

## The History of Eaton 1854 – 1954

Written by Mrs. Robert Dorton – Please see acknowledgments at the end of this document.

Though Indiana was organized as territory in 1800 and admitted as a state in 1816, the region that we now know as Delaware County of which Union Township is a part received but few permanent settlers until about 1820.

Prior to that date, the country was indeed a wilderness. Everywhere present were the towering monarchs of the forest. Black, white, red and burr oak, black and white walnut poplar, elm, beech and sugar maple were the prevailing varieties of timber when the first pioneers took up an abode in their midst. Along the wooded streams roamed the predatory wolf, and the restless red man parted the waters of old Mississinewa prow of his birchen canoe.

The Indians of this region were the Delawares, of the Algonquin stock. By the treaty of St. Mary's, October 3, 1818, they ceded to the United States, all their claims to land lying within boundaries of the state of Indiana. By the time our early settlers came in to establish residence, there were few of the Indians who had not taken down their teepees and followed the trail into the west.

Upon the coming of immigrants to the northern part of Delaware County, the land entries were made along the river Mississinewa. Mill sites were thus afforded, as were watering places for live stock. The facility for transportation by water also directed the settlers to this location.

Union Township, situated at the northern extremity of Delaware County, is designated as Township 22 north, of range 10 east. It is 6 miles long, east and west, and 5 miles wide, north and south. The Mississinewa River enters the township at the southeast corner and in the center. On both sides of the river the land is undulating, and in some places is characterized by gentle hills that add to the beauty of the landscape.

### **Early Settlement**

The settlement of Union Township began in the year 1828 when Tristram Starbuck came from Wayne County, Indiana and erected a cabin on a tract of land that he subsequently entered in section 22. He made extensive improvements on this land, and until the year 1836 had no other title than the right of possession. In the meantime, other settlers arrived, and fearing the possibility of being dispossessed, he entered the track at the land office at Fort Wayne in 1836.

In January of 1830, John Ginn came to the township and settled with his family on a track of land entered by him in 1829 at which time he resided in Delaware Township. He was a native from Ireland and when he came to the United States, lived in Washington County, Pennsylvania for a number of years. From there he moved to Morgan County, Ohio and finally came to Delaware County, Indiana where he passed the remainder of his life. He was a good farmer and was the first orchard in the township, which was set out in the spring of 1831. William Easley came in the spring of 1830 and settled at the mouth of a small creek, which still bears his name.

In March 1831, Francis Harris came with his family and erected a cabin on the land, which he afterwards entered. Shortly after he erected a mill on the Mississinewa above the location of the later Carter mill. The buhrs were made of granite boulders found in the river. The building was a log structure set on four posts and a hollow sycamore log served as the bolting chest.

During the years intervening between 1831 and 1836, there was a great many accession too the settlement and by the close of that period, the arrival of new settlers ceased to be regarded with much interest. Some of them who settled during this time, were Nimrod Jester 1829; John Ginn, May 1830; William Easley 1830; Francis Harris and James Galbraith 1831; Havilla Green and William Flummer. Also Samuel Kite and Samuel Wilson settled in 1832.

In 1833, Josiah McVicker, John Secrest, Elijah Collins, Samuel L. Black, Richard Craw, David Ashley, Isaac Cox, James Harter, Reuben Hampton, Roland Hughes and Joseph Battreal all brought there families and entered parcels of land.

In 1834 these men entered land: John Hamilton, Isaac Swisher, Lenard Cline, Benjamin Harris, William Craw, Peter Grimes, Washington Holdam, Samuel Elliot, John Irwin, George Sharon, Mathew Smith, Ephraim Leaird.

1835 saw their families settling new tracts: John Reason Jr. John McClain and Archibald McClain, Hiram Cocran, Peter Shidler, Joshua Shidler, George Carter, Thomas Carter, Reason Tippe, David Cochran, Jesse Linscome, Isaac Edwards, Junis McMillan, Jacob Gump, Joseph Snyder, David Studebakers, William Daily, Stephen Dunlap, John J. Adsit, William Martin and Peter R. Bradshaw. John Huston and Simon Maxon also purchased large tracts of land in 1853 but were not settlers. Their object was speculation and sold their land out in parcels to later settlers.

During 1836, nearly all the remaining lands were bought up. There old family names are among those who settled Union Township in this year: James Chenowith, Letteuce Shideler, Ashford Roberts, John W. Pike, Isaac Miller, William Adsit, John Lambert, Jacob Shidler, Jacob Gayman, Abraham Shiedler, Abraham Gray, Archibald Ray, Patrick Carmichael, Aaron Mote, Samuel S. Mote, John Van Burskirk, David Shidler, Liberty Ginn, Joseph Ginn, George Comstock, William Mendenhall, Jesse Meek, James Frazer, William Lewis, Lewis Philip Hendricks, James Frazee, James Love, Jonathon Jones, John W. Stafford, Nicholas Sherry, Abraham Culbertson, Vincent Martin, Samuel Martin, David Sherry, Thomas Ewell, Isaac Martin, James Gnew, George Pyke, William Sluth, Thomas McCormick, Samuel Payton and George Leaird.

The few remaining unclaimed lands were purchased in 1837 by Daniel Bosman, William Shearon, Mosos Hinton, Thomas Williams, Noah Simonton and John W. Studebakers. The land was purchased for \$1.25 per acre.

No acute records can be found for the early events of the township and there may be omissions or mistakes in dates that cannot be helped.

After the land was claimed, the early pioneers at once went to work building there cabins, that they might bring there families to there new home. The cabins often had no floor or chimney. A large stump was left in the middle of the cabin which they built fires in the cool evenings. Their fire for cooking was made against a log outside the cabin. So large slabs or puncheons were split from logs and laid across the back end of the cabin on which they made their bed. Since all their worldly belonging had to be carried by wagons, boat or by back, there was nothing but absolute necessities and something not

that. It is said the necessity is the mother of invention and these pioneers must have been inventors. One account has it that a man having settled for his land, had but thirty three cents remaining and he paid put this entire amount for butter on the way with his family from Munsey Town to the tract of land that he had entered. And thus he started in the wilderness to live and to make a home without one cent in cash.

