

Old Cemeteries of Marshall County

Published under the auspices of the Marshall County Historical Society

THE MANSFIELD CEMETERY

This little cemetery, probably totally unknown to all but the oldest of the "old timers" of the Henry-Whitefield area, is variously known as the "Black Church," "Whitefield Presbyterian," or simply "Mansfield" cemetery. It probably had never been given an official name, but was the parish cemetery, or "church-yard," of what was officially known (in the records of the Presbytery of Peoria) as the Mansfield Presbyterian church.

Almost any of those names might have been about equally accurate, however, as the Mansfield church was the only Presbyterian church in Whitefield, and also the only church constructed of brick. As the church was called by anyone speaking of it, so probably was its cemetery; we shall, however, for the sake of the official name of the church, refer to it by the name of Mansfield. (We have not the faintest idea, though, of the origin or significance of the name.)

It was one of at least two, and probably three, church parish cemeteries in the township. One other such, the Whitefield Center (Methodist) cemetery, we shall take for our topic in the next installment of this series; the other possible one, we have never learned for sure, and can hardly discuss. (Because it is now completely non-existent, for lack of any sure knowledge of it, whether it was or was not the "official" parish cemetery of the now-defunct Whitefield Christian church. It seemed always to have been referred to in older documents as the Buisson cemetery, after two Buisson brothers who were very instrumental in organizing that church; and it was located adjacent to the church.)

Probably Fourth Whitefield Cemetery

Lacking any positive information about this Buisson cemetery, and especially its origins and dates, it appears that the Mansfield cemetery was probably the fourth of the six Whitefield parish, neighborhood, and semi-public cemeteries to be opened. (Bonham in 1846; Nighswonger in 1854 (probably); Sugar Grove, the township's only public or community cemetery, about 1855-56; and Mansfield more than likely about the time its parish church was actually built, about 1858. (The Whitefield Christian church, adjoining the Buisson cemetery, was built in 1861.)

Although its location is noted in currently-used Marshall county plat-books, in the northeast quarter of Section 30 of the township, probably anyone driving past the site on the Rowe Hill road would never suspect that a cemetery once stood there—and we say "stood," advisedly, because today, not a single stone in it is left standing.

The three-acre tract once owned by the church is now the property of Frank Cliff, whose home is almost directly across the road from it, a few rods west. The old church building was gone, and the cemetery itself a complete shambles when his family came into possession of it over 50 years ago; but at least, the site is covered fully with grass, and no brush has ever been allowed to "take over," as in so many others of its type. This happens to be more than can be said of any, others of the old, abandoned cemeteries we intend to describe in this series.

Church Members Experience Difficulties

The history of this little cemetery is also the history of the church, that once stood beside it. Both had a fairly short, and somewhat stormy life, and both have vanished into almost complete oblivion, except in the memories of the few remaining "old-timers" of the community who dimly remember them.

Some of the history of both was published in one of the newspapers featuring this series, several years ago, but will bear repeating for the sake of many who had no opportunity then to read it. Quite an extended account of the church's organization, building, and activities, up until the year 1880, appears in Ellsworth's volume published in that year, being our principal source of that information; the balance, rather indefinite and incomplete, we have had to unearth from old newspaper files; and this somewhat dim memories of a few we have asked concerning it. There are probably no more than 50, perhaps fewer, persons still living who remember anything at all about it, and only a few of them remember ever being inside the building. Even some of those give us some slightly conflicting details about it.

This little history of the church was the second of the four Whitefield churches to be organized, but the first to erect a building; and this last was by far the largest building, almost twice the ground floor area of the next largest.

The organization meeting took place in a school-house near the location where some four years later, the church was actually built. A committee from the Presbytery of Peoria met with the little circle of prospective members on Tuesday, May 16, 1854, and after the necessary steps had been taken, the church was pronounced as "duly organized."

All went well, Ellsworth says, for a few years, with regular services being held in the same and other nearby schoolhouses, and occasionally in private homes, until the question of erecting a suitable house of worship began to be seriously discussed. Then, things suddenly took an entirely different turn; Ellsworth cites the ensuing events as "making local history for all time to come."

