



## Mile 146

July—September 2010



Volume 3


Topeka Area Historical Society

Number 3

### Topeka's Ties to the Civil War


With the passing of years Topeka's connection with the American Civil War faded into virtual obscurity. And yet our Hawpatch has amazing ties, both past and present, to what many referred to as the War of the Rebellion. Numerous men (we know of no women) served in Union regiments. If there were Southern sympathizers, they kept a very low profile. Today, several Topeka residents can trace their ancestry to President Abraham Lincoln, the Culp family of Gettysburg (Culp's Hill), as well as other key political leaders of that time. Another prominent Topeka family had an ancestor visited in the hospital by President Lincoln. And, two relatives of abolitionist John Brown are buried in the Eden Township Cemetery.


Enlistment records for Company H of the Indiana 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment identify at least six recruits as being from Hawpatch. All were mustered in on the same date, November 22, 1861. The community was not renamed Topeka until the railroad came through in 1892. Of the six, two were corporals, James Sutton and James Longcor; two were listed as musicians, John H. Stoner and Norman Sessions; and privates, Van Buren Fisher and John T. Fisher. According to Robert Lee Yoder, (LaGrange County in the War of the Rebellion ©2006) LaGrange County sent 1,500 men to the war. Two hundred of these men did not come back alive. Yoder's two volume addition provides extensive information on veterans who either lived in LaGrange County at sometime or that were buried in the county.


 **Norman Sessions** mustered into the Indiana 44<sup>th</sup> on November 22, 1861 at about the age of 20 as a musician. This picture, taken from the one of his unit, has a drum at his feet. It was said that he was 5 foot nine inches tall with brown eyes and black hair. He mustered out September 14, 1865 filing for his pension on July 14, 1890. Sessions lived in LaGrange and worked as a dentist. He died in 1930 and is buried in the Greenwood Cemetery in LaGrange.


**Norman Session**  
Hawpatch, Indiana  
Company H, 44th Indiana




 **Corporal James Sutton** mustered into the Indiana 44<sup>th</sup> along with Norman Sessions. Sutton was a 21 year old farmer who stood five feet six inches tall with brown eyes and hair. He was mustered out on November 23, 1864. Sutton apparently moved to Kansas where he filed for and received his pension on May 21, 1889.

 **Corporal James Longcor** was one who did not come home. Wounded at Ft. Donelson, Tennessee, he died in Evansville, Indiana on March 10, 1862. When he joined the 44<sup>th</sup> his occupation was listed as a farmer. He was said to have had grey eyes, brown hair and stood five feet 3 inches tall.

Like Norman Session,  **John H. Stoner** was listed as a musician. When he joined the 44<sup>th</sup>, Stoner would have been 33 years old. No occupation was listed for him. We do know that he had blue eyes, dark hair and was five feet two. His discharge came on August 10, 1863 because of a disease he had contracted. Stoner died shortly after his discharge and is buried in the Eden Cemetery (R-36, G-9).

 **Van Buren Fisher** was all of 19 years old when he joined the service. Standing five feet nine ½ inches tall, he had blue eyes and auburn hair. He was also a farmer. Wounded at Stones River, Tennessee he was discharged on January 2, 1863. Robert Lee Yoder believes that he may have also been known as Vern [Van] B. Fisher who left LaGrange County in 1884 and was living in Seneca, Kansas in 1917.

 **John T. Fisher** most likely was a brother (close relative) of Van Buren Fisher. Their records are very similar. Both were listed as farmers. John (five feet eight inches tall) was born in Indiana in 1832, and had blue eyes with light hair. When he mustered out on September 14, 1865, after almost four years of service John T. had earned the rank of corporal. (Cont. on pg. 2)

#### In This Issue

- Topeka's Civil War Connection
- 1904 Reunion of the 30th Indiana
- Hawpatch Churches Affected by the Civil War
- Hawpatch History Detectives
- Track Notes & Quiz
- Grant Update

(Cont. from pg. 1)

One of the most intriguing Civil War connections is that of Cloe Pettibone Brown (1785-1852) and her son John (1812-1852) who is said to be the first doctor in Hawpatch. In 1808, Cloe Pettibone married Judge Frederick Brown (a descendant of Peter Brown who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620) of Wadsworth, Ohio. She was his second wife and a respected doctor in her own right. The History of Medina County says that, "She, perhaps, was the first practitioner of the county".