### **The Mississinewa River**

The Mississinewa River and its contributory streams served a useful and vital part of the community. The streams were plentifully stocked with fish for food. The springs and clear water of the then unpolluted streams, furnished drinking water before any wells were dug. Also the river was the only power available to run the mills, which ground the meal and flour on which the pioneer depended.

For small craft, the Mississinewa was always navigable and in the early days, this fact was used to advantage by the settlers, who, with flatboats and pirogues, often floated down the river with cargoes for market. It is stated that in 1838, Jacob Gump and Joseph Snyder constructed a boat fifty or sixty feet long, four feet wide and three feet deep, which they freighted with one hundred barrels of linshed oil and a quantity of bacon destined for Peru, Indiana, a distance of sixty miles or more. The pilot was Abraham Gray and the crew consisted of four men, each of whom pulled an oar. Traveling by day and tying up to trees at night, they reached their destination at the end of two days. Upon their arrival, they sold the oil at \$1.00 per gallon and after disposing of their boat for \$20.00, stored the flour for future sale and returned home on foot.

This was probably the first trip made after the settlement of the township began and in the course of time, it became quite an industry. Regularly every spring for a number of years after the first trip, eight or ten flat boats left the settlement similarly laden, destined for voyages rarely failed to produce he anticipated profit. There was a good market at fair prices for the products of the settlement and cash began to take the place of hides and furs as a circulating medium.

### **Roads**

Among the Indians, as among the people of all nations, whether savage or civilized, recognized routes of travel were a necessity. Of these, there were different grades, depending upon the importance of the points connected and their distance from each other. The traces as early Indian trails were called, were the outgrowth of common consent. They became thus fixed thoroughfares. There were at least three principal traces centering in or passing through Delaware County in addition to others of minor consequence. The route of travel from the important Indian towns on the Miami River of Ohio to those on White River and the Wabash of Indiana once formed one road. Another connected the Indiana villages in the vicinity of Piqua and Greenville, Ohio to the towns on upper Wabash. This road was the most frequently used by the red men first and afterward by the white men upon their early advent into the white Mississinewa and Wabash river valleys. A third road connected points along the Ohio River, now Cincinnati and Ft. Wayne, which was the grand radiating point of the old Miami Confederacy.

The roads indeed were in a very primitive, condition. At first men drove through the woods, cutting out brush and poles when necessary, to admit the passage of the wagons though at first there were only paths or trails for passing on foot or on horseback. And when actual roads intended for traveling for wagons began to be made, it was done simply by removing some of the largest trees so as to give room for the wagon to pass, and building bridges, not merely over the streams but across swamps also, of logs or poles laid cross ways of the track. These were called corduroy. Sometimes earth was thrown upon the bridge thus made, but oftener the poles or logs were entirely bare.

The first state road began at the Ohio state line at the end of the road leading from Greenville, Ohio toward the Mississinewa River and thence on west by the nearest and best way. This road was provided for by legislative enactment approved February 2, 1832 and established a line of general communication between the settlements of Western Ohio and the Upper Wabash.

In developing these roads, attention had to be paid to the fording places in the river. Natural fords were located at the Granville and on west at Union Corners, better known now as Henpeck. Often at these fording places were inns where the travelers might spend the night. Also at the fords or other appropriate spots were located trading posts. The earliest trading post in the county was built at Granville by one Goldsmith C. Gilbert prior to 1825. One day during a drunken spree, a band of Indians set fire to his house and store and burned up all he owned. In the assault, his wife was struck with a hatchet and slightly wounded. For these damages, Mr. Gilbert received \$2000 from the Indian annuities with which he purchased Hackley Reservation upon which site the city of Muncie was founded.

In 1836, John Gregory divided a portion of his land into town lots and founded the village of Granville. This village was the successor of Georgetown, which was founded about 1833 by George Deeds and was situated a short distance above Granville on the Mississinewa. The first business house in Georgetown was founded in the winter of 1833. it promised to become a town of some consequence but Granville seemed to be a more favored location and drew the trade from its rival which finally succumbed and ceased to exist. It has been said that the inhabitants of Georgetown tore down their houses, which were log structures, and floating them down the river, put them up in Granville. Granville at one time, was quite an enterprising village, having a general merchandise store, a grocery, resident physician, blacksmith shop and a hotel which was erected in 1839. the post office was located here and served all surrounding points including Eaton. The mail was brought in on horseback from Richmond, Indiana. Later when Union Corner had a postmaster, he rode to Granville twice a week for mail.

Union Corners or Henpeck as we know it now, sprang from the activity which surrounds the junction of two heavily traveled roads. These roads were known as Ft. Wayne state road and the Greenville and Marion state road. Here at Union Corner was also a good fording spot and the road referred to as the Ft. Wayne road was actually the direct route to Cincinnati.

Henpeck was a small village in the year 1850. the general store was owned by David Brandt, an in it his son John Brandt clerked up to the Civil War. He enlisted early, among the first to go out. He, like many others, never returned. After John enlisted, Mr. Brandt employed a man named John Cole. Later his son, Robert L. Brandt was employed as clerk. The post office was named Eaton P. O. and Mr. Brandt was the postmaster. When he was out of office, Elisha Cass, who owned and ran a small grocery, became the postmaster; the office passing back and forth between them.

Few roads were laid out or any attempt made to improve them until many years later, with the exception of a county road, which was surveyed from Muncie to Harford City in 1838 and was opened for travel in the same year. In 1839, the Ft. Wayne and Muncie road was surveyed and laid out. It was surveyed by the state and known as the Ft. Wayne and Muncie state road. During the succeeding years, these were numerous roads located throughout the township for local convenience. Many of these so called roads were impassable much of the year, but they were a sign that the area was expanding.