Member Gets Out of Hand

It seems that a considerable dispute arose as to the location of the anticipated building. But perhaps we'd best let Ellsworth tell us about it in his quite refreshing style and choice of words and expressions: "In March, 1857, a business meeting was held to devise measures for the erection of a house worthy of worship. At this meeting considerable ill-feeling was developed, chiefly upon the question of location. A prominent member, and one who by reason of his wealth and position was expected to contribute liberally to the enterprise, was consulted, but his preference as to a location was ignored by the majority, whereupon he became exceeding wroth, expressing himself with much greater force than elegance."

Ellsworth then goes on to describe the remainder of the meeting, in almost as much detail as if he himself had been present, indicating that the member in question wound up his rather torrid tirade by "consigning the majority to a locality more noted for warmth than piety."

Following this little outburst of temper, the member in question was immediately suspended, and notwithstanding his objections, the majority went ahead and accepted a site-donation offer of W. H. Brassfield, who in those days operated a tile factory at Redtown Corners, a mile and a half north of the highway crossing just east of the site known for many years as "Lundy's corners."

Church Built 99 Years Ago

Some 20 months after the meeting just described, the church was finished, and dedicated with appropriate services the morning and evening of Sunday, Nov. 21, 1858, just a few weeks short of 99 years ago. It was, as indicated above, of red brick, somewhat resembling the present Henry Consolidated Grade school's brick in color, and although we do not know for sure, probably manufactured at the old Payne-Wikoff brickyard on Western avenue road, near the Henry-Whitefield township line. (Mrs. Mary Payne, apparently the second wife of Edward Payne, one of the partners, was a member of the Mansfield church.)

The church's floor dimensions were 40 by 70 feet, by quite a bit the largest structure of the four Whitefield churches. Its cost was about \$2,000—about one-seventh of what a similar building would cost today. It stood on the west third of the three-acre tract, with the cemetery occupying the larger share of it. However, the actual burials in the latter, judging by what stones are available for inspection, never reached even very close to its easterly end.

We have tried repeatedly to find some one who remembered the interior of the church well enough to describe it, but the following is the closest we can come to it—and this was told us by an elderly lady who dimly remembers attending occasional "evangelistic services" in it, as a child, though she herself and her family were affiliated with the Whitefield Center Methodist church; she also qualifies her description with the fact that her memory "might not be altogether accurate" on a few of the details:

Kerosene Lamp Chandeliers

Our informant did not remember whether the interior was of the same brick as the exterior, or plastered, but it was painted, rather than papered. The furnishings were far from elegant, though not too coarse. The new kerosene lamp chandeliers were suspended from the

made, rather than professionally made, by a factory specializing in them—probably resembling rather closely those in the Putnam, Christian church and the Saratoga Methodist church before their recent remodeling. She did not remember whether any of the aisles were carpeted or not—few were, in those days. The church had one central aisle, and two side aisles, with two sections of pews; the aisle or pulpit platform, stood at the south end.

Music was furnished sometimes by a piano, sometimes by one of the old-time "parlor organs" which were very common in those days. The windows, probably five or six on either side, were of plain glass; stained glass would have more than doubled the cost of the church. Lighting for evening services, which were always held every Sunday evening, was accomplished by two, or possibly three chandeliers, made up of kerosene lamps, which could be lowered from the ceiling by chains or pulleys for lighting and extinguishing. A few others also adorned the side-walls in-between the windows.

These details are to the best of the memory and recollection of our informant, recently deceased, who admitted that a few of them could have "gotten mixed up with other churches" in Whitefield at that time. If any of our readers have any additions or corrections to make in them, we would gladly welcome and will publish such.

Records Lost in Mail

Partly anticipating, writing this series about two years ago, and partly out of pure curiosity to know who the member was who "got out of hand" with his little temper tantrum on the matter of location, we have queried, we asked the stated clerk (permanent-executive-secretary) of the Presbytery of Peoria for the loan of the session minutes of the church. The book was mailed us—uninsured—and somehow got lost in the mails. Our only comment—a serious loss of valuable historical material.

