

32

THE
PAST AND PRESENT
OF
KANE COUNTY, ILLINOIS,

CONTAINING

A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY—ITS CITIES, TOWNS, &C., A DIRECTORY OF ITS CITIZENS, WAR RECORD OF ITS VOLUNTEERS IN THE LATE REBELLION, PORTRAITS OF EARLY SETTLERS AND PROMINENT MEN, GENERAL AND LOCAL STATISTICS, MAP OF KANE COUNTY, HISTORY OF ILLINOIS, ILLUSTRATED, HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST, ILLUSTRATED, CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS, ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

CHICAGO:
WM. LE BARON, JR., & CO., 186 DEARBORN STREET.
1878.

FARMERS' INSTITUTE,

organized in 1841, for mutual improvement, by the interchange of ideas upon agriculture and every theme of general interest. The proceedings of its first meeting were published in the first number of the *Prairie Farmer*, and many useful ends were accomplished under its direction in the following years, which it would have been difficult to effect by any other means. The business statistics of the township, collected by the Club, and read by Mr. Thomas Judd before a meeting called in St. Charles to consider the feasibility of extending the Chicago & Galena Railroad west of that place, were taken as a basis on which to compute the estimated products of the other townships, and had their due proportion amid the various other considerations, which led the company to extend it. The second State Fair in Northern Illinois was held at Aurora. In the previous year it had met at Naperville, with the promise by the citizens of that place that a free dinner would be given on the grounds. The dinner was a failure. The citizens of Aurora resolved to excel their sister town, and not disappoint the assembled multitudes, and, accordingly, announced that on that occasion all should eat and be filled. The day approached, and the farmers of Sugar Grove were called upon to assist in the preparations. Several of the delegates from the Institute, who met with Aurora to consider the matter, proposed a warm dinner, but this proposal seemed so utterly impracticable to the people of Aurora that they laughed at them. But Sugar Grove resolved that there should be hot tea and coffee, and warm vegetables, with meats enough to supply the State, if necessary, and to this end a plan of operations was arranged by the Farmers' Institute. A steer, three years old, was dressed, and sent around the township in parts to be cooked, while pigs, turkeys and chickens were killed without stint. Coffee and tea were boiled in huge brass kettles, and vegetables cooked in caldron kettles on the ground, and after all had enjoyed a repast such as Kane County never furnished before or since, Mr. Judd states that "they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets, and distributed them to the citizens of Aurora." When Kansas, suffering from drouth and anarchy combined, sent a wail eastward for help, the Farmers' Institute of Sugar Grove donated 1,000 bushels of wheat and sent them to her. Two

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

have exercised an important influence in the mental culture of the inhabitants of the township. According to some of the early settlers, sectional jealousy was first introduced through them; but be that as it may, their beneficial effects can scarcely be over estimated. Sectional feeling must have appeared of necessity, as the entire township became settled, and the fact that it was ushered in with the first library should count for naught in a consideration of the value of the library itself. The first one was organized in the winter of 1843, by the farmers resolving themselves into a company of stockholders. Three of them headed the list by purchasing shares to the amount of ten dollars

each, and others followed with smaller sums. The books were first kept at the house of S. G. Paull, Section 16, and the collection bore the name of Farmers' Library. The old records show that the books were most industriously read, and additions were occasionally made to their number until, in 1851, there were 264 volumes, embracing valuable works upon a variety of topics. Many of them are now in the school house, in District 7. The second library was known as the Independent Farmers' Library, and was established during the Winter following the organization of the first. It was kept at Col. Ingham's, two and a half miles from the other. The books have now become scattered.

In 1846, the first

BRICK HOUSE

in the township was built, by Silas Reynolds, on Section 10, where it is now used as a dwelling, by Millard Starr. Previous to that time, a peculiar

TRAGEDY

was enacted near Jericho, which may be mentioned, as it resulted in the death of one of the earliest settlers in that vicinity. Mrs. I. S. Fitch had taken a young and friendless girl into her family, and had cared for her as a mother until she arrived at a marriageable age, when she became the wife of Reuben Johnson, who has been mentioned as one of the early settlers near Jericho. Mrs. Johnson had occasionally shown symptoms of insanity, but no danger was apprehended from her, and when suffering from her temporary attacks she had been allowed her liberty, and had generally taken refuge with her old friend Mrs. Fitch, whose house was near her own. On the day on which the following events occurred, Mrs. Fitch was alone in her house employed about her domestic duties, when Mrs. Johnson entered in a high state of excitement. Mrs. Fitch, however, being accustomed to see her thus, continued with her work, and was busied with her back turned toward the young woman, when she crept slyly behind her with a razor, and cut her throat from ear to ear. The unfortunate lady ran to the door screaming to her son, who was at work in the field near by. He hastened to the house and, by holding the severed arteries, prevented the flow of blood until surgical aid could be obtained, but while the wound was being dressed she died. More than thirty-five years have passed since that day, and Mrs. Johnson, still a raving maniac, lives at her home in Jericho. Mrs. Fitch was buried in a field near her house, but a number of years afterward her remains were exhumed and placed in the cemetery. On raising her coffin from the grave, the attention of her son was directed to the enormous weight which it appeared to contain, and on removing the lid the body was found to be a *solid mass of stone!*

It was in 1847 that the delegates were chosen to form a new Constitution for the State of Illinois, but it was not until August 2, 1850, that the first town meeting, under the new Constitution adopted, met at the house of S. G. Paull to

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