all cases the warrants were issued for men who had arranged to prove their absence from the county on that particular occasion. By mutual agreement between the court and certain defendants, these were to be test cases, which should decide the issue of all pending litigations, and, of course, by reason of this sharp practice, and also a divided public sentiment, the defendants were all discharged, and pending cases thrown out. The few survivors of these bands refer to them and their depredations as the outgrowth of over-zealous political sentiment, lashed into mischievous

activity by the hot-blooded energy of a few fanatical leaders.

The first school was taught by Thomas Gilfillen, while Benning Wentworth, Zebulon Dow and Theophilus Wood were among the earliest pioneer teachers. There are now sixteen public schools in the township, a number not equalled by any township in the county except Concord, where there are nineteen.

The itinerant ministers occupied the township at a very early day, and public services of a religious nature were held in the settlers' cabins according to the willingness or convenience of the people. As early as 1806, regular preaching places were established, presumably in the homes of Thomas and Robert Cissna, who are believed to have conducted the first prayer-meetings in the township. They were both zealous and active christians. Richard Honold's house was another place of public worship in the pioneer days, and the master of the house was a devout and zealous adherent to the cause of christianity. William Sadler also threw open his house for devotional exercises, and the home of uncle John Fink, at Bourneville, became a ministerial resort and preaching place before the building of churches. The Methodist church on Bishop's hill, in the northwest part of the township, is believed to have been the first religious organization in the township. On the erection of the church building it was dedicated as Mount Olive chapel. It is in a flourishing condition at present.

The Christian Union church was organized about 1863, and a building was erected in the western part of the township. The only distinctive difference in creed between this society and the Methodist Episcopal was on the question of slavery; and to avoid the national distinction, "Methodist Church South" and "Methodist Church North," the title of Christian Union was chosen. A number of prominent

members withdrew from the Bishop hill congregation and joined with the new organization. Both churches still maintain a healthy existence. A church of the Protestant Methodists was organized in the western part of Huntington about 1830. Its existence was somewhat precarious, though at one time it attained a prominent place among the churches of the township. But transfers, removals and deaths seriously affected the membership, and the organization was abandoned after an existence of about fifty years. There is a prosperous Methodist Episcopal church at Farmersville, and the Baptist church on Ralston's run is one of the strongest religious organizations in the township.

Early ministers of the locality were Rivs. Henry Phinanders and James Havens, Dr. Given and Dr, Olds, Rev. Mr. Hughey and Rev. William Baker. The labors of these were supplemented by several active local preachers and exhorters among the early pioneers.

Huntington is an exclusively agricultural township. There are no towns or villages of importance, and no manufacturing industries, aside from a few shops. Farmersville is a little village in the south-central portion of the township, where there is one general store, a church, mechanical shops and a few residences. The population has remained stationary for many years, since the railroad towns and saw-mills were operated in the township in the early days, and a steam mill of that character is now located on Ralston's run, and an old mill still stands on Indian creek. The pioneer distilleries also had an existence, William Keyes being the first to engage in the liquor manufacturing business, while Henry Johnson became his competitor in later years. But these have long since passed out of existence.