The church functioned well for about 30 to 35 years after its building was completed, but about that time, began to experience serious losses in membership; from members moving further west to Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Kansas—a rather common thing in those days—and the lost members were not replaced by new ones among the later newcomers to this area, most of whom seemed to be of other religious preferences.

These losses had become so serious in the late 1880's that there was some talk of disbanding the church organization. In the early 1890's it finally did become necessary. We have never been able to establish the exact date. The building continued on, unused except for occasional community meetings, entertainments, or political rallies, for another eight to ten years, and finally it too, disappeared.

A man well remembered in the Henry-Whitefield community was given the task of dismantling it, the late William Morton True, whose son Fred still lives in Henry, and has one very vivid recollection of the affair, sustained while "helping," as a lad of about seven or eight years, his father in the task. He was attempting to pull a stubborn nail from a timber, and it came suddenly loose with enough force that the hammer flew up and hit him in the face. The result was a beautiful "shiner" which Fred sported until almost time for school that fall.

Cemetery Loses Popularity

When Ellsworth wrote his historical volume in 1880, almost his only comment regarding the cemetery itself was, that in later years, "its members began to show a preference for other locations." Granting that it was first begun at or about the time of the completion of the building itself (fall of 1858), it probably served the little parish for only about 20 years. At least, what few stones we have been able to examine, all show dates of death in the 1850's and 1860's, though from old newspaper obituaries, we learned that a few burials in it did take place in the early 1870's.

The reason for the "preference for other locations" Ellsworth cites is fairly obvious: in those days, it was generally thought best to have cemetery locations on hillsides, or at least, sloping ground which has some chance of drainage—such things as water-proof burial vaults were unknown at that time—and this cemetery, was just about exactly level. But more than likely, the William H. Brassfield land donation for the site of cemetery and church was like the proverbial "gift horse," and after "squelching" the unruly but perhaps still wiser-than-they member described earlier in this story, who were they to object with a very clear conscience?

Sugar Grove and Henry City, and perhaps Sparland cemeteries were the "other locations" which Mansfield people finally began using. We have no idea when the last burial in the Mansfield cemetery took place, but quite likely, in the 1890's.

There were, some 18 stones with still legible inscriptions available for inspection when the county historical society visited it last Oct. 13, and we know through newspaper obituaries of at least six more. This total is still only about 40 percent of the 60-odd burials in it which Frank Cliff, its present owner, estimates. Those known two dozen are almost equally divided between adults and children.

Some Have Local Living Relatives

Only two names appearing on stones in it are at present represented in Henry and surrounding area: a Daniel McVicker, who died July 4, 1862, at the age of 30 years and two months; and two members of a Brown family, which we have been told by a distant relative are part of the extensive Brown relationship which includes the whole Henkins family, most of the Putnam and Lone Tree Andersons, and a few actual Browns in Henry, of the Adam Brown family; Elizabeth Brown, wife of Simon, who died Nov. 23, 1858, at 67 years of age; exactly two days after the dedication of the building itself, and possibly among the very first few burials in the cemetery; and a Mary L. Brown, daughter of T. P. Brown, who died Jan. 2, 1862, at the age of 14 years, 10 months, and 6 days, quite possibly a granddaughter of Elizabeth.

All the other names: Cunningham, Terwilliger, Beeks, Eckly, Deyoe, Diehl, Patterson, Yates, Faris, Byers, Hervey, Rogers, and Kirk, are at present wholly missing from area directories.

A few, however, do have some distant relatives living hereabouts, or may be related to parts or their families; the Kirk family, once very prominent in Whitefield, are related to the Barnes family of Whitefield; and a portion of the Diehl family, though not the one buried in Mansfield cemetery, is related to the Hunt family of Henry and Sparland.

Up until a few years ago, one surviving member of the Faris family lived in this area, but died and was buried elsewhere. This Faris family was among the "leading lights" in both the original organization of the church, and most of its actual existence. A Rev. Faris was a member of the Presbytery's organization committee, and another of the same name was one of its early pastors, and an R. P. Faris was its clerk of session (secretary of its official board) for a very long period. When the Faris family left, the church was mortally crippled.