*"It is said that Eve in the Garden of Eden, through transgression, entailed upon posterity the seeds of disease and death 'and all our woe'. But 'Aunt Chloe', in the wilderness of America, with sympathetic heart and extended hand, afforded relief to many a suffering mortal, as if, in part, to atone for the stain upon her sex*

*through the 'fall'."* (History of Medina County, page 253).

Frederick had a brother, Owen, who was the father of none other than abolitionist John Brown (1800-1859). Abolitionist Brown helped to trigger the Civil War when he led the raid on Harper's Ferry and was later hung for his crime. Thus, our Cloe would have been his aunt and Dr. John a first cousin.

In 1842, due to declining health, Frederick retired to live with his son Dr. Marcus Brown in Circleville, Ohio. Following Frederick's death, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1848, Cloe came to live with her son on the Hawpatch. It is said of Dr. John that "he attained a high reputation as a physician and a Christian gentleman". Unfortunately he fell victim to an epidemic of erysipelas which ravaged the area, and died January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1852. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1852, Cloe died at the age of 67 in the same house as her son. Both are buried in the Eden Cemetery (Row 40 # 18) west of Topeka.

Marlene Smith Campbell (THS Class of '49) who lives on the family homestead east of Topeka has found President Abraham Lincoln in her family tree. The lineage is traced through her father's (Glen) mother and the Sparrow family. The children of Glen's brother, Guy (Bert) Smith would also be relatives: Burton, THS Class of '56; Mike, THS Class of '63; and Cheryl Smith Kramer, THS Class of '64. All are still living in the Topeka area.

James Benbow, who lives one mile west of Topeka, traces his ancestry back to the Culp (Kolb) family of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was his mother's side of the family that owned the farm known as Culp's Hill that played a prominent role in the first day of the most famous battle of the Civil War, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1863. Henry Culp had nephews on both sides. John Wesley Culp was with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia while his brother William serviced with the Union. William was not at Gettysburg. Allegedly John Wesley was carrying a message from his friend Jack

Skelly, who had just died, to Jennie Wade who was engaged to marry Skelly. Tragically, she would become the only civilian casualty of the three day battle. John Wesley was killed on July 3<sup>rd</sup> in fighting which took place on the family property.

Cliff and Mark Thompson's great, great grandfather, Robert Thompson, joined the 164<sup>th</sup> Ohio on May 2, 1864. Wounded in battle he was visited in the hospital by President Lincoln who reportedly said, "Son you're gonna make it". Thompson was so impressed that he named his son Robert Lincoln Thompson. There has been a "Lincoln" in the Thompson family ever since. Today Mark's son Robert "Lincoln" Thompson is currently serving his country as a Captain in the U.S. Air Force.

Robert Thompson died on Sunday August 6, 1905 (72 years, 8 months, 24 days) less than a year after the 30<sup>th</sup> Indiana reunion that was held in Topeka (see page 3). For some reason his tombstone says that he died on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1906, but coverage of his death and funeral were published in the August 17, 1905 issue of the LaGrange Standard. In that article it states that *"at the age of 30 he was converted and became a faithful member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and ever after remained a faithful member and an earnest Christian"*. A large crowd gathered at the Beulah Church for the funeral on the following Tuesday. One of the preachers that day was W. H. Brightmire, pastor at Topeka Methodist Episcopal Church (Eden Chapel), who had offered the invocation at Civil War reunion the previous September.

One of the relics in Mark Thompson's collection is a 58 caliber Springfield 1864 VP rifle that was given to him by his late father-in-law, Dennis "Tiny" Fought (THS



Class of '59). The rifle was carried in



the Civil War by a Hawpatch soldier. Unfortunately, while Tiny knew who carried the gun, the person's name has been lost.