### Schools

As early as 1836, a cabin on the farm of Junius mcMillen, which lay somewhere east of the now Willman road, was occupied for school purposes and Miss Susan Hanly was employed as the teacher for the term which comprised the winter months. Her salary was contributed by Willson Martin, Junius McMillen, Willam Easley, Phillip Stoner, Aaron Mote and Francis Harris whose children attended the school and who paid \$1.50 for each scholar.

In 1837, a log building was built especially for a schoolhouse, and was probably the first one erected for that purpose in the township. This school was in the northeast corner of the thownship on the farm of Aaron Mote. In the cabin on the farm of Havilla Green, which received the name of the "Green Schoolhouse." This school was located in the west part of the township possibly in the region of Carl Craw's farm.

For a number of years, all the schoolhouses were log buildings and as late as 1852, some of these were still standing and were converted into free school under the provisions of the public school law, which came into action in 1852. the township was divided into 12 school districts with a school on each.

Mrs. A. N. Foorman wrote, "The fist school house in town was located in the Union Corners. In 1860 a frame school house was built on what was then the corner of R. A. Bosman's and James Long's farms, each giving a lot for the new building and that is where George R. Mansfield's and George Beath's (ed- win McClure and James Harris) dwelling now stand. At that time, there was an apple orchard just across the road belonging to Austin Long. There the children used to skate on the ice that formed between rows of apple trees, and to the north of this orchard was a woods where the boys had a flying horse that was a source of much pleasure to school children. Then there was another schoolhouse at what is now the east end of Harris Street that was called that Babb School; some of us went there on account of the crowded conditions of the Easton School. Well do I remember climbing a high rail fence where Harris and Long Streets

cross now, going through a field, then another rail fence at what is now Harris and Meridian Streets, then across a babbling brook, and following a crooked path through the woods until we came to the schoolhouse. We thought it a long way to school.

The next house of learning was a two-room brick building, which was erected where Moses Black's residence now stands. (This is now the John Morris home.) This school was built in 1885 but soon it too became too small for the growing town and two more rooms were added, then a little later two more. Soon after a frame house was built on the grounds for the Primary Department. This served until the crowded conditions made it necessary for the present school building to be built in 1908, and later added to in 1925.

The old frame primary building was moved across the street to the present site of the Shell filling station, where is served for several years as a bakery operated by Fred Osborn.

In 1881, the township trustee's report showed that there were 378 pupils, length of school term 104 days, 6 male and 5 female teachers who received average pay per day — male \$1.83 and female \$1.56. There were 3 brick and 11 frame schoolhouses in the township. The teachers were C.W. Smith, Eaton School; Francis Wagner, Poor School; J.R. Lambert, Watter's School; Alma Isgrig, Craw School; Hannah Karn, Johnson School; Salina Anderson, Love School; J.R. McVicker, Keplinger School; Josie Wood, Yount's School; Lydia Davis, Rocky Branch School; Mollie White, Babb School, and W.H. Younts, Maple Grove School.

### Churches

The history of the settlement period of \_\_\_\_\_ country shows that wherever men gather in settlements, their first thought after getting themselves housed was of church and school. Quite often church services and school were held in the same building. About the year 1833, seven or eight adherents to Methodists met at the home of John Ginn and were united as a class of the Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of the Rev. Robert Bu\_\_\_\_\_.

Nearly at the same time, another class of the same denomination was organized at the house of Tristan Starbuck, and the two classes met regularly at the respective places for several years. Finally they united and Rich\_\_\_\_\_ Craw, one of the members, donated them a \_\_\_\_\_ from his farm upon which they erected a church, giving it the name of Mount Zi\_\_\_\_\_. They continued using the log church until 1867, in which year they erected the still standing brick house of worship.

In 1839 or 1840, fifteen or twenty members of the Disciples of Christ denomination, had their first services at the home of Robert Lo\_\_\_\_\_ east of Eaton, and from this organization grew the Eaton Christian Church. The meetings were first held at private houses and afterwards at a schoolhouse near the residence of Jo\_\_\_\_ Babb. During the warm summer months, the meetings were held in the groves. Occasionally, the

attendance being too large, they went to Granville. Elder George H. Babb was the first regular pastor. In 1858, Charles Car\_\_\_ donated to the society a lot, upon which, \_\_\_\_\_ the same year, they completed a neat fra\_\_\_ church. This building stills stands although \_\_\_\_\_ greatly changed, at the southwest corner \_\_\_\_\_ Indiana Avenue and Romy Street. The church enjoyed a continual growth and in the 1892 \_\_\_\_\_ building was enlarged. This, too, was soon overgrown and plans were laid for a new and larger building which would be closer to the center of the town. The location was chosen and during the summer of 1899, work was begun, with the construction continuing until completed the summer of 1900. The German Baptist Church was organized in 1840 at the house of Jacob Gump where the meetings were held for a number of years following. Fifteen years after organization, they purchased a lot from James Long upon which in the same year (1855) they completed a frame church. The church was situated half a mile west of Eaton on the old river road, that then followed along the south bank of the river, now about the location of the J & K Stone Quarry. Information as to where the church moved or when it ceased to be active, could not be found.

In the early part of the year 1873, two Methodist preachers came from Hartford City to preach at the Christian Church. Rev. Wm. Pierce was appointed pastor on April 22, 1873, but on arriving found no class and very few Methodists, but was soon able to organize with twelve members coming from Mt. Zion and Mt. Carmel classes. The service was held in the schoolhouse in the north part of town until 1878 when a brick church was built on South Elm Street. This church was enlarged in 1902.

They worshipped in this church until November 25, 1923 when it was destroyed by fire. Without a church home, the congregation was invited to worship in the Masonic Hall, where the first service was held in November 31, 1923 with the Rev. J. Fred as pastor.

On September 8, 1924, the foundation of the new church was started with work continuing into the summer of 1925. Dedication services were held July 12, 1925. Rev. H. C. Powell was the pastor at the time.

The Church of God had its beginning as an Evangelistic Tent Meeting conducted on the school grounds in August 1929. The meeting was to have been for two weeks, but response held it for four weeks. After the month of meetings, the possibility of a church being established was in the minds of many. The store building just south of the bank was secured from Mrs. Ella Witamyer, who was among the staunch supporters of the church. Chester McGriff was elected to become the first new pastor. The congregation met here until their new church was dedicated on May 11, 1932. A parsonage was added in 1939 and the church remodeled in 1940. Many improvements have been added since to the thriving church.