Two Civil War Veterans

For historical reasons, and human as well, next after the Faris family in importance would probably come that of Samuel Byers, one of the two Civil War veterans buried there, a man with a most sympathy-provoking story.

We reprint in full the rather brief and sketchy but meaningful obituary which appeared for him in the Henry News-Republican issue of Feb. 29, 1872:

"We chronicle this week the death of Samuel Byers of Whitefield; he has been an invalid for a number of years, but after losing two wives by death, he has managed to keep his little family of three children together. At his death the friends have given homes to the orphans. He enlisted in Col. Marshall's 1st Illinois cavalry at the commencement of the war, was captured at the battle of Lexington, Mo., and paroled. Subsequently, by accident, his name got on the enlistment roll twice, and both names were drawn, but on examination he was rejected. He was a member of the Presbyterian church of Whitefield, and lived a consistent life."

(The last expression—common in obituaries of that period, signified that he had been a man of good moral character, and a total abstainer from alcohol.)

His "official" death notice, appearing apart from the obituary, gives his age as 45, which would make him born probably about 1826. Oddly enough, no cause of death is given, in either, an extreme rarity in those days.

Lost Two Children Also

Neither the names of his deceased wives, nor any of his children, appear in either death notice or obituary, nor does the fact that he lost at least two children, both buried in this cemetery. The name of the first wife, whose stone we found on our recent visit there, was Mary Jane, and she died April 5, 1851, at the age of 30. A son of this marriage, Thomas Reed Byers, died in January, 1857, at the age of 50. Only a few weeks past to that last date, an infant daughter,



The Illinois Valley Sportsman's Column

By Doc Wagner

Henry Ill.

What Triggers the Duck Migration From the Northland?

One of the most interesting aspects of duck hunting is the annual game of trying to guess when the ducks will arrive along the Illinois Valley. No one knows positively just what causes this tremendous flight of birds from Canada, although in a way everybody knows the weather has something to do with it.

Waterfowl experts fairly well agree that flights are started when low pressure areas in Canada start a southward movement of cold air. So, for the average hunter to plan his duck hunting trips he should guess when low pressure is going to arrive over the duck concentrating area of Canada.

A great many Illinois duck hunters feel compelled to go hunting on opening day even though they do not expect to find too many ducks. They figure that the ducks that are down will maybe be dumb and late arrivals.

At This Writing Only a Handful of Ducks in This Area

Possibly by the time this is published the great migration of ducks from the north will have started. This is the average date when they usually arrive.

The fellow who can wait for this migration and then drop everything to take off for his blind is the fortunate hunter. New blinds, upon arrival, are not too gun shy, but after a few days of "hammering," they soon acquire their tricky ways to keep out of range of the hunters.

Bow and Arrow Hunting Ends

As bow and arrow hunting ended October 15 everywhere but on the big water fowl refuges in Southern Illinois, the Department of Conservation began assessing results of the bow season.

While final results are not at this time available, the kill by archers during the first 15 days of the month throughout the entire state will be slightly over 100.

About half of these were taken on the refuges in the south, while the other half were taken in northern counties, excepting an occasional kill in such exceptional counties as Cass and Marshall.

Two-Dollar Goose

Illinois county public shooting grounds will be featured in the November issue of Outdoor Life.

Authorized by Tom McNally, the article is titled "Two-Dollar Goose." It covers a two-day hunt in the Union county wildlife refuge and should be of special interest to hunters who have trouble bagging their limit of geese.

The author says in the article, "I never thought bargain shooting would be a good idea. This Illinois trip changed my mind." He said that hunter success at Union has been fantastic. Ninety per cent of the sportsmen visiting the area last season left with the limit.

Illinois' system of promoting public shooting grounds in conjunction with the Illinois State Game Warden's Department, had died, Sept. 18, 1866, at not quite three months, and on Feb. 13, 1867, the latter's mother, Samuel Byers' second wife, Rachel C. Byers, at the age of 36. Her obituary states that she was born in Ohio county, W. Va. (county seat: Wheeling).