Harold Gingerich (THS Class of '65) has an interesting civil war connection as well. On his mother Shirley's side five generations back, Francis Harrison Pierpont the father of West Virginia would have been a first cousin. Pierpont was a friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln. In 1861 the portion of Virginia still controlled by the Union was made a new state, West Virginia, of which Pierpont became the first governor. Following the war during Reconstruction, he was the governor of Virginia.

One can only wonder how many more stories there are of Topeka's connection with the Civil War. Hopefully those stories will be revived so they can be preserved and shared with future generations.

HG



# A Generous Welcome

## The Loyal Hawpatch Entertains Gen. Lawson's Regiment

Patriotic, generous, rich Hawpatch! Such a big hearted welcome as the people of that vicinity gave the survivors of the 30<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry at Topeka last Thursday has not been excelled, if equaled, by any town, large or small, since reunions have been held. Every house in town seemed to be decorated with "old glory", and the streets at a number of crossings were arched with evergreens, flowers and the national colors, and the glad hand of welcome and the smile of delight greeted the visitors everywhere. Not only hearty greetings met each and all, but a bountiful dinner and supper prepared by the ladies of Topeka from the best things the earth produces, cooked in the best and most luscious manner, were elegantly served. The visitor's horses were likewise cared for free of cost. The place of meeting was extensively seated and shaded with a covering of green brush reminding the old soldiers of the shaded camps they used to make.

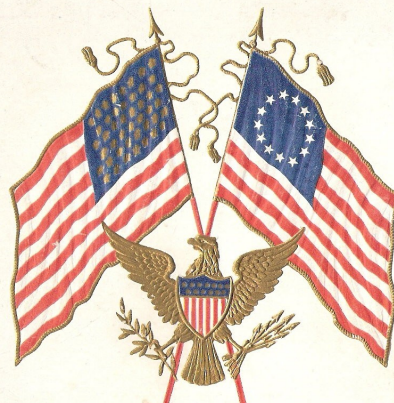
Secretary Oldwine of the 30<sup>th</sup> regiment was at the headquarters, happy as ever, and registered 113 of his regimental comrades and 126 soldiers of other regiments. The attendance was estimated at 3,000. The ladies served dinner to 1,200, and supper to as many more, making 2,400 meals furnished by the generous people.

The public exercises in the afternoon consisted of invocation by Rev. Brightmire, welcome address by Luman K. Babcock, response by Comrade ----- of Chicago in behalf of the regiment, Memorial address by Rev. Musson of Ligonier in memory of the deceased Comrades during the past year, address by Col. J.M. Dodge of Elkhart, followed by a drill by school children.

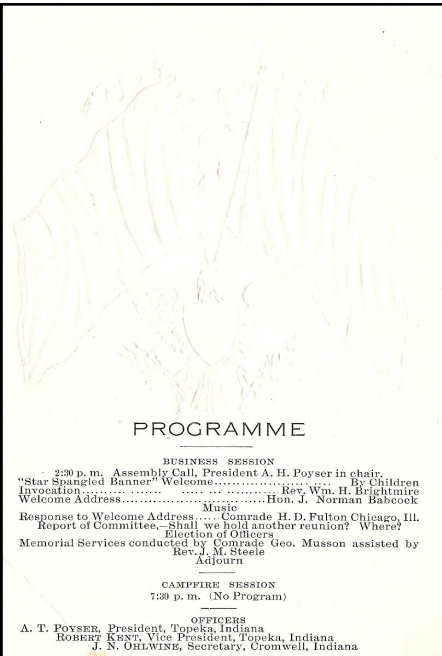
In the evening a Campfire was held which was addressed by Hon. N.W. Gilbert, and a number of the comrades. A poem on the flag of the 30<sup>th</sup> regiment written by Miss Orpheus Fisher,