### **Cemeteries**

Here, as in other pioneer settlements, some years elapsed before there was any place especially set apart for burying the dead. Those who died were buried upon their own farms and in many instances, their friends and relatives were laid to rest beside them.

About the year 1860 or 1861, Mrs. Mary Constable died and her son-in-law, Wilson Martin, obtained permission of Charles Carter to bury her remains in a portion of his land adjoining the Christian Church lot, with the privilege of founding at that place, a

public cemetery. Later negotiations were concluded with James Long for a tract adjoining and at a later date, two acres more were added. Money from the sale of lots was used to pay for the ground which is known as the Eaton cemetery.

About half a mile west of the German Baptist Church, a cemetery was established about the year 1845, the ground for this purpose having been purchased from David and George Studebaker. In 1865, additional ground was purchased and the cemetery enlarged. This was the property of the German Baptist or Church of the Brethren until in February 1903, the church authorized her trustees to make deed for the ground to the Union Cemetery Association.

### **Mills**

Since life itself depended upon what the early pioneer could produce for himself, one of the first acre of settling a territory was the location of a mill. The first mill, as was noted earlier in the history, was built by Francis Hariss. At first it handled only corn, but in time there came a demand for flour and a second set of buhrs were installed for the processing of wheat.

Harris continued operation of the mill for at least eight years or more when he sold it to Frederick Carter, Caleb Carter and Thomas Johnson. In 1847, the firm of Carter & Johnson erected a flouring and saw mill on the

After three years, the mill was sold to Charles and George Carter and a short time later destroyed by fire. (This mill was located close to the Felts home in Henpeck). The Carter Brothers rebuilt their mill at once on the same site and operated it successfully for a number of years, in fact until George Carter died, when his brother Charles purchased his deceased brother's interest. He then set about a program of expansion, extending the race some distance farther west, erecting a new saw mill and afterward a four story flouring mill. Sometime about 1870 or 1871, Carter and Son dismantled the old mill at the ford and moved it down to where the saw mill was located. They put in an up to date roller mill. A steam engine was installed for auxiliary power. The mill was operated for several years by Uncle Billy House, David Modlin, Max King, Samuel Younce and others as millers. Operations at this mill ceased about 1900 and the building stood unused for many years. In 1936, George Cruea, who had acquired the property, dismantled the building which was moved to the country and made into a barn. The lower section was used as a slaughter house by Mr. Cruea for a short time and then it too was sold and dismantled.

The Studebaker mill was erected about the year 1845, by David Studebaker (a short distance west of the bridge on State Road 3). This mill was run by water power and was used as a saw mill and oil mill. Large quantities of linseed oil were manufactured here, which formed a large part of the cargoes that went down the river to Peru. Studebaker sold the mill to William Mitchell about 1852. Mr. Mitchell added a carding machine for the processing of wool, along with the manufacture of oil; then after several years of operation, sold the establishment to George Younce. Younce had the mill but a short time until he sold it to Michael Hyland who made extensive improvements. Among others things, he erected another building and added two sets of machinery for the manufacture of blankets, yarns, cassimeres, jeans, and other woolen goods, for which he always found a good demand in the home market.

Founding of Eaton

Eaton was platted June 19, 1854 by George H. Babb and Joel W. Long, guardians for Reason T. Harris and David Harris. The town is a result of the race to build railroads which would compete with the canals that were already under construction. One railroad had already been completed in 1852 between Indianapolis, through Muncie and on to Bellefontaine, Ohio. The road bed for the Ft. Wayne and Southern Railway was surveyed, probably in 1853. Taking advantage of this golden opportunity of placing a city upon the railroad Mr. Babb and Mr. Long platted the town of Eaton. The original plat called for North Harris and South to be the east and west streets and Hartford, Center and Front, the north and south streets, the latter fronting the railroad grounds.

It has often been asked how Eaton was named. No one seems to know. There are rumors that there once was a family here by that name; the family all dying in an epidemic with the town being named to commemorate them. But no records substantiate this. The best possible reason seems to be that the pioneers migrating to newly opened lands in Indiana, passed through but more often spent the winter in and established town in Ohio named Eaton. The Ohio town had been established for several years, along with Dayton, Greenville and others, before Indiana became a state. Records show that many of the people who eventually settled here, had spent the winter or at least some time in these Ohio towns, equipping themselves for the job before them. Thus it would seem that Eaton is the namesake of Eaton, Ohio.

After the railroad right-of-way was surveyed, there was much dissention caused by communities being by-passed. Officers in the company changed quite often until W. W. Worthington was elected president of the Fort Wayne, Muncie and Cincinnati R. R. and through his efforts to secure money from the county coffers, was able to see the completion of the road in 1869.

#### The Civil War

Tension had been building up from the mid fifties concerning the differences of opinion between the north and south states. The passing of the infamous Fugitive Slave law with the later Dred Scott Decision, heightened the feeling, and prior to the Civil War, opposition developed to such an extent that church groups worked out plans to help the negro slaves escape to Canada. This developed into the Underground Railroad which had a well defined traffic through this part of the state. The route was supposed to have led north through Richmond, Indiana which had a stopover there then on to Eaton, where a stop was known to have been at the Robert Long homestead east of Eaton, now occupied by the Robert Cappers.

From there the route led north by possibly different routes since there was a station north of Pennville and another at Marion. These stations were of a distance that the journey both to and from, could be completed in one night. The negroes were hidden during the day, fed, and at nightfall, concealed in wagons, then loaded with various forms of merchandise from hay to furniture or grocery supplies, anything for complete concealment. These agents of the Underground Railroad were subject to federal punishment and there were many southern sympathizers throughout the state, so absolute caution had to be used. Even so, it is suspected that probably over a thousand escaped slaves reached Canadian borders this way. Naturally no records were kept or at least released, so it is impossible to say how long this form of escape was continued.