Samuel Byers himself died Feb. 22, 1872, according to the published death notice, but we found no stone for him. For many years, the local G.A.R. post used to nail two flags to a tree along the edge of the cemetery, near the roadside fence, in memory of the two veterans (the other was Richard Stutz, of whom we have no further information than that he served in the 28th Illinois infantry regiment), but even the tree is gone now.

Some of the above information was published in one of the newspapers carrying this series, several years ago (under a similar heading, "War Heroes of Former Years"). At the time, we had no further information regarding the three orphan children. Since then, however, on one of our frequent "browsing expeditions" through old newspaper files, we may have discovered what happened to a possible one of them. On May 18, 1882, a Mary Jane(?) Byers died at Dunlap, Ill., of consumption, at the age of 25; her actual date of birth was March 4, 1857 (the day upon which President Buchanan was inaugurated). No mention of her parentage or other survivors is given. But the fact that her obituary appeared in a Henry newspaper, although her death took place entirely outside its normal circulation area, would indicate that she was known to some people within it. Also, the name Byers is far from being at all common, and its far more common spelling is "Byers"—a name itself, probably Mary Jane, identical with Samuel Byers' first wife's, and all the other circumstances, seem to indicate that she was a daughter of him and his first wife.

The Zephaniah Bell Family

One other very prominent family in Mansfield church history was the Zephaniah Bell family, which retired from farming in the Mansfield area and moved to Henry, affiliating with the Henry Presbyterian church on May 16, 1875. (Mr. Bell passed away some 19 months later, but was buried in Henry City cemetery; his wife, Sarah, died in March, 1882, and was buried beside him.) Mr. Bell's obituary states that he was for many years a ruling elder in the Mansfield church.

As most couples did in those days, these people had a large family. Among their children were Dr. James Harvey Bell of Saratoga, and Robert H. Bell—among the very few living descendants of the Zephaniah Bell in this area is a great-granddaughter, Lila Bell (Mrs. Clarence) Poling of Peoria, a former Henry resident. (Note: there were at least three Bell families residents of Western Marshall county, none of whom appear to have been related, or at least, very closely.)

There is some evidence that a few graves might have been moved out of the Mansfield cemetery. In one spot, near its south central boundary, a depression which gives the appearance of graves re-opened and then not filled in level, is easily noted. Quite a little activity of this type took place in the closing years of the 19th century in several of the Whitefield cemeteries, including the whole of the old Buisson cemetery, as we have noted.

If there was ever a plat kept of the Mansfield cemetery—which would have been a genuine rarity, in those days!—no one we have ever questioned, has the faintest idea where it might be. If any reader can supply us with any additional information about this church, its cemetery, or any persons buried in it, the county historical society would gladly welcome it.

(Next Week: The Whitefield Center Cemetery)

Swishes by the Sweeper

After a period of being tied rather closely to the grind, sometimes referred to by some of our subscribers as the "Sweep Driver," and by others called, I believe facetiously, the "Sweep Mine," I have broken away a couple of times during the week and I hope to be away for a short breather again this weekend.

Thursday night, I went over to Henry-Senahwin high school to enroll in an adult class on electrical wiring conducted by Ewan, vocational teacher of the school.

I have had a great deal of regard for our local high school ever since it was completed a few years ago, but I believe, as a student myself, I will appreciate the school even more.

I hope to attend most of the 10 class sessions in this particular course, and in the first session Thursday evening it did not seem long to find out that I will not exactly be one of the "pills of the class." Nevertheless, I believe the course will be beneficial as well.

I am a strong advocate of adult education, although I do take one long to discover that the learning process after the "half-century mark," does not click exactly as it did before that.

Saturday night, Moby and I went to Peoria and spent some time on the Bradley university campus and at the new Student center.

The occasion was the fall meeting of the Peoria chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, a journalistic fraternity which includes in membership most of the newspaper, TV, and radio people of Peoria area.