REUNION ORDER  
No. 21

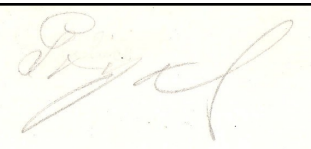
HEADQUARTERS, 30TH INDIANA REGIMENT VETERANS' ASSOCIATION  
August, 18, 1904  
COMRADES:—Topeka sends to you her greeting and invites you to be their guests Thursday, September 8th, 1904 upon the occasion of the reunion of the survivors of 30th Indiana Regiment Veterans' Association.  
At the same time cordial invitation is extended to comrade associates of other regiments. All are invited to come and be active participants in this reunion of veterans.  
This one may be the last reunion of the 30th Indiana Regiment, so do not fail to be present.  
Topeka is in Lagrange County, Indiana, on the line of the Wabash Railway. See time table.  
EAST BOUND  
No. 12, Arrives 2:30 a. m. connects at Wakarusa, Lakeville, North Liberty and Westville  
No. 14, Arrives 3:03 p. m.  
No. 8, Arrives 6:20 p. m. stops at all stations.  
WEST BOUND  
No. 5, Arrives 3:12 a. m. Stops at Wolcottville, Ashley, Montpelier.  
No. 9, Arrives 5:59 a. m. Stops at all stations.  
No. 1, Arrives 11:40 a. m. Makes all stops.  
We are not able to procure encampment rates on railroads. Where possible you should make up excursion parties and thereby secure special rate of fare.  
The following named comrades are detailed for special service—spies and engineers—whose duty it shall be to study the Geography, chorography and topography of Hoosierdom and select a place to hold next encampment and reunion of this regiment if any more are to be held.  
TOM B. TOOMEY, BELA BROUGHTON, J. S. TILBERRY,  
ISAAC SCOTT, JAMES ORN, ALBERT PRUSTON,  
H. L. SHOPP, LESLIE FISHER, L. N. REDMON,  
GEO. W. FAGER



30TH INDIANA REGIMENT  
VETERANS' ASSOCIATION  
REUNION  
TO BE HELD AT  
TOPEKA, INDIANA  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1904



PROGRAMME  
BUSINESS SESSION  
2:30 p. m. Assembly Call, President A. H. Poyser in chair.  
"Star Spangled Banner" Welcome ..... By Children  
Invocation ..... Rev. Wm. H. Brightmire  
Welcome Address ..... Hon. J. Norman Babcock  
Music  
Response to Welcome Address ..... Comrade H. D. Fulton Chicago, Ill.  
Report of Committee—Shall we hold another reunion? Where?  
Election of Officers  
Memorial Services conducted by Comrade Geo. Musson assisted by  
Rev. J. M. Steele  
Adjourn  
CAMPFIRE SESSION  
7:30 p. m. (No Program)  
OFFICERS  
A. T. POYSER, President, Topeka, Indiana  
ROBERT KENT, Vice President, Topeka, Indiana  
J. N. OHLWINE, Secretary, Cromwell, Indiana



INVITATION  
COMRADES: Topeka cordially invites you to meet your comrades in your Twenty-first Annual Reunion here, Thursday, September 8th, 1904. We promise you a hearty welcome and entertainment.  
WELCOME COMRADES  
Welcome to all who here congregate,  
This welcome's yours, be ye humble or great;  
For we know the honors you all have won,  
Whether belted with sword or carrying gun.  
To you we give honor, to you we give praise  
For the heroic work did in those far-away days.  
Welcome is proffered your noble band,  
For when Liberty faltered you gave your hand  
To steady the poise of our God—dess—Queen,  
While she held aloft with majestic mien,  
Hope to the fallen, oppressed and sad,  
And freedom to those in slavery's garb clad.  
Welcome to ye men of the regiment,  
The latch-string's out—fact—it is a tent.  
Our town is filled to its limits with cheer  
For you who here meet once again—one more year  
To clasp hand in hand in comradeship's true grasp  
For perhaps the last time: Aye mayhap it's the last.  
TOPEKA.

From the collection of  
Mike Vandermark

was recited by her, recitations by Wilma Dunathan and Lizzie Kaufman and two songs by Miss Carson.