When the war began, many young men enlisted. There was a company of men raised at Granville that enlisted early in 1861 for a three month period. Soon after they were mustered out, most re-enlisted for a three year period. In 1863, word was received at Indianapolis that Indiana was in danger of being invaded. Word was sent out and within hours, 65,000 men had volunteered their services. Among these was a unit from Eaton named the Union Guards, with these men as officers: Captain, Martin Brandt; First Lieutenant, William Props. The percentage of enlistments from this area was high. In the various battles of the Civil War, many were wounded, imprisoned or never returned at all. Eaton is to be proud of her soldiers in all wars for we have been well represented.

### **The Period of Expansion**

With the coming of peace, the entire nation entered on an area of commercial expansion. Internal improvements that were halted by the war, were now resumed. The completion of the railroad in 1869 brought prosperity to the little village of Eaton, which at the time had only four or five families. Among them were William H. Younts, Dr. B.F. Youngs, Serena E. Carmichael and Patrick C. Ray, who had built the first frame dwelling house in 1850, where the post office now stands.

The town made rapid progress and contained many businesses that are astonishing to us today. An additional was built to Patrick Ray's house, which was operated as a hotel by William Babb. Later, another hotel was run by a Mrs. Keller. Dry goods stores were operated by E. Carmichael, John Dragoo and L. Brandt, Carter and Co. A.N. Foorman was the proprietor of a meat market and dealer in general merchandise. Eli Foorman was the proprietor of the drug store. S. W. Thomas dealt in hardware and stoves. Edward Shideler had a boot and shoe store. W. A. Blair was the furniture dealer and undertaker (he also made the coffins); John D. Shaffer and John Sherry, blacksmith; S. W. Black, wagon maker; R. M. Morris and Leo Pancoast, blacksmiths and J. D. Huffman, harness maker, William H. Younts was the attorney and the town boasted four doctors: Drs. J. W. Sage, B. F. Youngs, J. C. Ginn, and A. Stradlie.

### **Incorporation**

The first census of the town was taken May 6, 1873 and proved the population to be but 158 souls. Immediately after taking the census, a petition was framed and presented to the Board of County Commissioners at their meeting in June of that year, praying for the incorporation of the town, agreeably to the laws of the state. The commissioners ordered an election to be held in the town, polling the opinion of its citizens on the question. An election was held accordingly July 5, 1873 and twenty-eight ballots were cast, everyone in favor of incorporation. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September 1873, Eaton was declared duly incorporated, the first town in Delaware County to incorporate itself after Muncie. The first election for town officers was held Sept. 10, 1873, resulting in John Foorman being elected clerk and Robert Brandt, Adam Foorman and Wilson Martin elected trustees. Wilson Martin was chosen president of the board at a salary of \$10.00 per year. D. W. Younce received \$4.25 for serving as street commissioner, and the Marshall received \$5.00 The 13<sup>th</sup> ordinance was adopted January 24, 1874, providing for taxation at the rate of twenty-five cents on each one hundred dollars of valuation

property. This was to provide funds to maintain the town. The first ordinance defined the boundaries of the town which contained 144.85 acres.

In 1875, the board of trustees of the Eaton Cemetery deeded to the Town of Eaton that cemetery as a public burial ground. Also in 1875, a Board of Health was established and a calaboose was built at a cost of \$30.97. A school board was appointed in 1876, comprised of three members who had the responsibility of looking after the needs of the school and making such reports as were necessary. Thus the town undertook self government and showed much forethought in planning. With the advent of local government, streets, and sidewalks were installed and maintained to the best of their ability. Of course at that time, the streets were only sidewalks, plank or graveled. Each man of the town was obliged to give one day's work to the town streets. He was to be paid at the rate of \$1.50 for each extra day he labored.

The railroad had much to do with the advancement of the town, in that it provided transportation of goods and people. The round-trip fare to Muncie in those days was \$1.00. A warehouse and office had been built by public subscription and the telegraph was located here with a man named Bradberry as the agent and telegraph operator.

About the time of completion of the railroad, David Brandt moved his store to a new storeroom on South Hartford Street. John Drago moved his store from Granville and located across the street south of the Brandt store. About 1880, David Brandt and C. Carter & Son consolidated their stores under the name of Brandt & Carter. They erected a two story brick building on the corner of Harris and Hartford Streets where the drug store now stands. This building had been constructed with a high platform in front where farmers could drive up and step out of their farm wagons right at the front of the store door.

In 1882, A. N. Foorman erected a three-story brick hotel, which was the largest building in town, but in 1885 it burned. It was replaced in 1886 with a two-story building in which the Valet Cleaners and Mississinewa Tavern are now located. This building, at the time, housed other businesses besides the hotel. Mr. Foorman had a meat market and grocery in the first room east of the lobby. Will Brandt had a dry goods store in the next room east. Sharp & Sherry had a hardware store next, where the hardware store's storeroom is now, and on the corner of the alley was a livery barn operated by James Duke. Sol Gumm had a dry goods store in the room east of the alley. Next was the Eaton State Bank with Carl Van Buskirk, the cashier. Before the present post office building was built, a frame building stood at the corner and was a hotel operated by Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson. On south was the Carmichael store and the Pierce Bros. had a buggy and harness shop. Where the present bank now stands, a frame house stood that housed Dr. John C. Ginn. After he left, the house was occupied by Henry's who operated the bakery. Next east where Lowry's Service Station is now, stood the village band stand. An ornate, elevated, octangular structure which held the Eaton Band each Friday night for a concert to the delight of the local residents.

On the north side of Harris, starting at Center Street, was a frame building that was the communion home and grocery store of John Foorman. He also for a time, had a post office here. Next was another frame building that housed the Lambert's saloon. Following that eastward was another frame building that for many years was a barber shop operated by Oliver Chapman. East of the alley, a small frame building had been

moved, and in this “Dad” Pope had a restaurant where a man could get a full meal and trimmings for a quarter. Jake Sabine had a barbershop in a small building next to the new brick store building of Brandt & Carter. Above this store was a large room in which community activities took place, including supers, church services, and even roller-skating.

