



Biography of Elijah Chapman Daviness Co., IN

A portion of the following is an extract from an article written several years since by S. F. Horrall, a veteran newspaper man of Washington, Indiana. The article briefly tells of : "The rise and fall of a town on the east fork of White river, named New London." Its founder was Elijah Chapman, a pioneer of Veale township, who resides near my father's farm. In addition to that farm Chapman owned a large tract of the rich river bottom land. The land along the river then was covered with heavy timber consisting of poplar, walnut, ash, hickory, sycamore and beech. The size of the trees ranged from one to six feet in thickness and was from twenty-five to seventy-five feet high. Chapman concluded that it was a pity for all that food timber to go to waste in ashes following the clearing, so he built a sawmill, employed men to operate it and rapidly the forests were converted into the choicest lumber. The market for such lumber in Washington for a number of years depended on Mr. Chapman's saw mill for its supply. I was quite young but the idea of making a town out of a wilderness was so novel that all the people talked and wondered. Mr. Chapman was a bundle of energy and determination. He did not know the word fail. The land for a half mile along the north bank of the river was platted into lots and sold rapidly for he promised and gave employment to all who would buy a lot and "settle" there, hence in a few years New London was a town of several hundred people, with one or two general stores, blacksmith shop, shoemakers, carpenters and cabinet makers to say nothing of the spinning wheels and looms. Another industry was an additional saw mill located at the west end of the town by Geo. Anthis of Decker township, Knox County. Transportation of large supplies of the products from the rich lands was furnished by water, White river, Wabash and Ohio to New Orleans or the Mississippi. Many flat boats plied down these streams finding markets. Here then at New London was of all places along the east fork of White river, the most eligible site for flat boat building. Samuel and Elias White of Cumback at that time were the chief builders and contractors for everybody. Not even a nail or a spike was used in the construction, but all sides and bottoms were fastened with pegs, kept on hand, of seasoned oak, the size being an inch thick and as long as necessary. New London now was a town with two saw mills, a dozen ox teams hauling saw logs, carpenter shops, and other industries, five or six flat boats being constructed, so all the planning of Mr. Chapman seemed to be successful and he felt proud of it. He often was heard to rejoice that life was not a failure. So that good man lived to see the town of New London at its zenith. "Mr Chapman was one of the pioneers of Daviness County, having entered a large tract of land in 1813. He was the first in the county to erect a saw mill and carding machine. he was one of the founders of Old Bethel church. Because of his efficiency in court proceedings he obtained the title of Judge Chapman. It is said, the slogan "Crow Chapman Crow," originated from his extreme modesty manifested when successfully elected to office over a very popular opponent. He was honored by being elected as representative to the state legislature in 1844-16. He built a substantial two-story home on the Troy road near Pleasant Hill, in a field east of the home he erected a kiln for the manufacture of earthenware; crocks, jars, jugs, dishes and other articles from the kiln, with products from the saw mill and farm were hauled by ox and horse teams to White river a distance of several miles loaded into flat boats, taken to New Orleans and there sold or exchanged for groceries and merchandise for the comfort and pleasure of the family and neighbors at home, who waited and watched anxiously for their return and were often highly delighted with a surprise gift of silk or other fine fabric for extra wearing apparel. A trip to New Orleans in those days was a greater and more dangerous undertaking than a trip now to France or Germany. Elijah and Mariah (Johnson) Chapman's children were James, Caleb, French and Elizabeth. Caleb married Harriet Palmer, daughter of Hiram Palmer whose farm joined Chapman's. Palmer was superintendent of the county farm and died there of cholera in 1849. Their children were Alonzo, now of Madison, Ind., and Cordelia and Medora, California. Friend married Elizabeth Sutton of Washington, Ind., one daughter Esther, now lives in California. His second wife was Sarah M. Barr, of Shawneetown, Ill., their children were, Alonzo, Franklin, Mollie, May. and Jesse. Elizabeth married Thompson Wallace, whose children were Caleb, Emeline, Elijah and Frank, Rose, Jane and Joseph by a second wife, Catherine Rodarmel. On the 22nd. of Feb. 1838 James Chapman went to the home of Hon. William and Sarah (Horrall)

Wallace where he was united in marriage to their daughter Nancy Matilda, Rev. Davis officiating. On this occasion an elaborate wedding feast was served to over one hundred guests. The decorations were profuse. The bride's brother (Harrison) went several miles on horse to procure evergreens and materials for festoonings. The center decoration for the table was a small cedar tree festooned with fine curled paper. Other decorations were cedar and grasses dipped in flour or alum water making them glisten like frost and icicles. The beautiful bride in white, the groom in black, were a handsome couple. Elijah Chapman invited all present, and others who wished to come to his home the next day for the "infare" dinner. James with his beautiful bride Matilda, in a sleigh, drove to the Chapman home where a wonderful dinner (Equal to a barbecue) was served to many guests. James had three sons in the Civil war, John, William and Albert Eli. Albert being named for Eli McCarty of Civil war fame. John was in Salsbury prison, N.C., and was liberated on the 22nd of February 1865, the anniversary of his father's wedding, and his grandfather Wallace's birthday. Albert, as a drummer boy was with Sherman on his famous march to the sea. Three daughters, Jane, Ella and Josephine, survive. In 1854 Elijah Chapman moved to Illinois where he purchased a large tract of land so that each child could own a good sized farm. He died there in 1855. The land entered by Mr. Chapman in 1813 has been transferred but once. In 1854 it was sold to Mr. Wm. Allison, whose children take pride in the homestead. Mr. Allison says the only improvements made in the building since 1854 are the new kitchen verandas and roof. In the east room is the original puncheon floor. Near the barn is a piece of land where sweet potatoes have been cultivated each year (except two) for over one hundred years. The "Allison boys" are courteous, obliging, progressive farmers, whose influence is felt throughout the community. Their descendants will be as proud of their skill, ambition and integrity as the Chapmans are of their forefathers. Around this dear old pioneer home cluster many precious memories dear to the hearts of the many descendants of Hon. Elijah Chapman.

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BIOGRAPHICAL AND GENEALOGICAL HISTORY OF THE CHAPMAN-JOHNSON-WALLACE-PALMER FAMILY

by MRS. JOSEPHINE CHAPMAN