The writer only had the privilege of hearing the welcome address and the response. It was a splendid welcome both in thought and delivery, reflecting much credit on the speaker and the people he represented, and the response showed a record on the part of the regiment, most creditable to the

brave command whose services on the field makes part of the fame of the state in the civil war, and whose last commander, Gen. H.W. Lawton, gained national fame and honor in the Philippines, where he lost his life at the front of his command.

printed as it appeared in  
The LaGrange Standard  
September 15, 1904

3

# Track Notes:



## Schedule of Events:

- *September 21, 2010*  
Program: **The History of the Council on Aging**  
Location: Depot Museum 6:30 pm
- *October 19, 2010*  
**TAHS Board Meeting** 9:30 am  
Location: Topeka Mennonite Church
- *November 9, 2010*  
**Annual Dinner Meeting & Elections** 6:30 pm  
Location: To be announced  
Program: **LaGrange County & the Underground Railroad** with special guest Scott Beam

**“Get in the Game.....”**  
**Become a 2011 member!**



T.A.H.S. membership is only \$10.00 a year

- Receive the quarterly newsletter
- Help us provide newsletters to every Topeka Elementary School 3rd Grader

## Matching Grant Update

As you know, an anonymous benefactor has pledged to match dollar for dollar every dollar we can raise up to \$25,000. The purpose is to establish a sustainability endowment fund. To date we have raised \$4,527.00

**Time is running out!** This challenge grant will only continue until **November 1st**. It would be a shame to leave even one dollar unclaimed. Any size donation will help. Please consider sending an end of the year gift to help us reach our goal. It is also tax deductible.

The Topeka Area Historical Society is a not-for-profit corporation with 501-c-3 status.

## TAHS Quiz

1. What two churches received donations from the estate of Jonathan E. Yoder?
2. How was Cloe Brown related to the abolitionist John Brown who lead the raid on Harper's Ferry?
3. How many people were reported to have attended the 1904 reunion of the 30th Indiana Regiment held in Topeka?
4. Who gave the invocation at the 30th Indiana reunion and also preached at Robert Thompson's funeral?
5. Name two Topeka area residents that are related to President Abraham Lincoln?



## Hawpatch History Detectives

Thanks to Sharon Turner, we have learned more about Alma Bloomkvist (featured in the last issue). On June 1st, 1911, she married Harry C. Kelley (1878-1923) who worked as a clerk at a grist mill. Alma died in 1942 and is buried in Oak Park Cemetery, Section C1-11 in Ligonier, Indiana.

There is no record of Alma ever sailing on the S.S. Oscar II, which was not built until 1901 and was scrapped in 1933. One explanation for the sticker on Alma's trunk might be that, since she was originally from Sweden, she may have taken her son Tom for a visit and then sailed back to the USA aboard the S.S. Oscar II. What happened to Tom is still a mystery.

*Answers:* 1) Maple Grove Mennonite and Topeka Mennonite; 2) She was his aunt; 3) approximately 3,000 people; 4) Rev. W.H. Brightmore, from the Topeka Methodist Episcopal Church; 5) Marlene Smith Campbell, Burton Smith, Mike Smith, or Cheryl Smith Kramer

## Topeka Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 33

Topeka, Indiana 46571

[www.topekahistoricalsociety.com](http://www.topekahistoricalsociety.com)

### 2010 Board of Directors

Harold D. Gingerich, President  
Doris Haggard, Vice President  
(YOU ???), Secretary  
Janice Gingerich, Treasurer  
Nancy Sutton, Director  
Cleo Hartzler, Director  
Galen Yoder, Director