The third floor of the old hotel building also was the center of interest, having on occasion, show troops who stayed by the week and gave nightly performances of such favorites as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, ten Nights in a Barroom and East Lynne. It also was used as a skating rink and at one time served as a school room while the school was being repaired.

On the corner of Hartford and Harris was the location of Eli Foorman’s drug store. Next were other frame buildings whose occupants have been forgotten. In one of these, Lee Pancoast had an implement store and Mrs. Emma Vanbuskirk had a millinery store.

The streets were tree lined and on summer days the merchants would provide chairs and benches where the town sages could rest and swap yarns. In winter, the benches would be drawn close to the old pot bellied stoves, a handy box of sawdust, for tobacco chewers and the tales of yesterday lived on.

### **The Finding of Natural Gas**

In the years from 1869 to 1890, stone was one of the principal businesses of the town of Eaton. There were two quarries: one was owned by George W. Carter and the other by Lewis W. Bosman Jr. taking out stone in each of the quarries, there were signs of fire or blowout, blackened strips of stone, which aroused the curiosity of the men. In 1876, Mr. Carter got the officers of the railroad interested enough to provide equipment with which to drill a three inch hole with a hollow drill, one that brought up a cone about an inch thick. By that means, they could see what they drilled through. This cone was kept in a box and recorded as to depths. When down about 600 feet, a pocket of evil smelling gas was reached. Having no knowledge of this natural wonder, the coal seekers withdrew their drill, plugged the hole and abandoned the project. One person at the time is supposed to have suggested that from the roaring noise produced by the escaping gas and from the vile odor, maybe they were approaching the devil’s territory.

Early in 1886, gas was discovered in the area around Finday, Ohio. Curiosity seeking and with a suspicion in his mind, Mr. Carter boarded a train bound for Finday, where people were coming by the thousands to view the phenomenon. On viewing the flame, hearing the noise and smelling the odor, Mr. Carter hopped the next train for home, knowing that their plugged well contained natural gas. Reaching home, he immediately opened the hole that had water in it and placed a burning match on the top of the pipe. It lighted, burning a flame about 18 inches high. Then it was simple to put together a group of men to finance the well. On February 26, 1886, the Eaton Mining and Gas Company was recorded. This historical company, generally agreed to have been the first in the field in the state of Indiana, was comprised of William W. Worthington, Amos N. Foorman, George W. Carter, Benjamin F. Smith, Robert C. Bell, R.M. Carter and Jesse Nixon. They organized “for the purpose of mining and manufacturing and to furnish nature’s power for carrying on such business to sink and maintain shafts and mines for coal and other minerals, to lay and maintain pipes and conduits for carrying gas and oil and for transacting the business incident to the foregoing.”

In the following July this company acquired a series of leases held by Worthington & Stewart to lands in the region that had been taken ten years before; other leases were taken on Union township lands by the company and the "gas boom" was on.

The first gas well, located about 10 rods south of the river on the east side of the railroad track, was brought in September 3, 1886. Trenton rock, in which gas is found, was reached at a depth of 890 feet, and upon penetrating this to a depth of 32 feet, a gusher was brought in. On that day in September, a circus came to town and pitched their tent on the railroad ground. Everything was ready to open when about 10 a.m. word came from the drillers that they had struck gas. The show never opened their ticket wagon and left town without taking in a nickel. The gas well was a bigger show than anything they could put on. The gas was piped out of the derrick, lighted and burned for two weeks. Visitors came from all the surrounding country to see it burn. Excursion trains were run from Ft. Wayne and Muncie and people drove here in buggies, spring wagons and farm wagons from Alexandria, Fairmont, Summitville, Marion, Dunkirk and Portland.

The gas company thought they had the gas under control, but something slipped. A small boy found that he could light the gas coming from crawfish holes along the bank of the river and at night over one hundred blazes about a foot high could be seen. It was quite a sight. The excursion trains would stop on the grade and let passengers watch for about an hour, then return for another load. Pink lemonade was sold to the sightseers, fresh from the Mississinewa river with an occasional lemon added for looks.

### **The Boom Days**

With the realization that the finding of gas could change the whole economic picture, the Mississinewa Land and Improvement Company was formed to purchase the William A. Long farm. This was platted into four additions to Eaton. Other additions were also added. In all, there have been 23 additions to the original plat.

In 1884, the citizens of Eaton decided that incorporation was no longer of advantage to them, so a petition was written to that effect and so on September 2, 1884, the town became a village again. But after the gas boom began, it was found expedient to reincorporate. This was accomplished in September of 1893. One of the actions of the town board was to quarantine the town and to hire guards to enforce it. In the summer of 1873, that memorable hard times year, when local bank troubles and industrial and commercial uncertainty were giving grave concern to all, a smallpox epidemic broke out in Muncie. The local health board warned against all public congregations, and insisted on vaccination. A pest house was acquired south of town. No one was permitted to leave or enter the town without a doctor's certificate, attesting that they had been vaccinated and that their clothes and luggage had been fumigated. This quarantine worked a hardship on all but helped to prevent the spread of the disease. Dr. George F. Ames was elected secretary of the board of health and the fumigation of houses was instituted. When the quarantine was lifted there was much rejoicing and accounting to be done.

There had been much building almost from the day that gas had been found. With the gas well located south of the river, it only seemed natural that that area should expand. The Randall, Romy & Bach Paper Mill, a company from Ft. Wayne was built in 1870. The company buying part of the farm of Wm. Bosman to erect its factory

buildings. There was some land left over, so another addition was placed which was also caused another district to the town of Eaton to be added. The company built several houses on lots in this addition for their employees. George McClung and Steven Trentman were early superintendents. The factory has been the source of a great deal of excitement from time to time. In the first ten years of its existence, a tornado ripped most of the roof off, and a fall into a rotary or cooker, caused the death of Mr. Schoonover. In the later years, there was an explosion in the boiler room that killed Albert Henry and Jim Pullen. Fires have plagued the company from the start and they were obliged to form their own fire company, which helped to keep the damage to a minimum. The most spectacular were the two fires in the straw ricks in 1929.