Along with Bill Sanders of the Chillicothe Bulletin, the fledgling of the Morton News, and about 15 others from the Peoria area, we were received into the membership of the organization, in a ceremony conducted by Tom Connor, the TV-newsman whose name, incidentally, is Tom Sepch and not Tom Sepch, and he hails from Canton where the Sepch's are well known athletic circles.

Being received into membership of the organization was a particularly gratifying to me, as, for personal reasons, I had some day to be a member of Sigma Delta Chi, an organization which stresses the importance of talent, energy, and truth in the field of journalism.

The speaker at our program was Harrison Lilly, a staff member of Time Magazine. Lilly told of the immense staff that employs in producing its magazine. It was interesting to learn that the magazine has several hundred writers, and that Tom does a story appear in the magazine as it is originally written.

On the more important stories, there are usually a score more of reporters working and many hands and minds on occasion collaborate in writing a single paragraph.

It has always been a puzzle to me how a big assortment of minds can be co-ordinated in writing a sentence or paragraph. Time magazine seems to get the job done in a famous way.

Our writing here on the News-Republican is done in a considerably different manner.

To illustrate, these few paragraphs, which admittedly, not up to Time's specifications, are being written by the person who holds the joint title of owner and sweeper of the News-Republican. Instead of having a copy writer and editor for this column, it is being set directly onto the linotype machine without copy. Not boasting at all, but when this is done, I will do a little sweeping, help put some ink in the press to the post office and get the mail; pay a bill or two; and probably wind up the week's issue by helping to mail papers to subscribers.

Our system is quite different from Time's, but the nice about it all is that Time seems to be happy with their set-up as we are.

During the past week the writer has had the privilege of mingling with several individuals who have some first-hand knowledge of the problem of school integration of the races in Arkansas. We have talked with three or four former residents of Arkansas, are in touch with the situation there, and have also talked with news reporters who have been on the scene.

It remains to be seen what the final result of the Little Rock disturbances will be, but there is a widespread belief that Faubus has done his State a disservice and that he may also, materially detracted from his own personal and political status by his actions and decisions in the Arkansas case.

Also there is the belief going around that the prestige of U. S. News & World Report may have suffered due to the tenure of its editor, David Lawrence, that there is no such thing as a 14th amendment to the Constitution, and that consequently the Federal Government is powerless to enforce its position against segregation. The U. S. News arguments on the subject have nothing to do with the promotion of law and order and social justice.

As the excitement over Little Rock gradually subsides, opinion is slowly emerging that the right of the federal government to enforce integration of schools is becoming more established. It is quite true that in some areas perhaps integration will never take place, as the races will, where conditions permit, perhaps desire to attend their own schools. But out of present turmoil will eventually come the belief and the right of individuals, regardless of race, color, or creed, to attend the school of their choice. The question at issue is not to put all children in the same schools, but to establish the equal rights of all under the law and social custom.

This writer, and others on the News-Republican staff, have been impressed with reports brought back recently by a number of travelers who have visited Europe. Invariably, they report that Western Germany is making rapid strides, they report that it has been more rebuilding since World War II in Western Germany than in any other country of Europe, and that the people of Western Germany appear to be prosperous and happy.

We are anxious for someone to give us the formula for being followed by these people to restore their country to a position of strength. It would be interesting to know the procedure to follow to achieve happiness and prosperity and to see that so much more progress is made in some places than others.

We will close this little contribution on a less solemn note, quoting from a news release left with us Monday afternoon by Fred Darr of Princeton, a representative of the Illinois Electric Co-operative. Fred is concerned about waste and a particular insistence with the waste of electric current.

Fred says we ought to watch for dripping faucets in our homes especially those which deliver hot water from electric heaters.

He says a faucet that drips 15 drops a minute wastes 48 gallons a month, and would waste 12 kilowatt hours of electricity, valued at about a quarter. If the drip is at the rate of 120 drops a minute, the loss is 429 gallons a month, and waste is 107 kilowatt hours, worth about \$2.14.

The moral, Darr rightfully insists, is to have your leaks fixed.

This week Moby and I are looking forward to spending a little time at the annual fall meeting of the Peoria association of Deacons.