### Museum Curator

Susie Parker



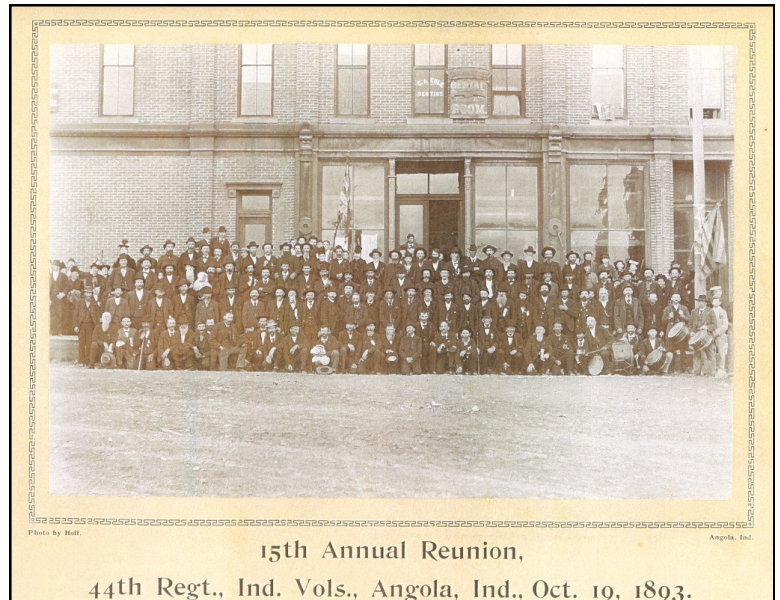
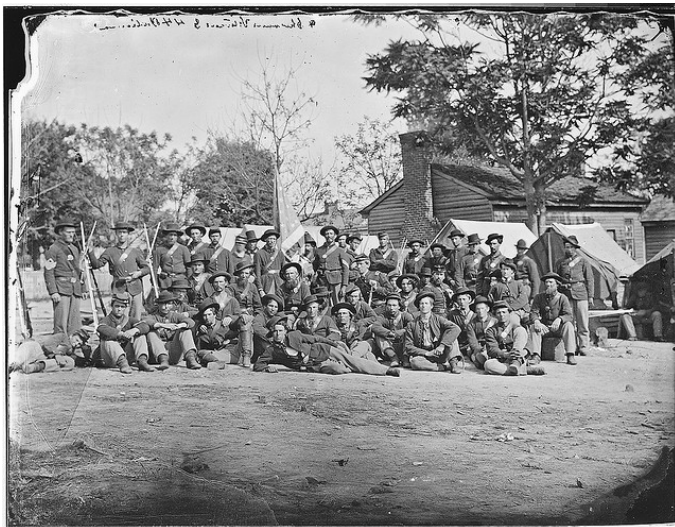
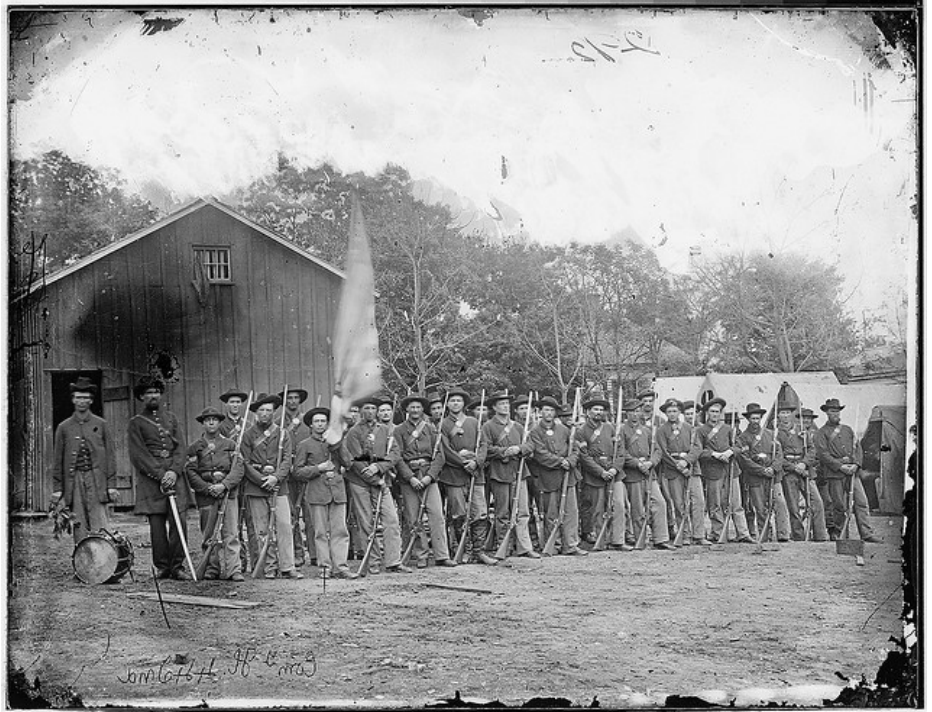
# Company H, 44th Indiana

**Right:** Norman Sessions' Unit  
(Norman, far left, is the only person  
identified in this photo)

**Lower Left:** More men in the 44th  
Indiana, Company H.

*(Both photos of Company H are  
from the National Archives)*

**Lower Right:** Reunion of the 44th  
Indiana, held in Angola in 1893



*(Cont. from pg. 6)*

monthly rate of \$12.00. He died on November 2, 1922 and is buried in the Maple Grove Cemetery west of Topeka on the county line.