The company at first made what was known as egg case paper, then after the United Paper Board Company bought the company, changed over to corrugated straw paper. During the latter years of the depression, Ball Brothers bought the mill which had been for some time and ran only part time. Late in 1945, the Sangamon Paper Mill Company of Chicago, purchased the plant and ran it steady for about five years. Since then, the mill had run very little.

Other business that prospered during this era, were the Excelsior factory owned by Samuel B. Ames, a brother of our Dr. Ames. This factory produced excelsior and other wood products. Brandt & Carter bought this place is business and continued the same line of work. Ames then started a handle factory back of the old school building.

The Bending Works that made buggy bows also was located east of the old school building. The washboard factory was owned by Robert McCormick and Sons and located about where the canning factory is now. A hoop factory that was owned by O. L. Bartlett, was located where the Goodrich Eleator warehouse now stands. A pulley works was owned by a Ft. Wayne concern and was located across the street east of the canning factory office.

The Mississinewa Land and Improvement Company started the "Pot House" a window glass manufacturing concern, and was operated and later bought by Eley, Jones and Baur. Emily Baur owned the Tank Factory, another window of our present school ball diamond. A bottle factory was located south of the river, north and west of the old Power House. This was called the Western Flint Glass Company which made bottles. This was managed by George J. Miller. There also was an Old Fort Manufacturing Company and Lefeber's Lumber Co. where the lumber yard is now located. S. N. side of the jog at Henpeck where chickens were dressed. He employed 8 to 10 men and women. The nickname of Henpeck was derived from the business.

The Central Union Telephone Company installed telephone service in the town in 1896. Also that year, a public well was drilled by public subscription at the corner of Harris & Hartford Streets on the south side of Cox's drug store. A gasoline engine was purchased by the town in 1897 to supply power for the pump.

After gas came, it was found necessary to build a road south across the river. There had

### **INSERT PAGE 30 HERE**

We have not been so fortunate in keeping dentists, but these have been here during the years: Drs. Frank Wildason, Ford Bembow, J. Hammer, W. T. Miller Smith.

There had been only one veterinary up until of late years. Dr. C. C. Shuler set up his practice in May, 1912, in an office in Joe Whitaker's livery barn on North Hartford Street. Dr. L. R. Peters came to Eaton to practice following Dr. Shuler's death 1951.

The lawyers who have served Eaton were: Wm. H. Younts, E. H. Stradling and O. M. Rearick.

### **The Eaton Riverside Park**

Almost as important to Eaton as the gas strike, was the park. The Muncie, Bluffton and Ft. Wayne Traction Company started building the track prior to 1900 and the first run was made in 1901. To stimulate business, a tract of ground was purchased from Carter Bros. Along the river east of Henpeck, on which a park was laid out. Amid a beautiful setting of oak and beech trees at a bend of the river, was erected a pavilion and a hotel. This became a mecca for families from many miles around. There were such amusements as a ball diamond with regular team schedule, skating rink, merry-go-round, ferris wheel, a slide to the river and a steam boat called the Mayflower which plied the dammed up waters on moonlight cruises; as well as many row boats for the fishermen. Here was held the many family reunions, John's Day celebrations, and later the Mar's Day observations, and Red Men and Pocahontas gatherings. 'Twas a great day when John's Day came around. The crowd gathered early in the morning for the festivities which lasted until late at night. A two-acre parking lot was filled nearly every Sunday with all sorts of horse drawn vehicles and the traction company ran regular excursion cars throughout the summer. A spur line from the main line of the traction, carried open cars down Indiana Avenue to the park. Their two cars were kept busy and often were not nearly enough to carry the crowds that swarmed out to the best recreation spot there was for miles around. The park thrived for many years. Early in the 1920's, there was some dissention among the town people concerning dancing at the park and on July 18, 1823, fire was discovered in the pavilion and refreshment stand. Too much headway had been gained by the flames before the fire department arrived save anything except a small shed. A woman, believed to have been a Mrs. Holman, fell from the hotel roof and was killed during the height of the flames. Many believe that the fire was of incendiary origin. Thus ended another era in the history of Eaton.

The Spanish American war receives very little attention in the history books, but to those who served, it was a very important campaign. Only one of the thirty men who volunteered from this vicinity, is still living. Robert W. Long served in the Phillipines over 50 years ago, for a period of about two years. When word was received that the boys were on their way home, arrangements were made to meet them at the train in Muncie with the band and all the townsfolk that could get there. A surprise confronted the arrangements committee when only Mr. Long got off the train, the other boys coming by different routes at different times. The parade went on anyway, speeches were given and one of the largest gatherings ever held, witnessed the program for the returning hero.

World Wars I and II would take much more space than can be allowed if they were to be written up properly. The history books contain a complete story of the better tell of the wars. Over 200 men from our community, contributed their services to the armed forces during World War I. Of these, four gave their lives.

From 1941 to 1945, over 350 men were called from our area to serve their country in the second World War. Six women from here volunteered in their respective branches of the armed forces. We can be most proud of the contributions these men and women

made in all branches of the services. During the war, 15 men died in the service of their country.

When the Korean Conflict began in June, 1950, draft calls again searched out our young men. Since that time, close to one hundred of the men from this community have seen service in the Far East, Europe, and stations all over the earth. May we here, again, give them our highest praise.

### **Organizations of Eaton**

Perhaps the first social group to begin regular meetings in Eaton, was the Ouray Tribe of Red Men which started about 1883. This group prospered for over forty years. In this time, they acquired a meeting room on the second floor of the building at Hartford and Harris streets. Their parades to the cemetery on Decoration Day was a great occasion. Later, a women's group was formed which called themselves the Pocahontas. These organizations continued until the mid-twenties.

The Masonic order was started here on May 26, 1896 with a lodge of 10 members and on June 26, instituted as lodge number 606. The lodge now numbers 267 active members and 79 pins commemorating 25 years of active membership, were given at a dinner last year. On the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May 1928, the Order of eastern Star was instituted under dispensation. There were 25 charter members. The chapter now has over 200 members. At a dinner in May 1953, 23 received 25-year pins. Emma Jane Jester founded the chapter and served as its first worthy matron and Harvey Hyer the first worthy person.