Nancy Stoltz Sutton says that her father John C. Stoltz loved to tell the story of what Grandpa Yoder said about buying a gravestone. Yoder, who was financially well endowed, owned the farmland around what locals call "Buttermilk Corners" (State Road 5 and the LaGrange-Noble County line). According to Nancy's father, old Jonathan said that "he didn't know



whether to buy a small monument and be call a cheapskate or a big one and be called a spend-thrift.....so he bought the big one." His tombstone is in fact the largest in the cemetery.

Yoder's wife, Rebecca, was a member of the Topeka Mennonite Church, but Yoder also had ties to Maple Grove Mennonite. When his estate was settled generous gifts of \$25,000 were given to both churches. According to Topeka Mennonite's history their funds were used in 1926 to construct their current meetinghouse on the corner of Lake and Harrison in Topeka. How ironic that these two churches with pacifistic roots should be the beneficiaries of a Civil War veteran.

H<sub>G</sub>

# Hawpatch Churches Affected By the Civil War

The Civil War touched the residents of Hawpatch right where they worshipped. As Robert Latta was forming Eden Chapel, a second Methodist Episcopal society had been organized three miles west of Honeyville on the Elkhart County line in the winter of 1842-43 in the home of John Poyser. The congregation met in the Eden Valley Schoolhouse until their 32 x 45 chapel was built. I have not been able to find out where the Eden Valley Schoolhouse was located. But during the war, when feelings were intense and people were divided in their opinion about where preachers should draw the line between politics and patriotism, a split occurred in the church. According to the 1882 History of LaGrange County, a considerable number of people, including some of the Virginian settlers, left and formed the St. John's English Lutheran Church. The group moved up the road just 1,000 feet north and built a brick church on the Elkhart County side. The cornerstone of the current building was laid in 1878. St John's is still an active congregation meeting every other Sunday.

I am not certain of the date of the split, but we do know that the remaining Methodists struggled to keep their church going. Ultimately they were forced to close. At some point the adjacent cemetery, Salem Cemetery with only seven graves, was abandoned. A number of the Methodists, including the Poyser, joined the Eden Chapel group in Hawpatch.

In 1856 Eden Chapel was enlarged to accommodate the increased membership. Some of this may have been due to the former members of the M.E. church that had closed in the northwest part of Eden Township. By 1866

the Eden congregation decided to erect a new building on the west side of Eden Cemetery to accommodate the continued growth. The new church had a seating capacity of 300 and was built at a cost of about \$1,500. The present church on Pine Street in Topeka was built in 1895 at a cost of \$4,000. One of the stain glass windows still bears the name of one of the former members to join Eden Chapel after the split, W.H. Poyser. The Eden Chapel was sold to the Topeka Mennonite Church by 1898. They moved it closer to town. They used it until their present sanctuary was constructed in 1926. At that time the former Eden Chapel building was sold to Dan Oesch who moved it up the hill to the west end of Indiana Street where it became part of the Topeka Roller Mill.



**The former Eden Chapel building  
when it was part of the Topeka  
Roller Mill**

Jonathan E. Yoder came into the war late, but had a significant role in the life of Topeka. Yoder was actually a substitute who joined Company G, 142<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry on October 4, 1864 as a private. Since the draft was not popular, it was possible to pay someone to take your place. The average substitute was paid about \$300. Whose place he took is not known.

On June 28<sup>th</sup> of 1865 he was mustered out. Filing for his pension on June 15, 1888 (# 897,930), Yoder received a

*(Cont. on pg. 5)*

*Visit Us Online: [www.topekahistoricalociety.com](http://www.topekahistoricalociety.com)*

**Topeka Area Historical Society  
P.O. Box 33  
Topeka, Indiana 46571**