A chapter of Knights of Pythias was organized about 1990, whose membership included most of the glass workers here and then. After the gas played out and the glass factories no longer operated, the workers left and the club gave up its charter.

The Wednesday Afternoon Club was founded in January 1900, at Mrs. George Hoover's. Its purpose was a literary society patterned after the Women's Club of Muncie. It has been continuously active since then and four of their charter members are still active: Mrs. George Miller of Portland, Ind., and from Eaton, Mrs. Cora Hamilton, Mrs. George Hoover and Mrs. P.R. (Onie Foorman) McReynolds.

The Mississinewa Community Club was founded about 1905, with community betterment its purpose. Mrs. J. M. Atkinson, and Mrs. A. N. Foorman were instrumental in its founding. The club promoted many fund raising activities and purchased equipment for the community's use. They also had the town hall finished with a stage and its properties for use in staging plays and entertainments.

The Klu Klux Klan was quite active here for a short time between the years 1920 and 1925. This very secret order was known by their robes and hoods. Burning crosses were believed to be their work. What their purpose was, has not been ascertained.

Since that time, there have been many organizations founded. Some are still active and others have come and gone. Organizations that are listed as active today are: Mississinewa Home Economic Club, Better Homes and Gardens Club, Eaton Home

Economics Club, 42<sup>nd</sup> Home Economics Club, Delaware County Rural Friendship Club, Wit and Wisdom, Violin Club, Wednesday Afternoon Club, Eastern Social Club, Delta Theta Tau, Psi Iota Zi, American War Mothers, Merchants Association Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, P. T., Farm Bureau, Conservation Club, E & G Sadd Club, Firemen, Riflemen, Masonic Lodge and Eastern Star and the many organizations of men and women in the churches.

It has been said that Eaton is over-organized and in an effort for community betterment and a drawing of all the clubs together in a common bond, the Eaton Community Service Club was organized in February 1951. Through the club's efforts, Red Feather Committees have held drives each year for funds. The Town Hall has been refurbished as a recreation center with a council in charge.

The town of Eaton, Indiana is a normal quiet community of about 1600 middle class people. The majority of the men seek employment in the industrial center of Muncie. Muncie has happened in the 126 years that this historic covers, some regrettable, but most has been the advantage of our people. In the gas boom days, it appeared that Eaton would be an industrial center with a seeming inexhaustible supply of natural gas. But by 1915, the gas pressure was nearly gone and with the changing of time, many of the industries were relic of the past.

The traction company that flourished at the turn of the century, with car barns and a power station, fell by the wayside with the coming of the automobile age. Now a bus line connected us with the rest of the state. Only the train tracks remain in the same location. Diesel engines have replaced the steam locomotives that were a fascination to the youths along the way. Not to be seen now, are the stock cars that used to be a common sight through here nor has there been a passenger car for nearly thirty years.

The world is changing. May we be able to keep abreast of the times. Each and every one of us must be able to look forward, to be able to progress so that at the end of the next hundred years, our progeny will be as proud of our accomplishments as we are those of our forefathers.

### **Who Can Remember**

Billy, the little old man with the fuzzy grey beard that played the harmonica. He was afraid of fire and the boys of the town would light matches and throw at him?

When Eaton had a theatre run by Leon LeGros and the one run by Johnny Kimes and still another one that showed the early silent thrillers up in the town hall?

The croquet court that Dr. Shuler had beside his garage where intense games were played from 6 a.m. until midnight?

The old fire bell that struck terror in our hearts?

The wildcat whistle that summoned the men to work at the paper mill, supposedly so loud that it could be heard in Millgrove?

The ice jam in the river that was blasted out to save the railroad bridge?

The photographers who took pictures of all the scenes? Some of them were Burke, Brenner, O. S. Chapman and Bonny Lake.

When the water tower was climbed at night?

The “hot seat” that Monk Lowry had in his garage?

When Edward Francq had a glass novelty works and a saloon where Max Jones’ house now is? Later the greenhouse?

The shoe repair shops run by Ollie Hoffman and Tom Johnson?

Who remembers drinking “Homo”?

When the town sewers were being installed, did you play go-sheepy-go in them?

Bob Blair, the strongest man in town, who occupied the step at the corner of the drug store?

Bicycle riding John Babb?

The Chautauqua held on school ground?

The political parades and rallies before the days of radio?

And who can remember the first crystal sets with ear phones; later the battery set that squeaked and squawked?

The baths in the tin tubes behind the kitchen range and saving the water for the next one?

The Thursday night dances, round and square and the “Indiana Hop.”

Lovers’ lane at the park across the rustic bridge?

The pranks that were pulled on Halloween, and how did they ever get a wagon on a barn roof?

When we had a football team?

The barbershop quartet comprised of Rube Morris, Elmer Cappel, Orville Scull and Pony Thomas?

When the Strawtown stonequarry was fixed up as a swimming park with bath houses, boardwalks, diving boards and a cable separating the shallow from the deep part?

The hitching racks along the streets where the children “skinned the cat”?

The Redmen’s parade on Decoration Day?

These are only a few of the many amusing anecdotes that make recollection a pleasure.

This history has been compiled by Mrs. Robert Dorton from these sources: History of Delaware County, Indiana with Illustrations—1881 by T.B. Helm, author and editor; History of Delaware County, Indiana by Frank D. Haimbaugh; Complete History of Delaware, Indiana by John S. Ellis; and the many manuscripts and articles by Mrs. Ervin Cruea, O.J. Chapman, Robert F. Long, Carl Swift and others. Many people have been most kind in supplying information pertinent to this history and the author wishes to take this opportunity to thank each and every one. The old record books of the Town Board of Trustees and the Fire Department were made available. These two organizations are to be thanked also. May the public be lenient in their criticism of errors and omissions. The author has done her best in the limited amount of time and space allotted.