

Chapter IX

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP

Including History of the Township - Its Soil - Water Courses - Timber - Schools - Churches - Mt. Airy - Old Settlers - Crops

Silver Creek is one of the four townships into which Randolph county was originally divided. It was made the smallest in extent of territory because it embraced the most thickly settled portion of the county at the time of its organization. This fact, taken in connection with its location along the border of Howard county, which was settled first, leads us to infer that it is the oldest township in the county. Although originally the smallest in area, it has recently given up 18 square miles of its territory to the newly organized township of Moniteau, and being without railroad or a railroad town within its borders, it still ranks sixth in population among the eleven townships into which the county is now divided, and shows a greater voting strength than four others which have railroads running through them. These facts show that outside of the towns and cities, Silver Creek township is still the most thickly settled of any in the county. It is situated in the south-west corner of the county.

While it has no railroad running directly through it, its people, taken as a whole, are as well accommodated with railroad facilities as those of any other township except Sugar Creek.

Within a mile and a half of its northern boundary are the depots of the St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern (now Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific) Railroad at Huntsville and Clifton Hill. Not far from its eastern boundary the Chicago and Alton Railroad crosses the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, at Higbee, and on the south, at Armstrong, in Howard county, is another depot of the Chicago and Alton Railroad. The township is literally surrounded by railroad depots without any railroad running through it, a circumstance which gives to all its people a great uniformity of railroad advantages without any of the usual concomitant annoyances, such as the killing of stock and the introduction of tramps, contagious diseases, and other nuisances.

While Silver Creek contains less level land than the other townships, it may be safely asserted that the most fertile tracts in the whole county lie within its borders. The surface ranges from the gently undulating to hilly near the margins of the streams, and with the exception of a few white oak ridges and hickory flats in the northeast and an occasional one in other parts, the soil of the entire township is of a black, rich, sandy loam, interspersed with limestone, which does not predominate in any locality so as to interfere seriously with cultivation, but is generally distributed so as to furnish the requisite supply of this material element of natural fertility.

Here, also, is to be found one of the best watered sections in the whole county. The Sweet Spring, taking its name from a noted fountain on its southern margin, washes the northern boundary of the township, and Silver Creek with its tributaries flows from east to west through the central and southern portions. The names given to these streams, from the latter of which the township takes its name, are significant of the purity and palatable qualities of their waters and of the perennial fountains which dot their margins and spring spontaneous from the fertile hillsides in many other parts of the township. Of this, the leading varieties are white oak, burr oak, Spanish oak, red oak, black oak, pin oak, white and black walnut, hickory, blackberry and elm.

In localities suited to their growth may also be found the sycamore, ash, maple, linden, sassafras, coffee-bean, honey-locust and persimmon.

Many of the varieties of these trees have grown to magnificent proportions, particularly the white oaks, burr oaks, sycamores, walnuts and elms. An old settler tells of a sycamore seven feet in diameter which, in 1832, stood on the banks of Silver creek, near the place where the Huntsville and Glasgow road now crosses the stream.

The educational advantages are first class.

Nine spacious and well built school-houses, including a graded school building at Roanoke, all furnished with improved appliances to facilitate instruction, supply the youth of all parts of the township with mental and moral training not surpassed by those of any rural district in the State.

The leading Protestant religious denominations, embracing Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians and Christians, have places of public worship and hold regular services; the Missionary Baptists being the most numerous while the others are quite respectable in numbers. There are three churches in the township - three of which are Baptists and the other two are union churches.

The region of country embraced within the limits of this township is remarkable for its healthfulness, and there is only one physician, Dr. A. Aldridge, who keeps his office at Mt. Airy, which is the only post-office.

At Mt. Airy are also a store of dry-goods and groceries, kept by Mr. James Smith, a blacksmith and wagon shop, and a large tobacco factory, operated by Messrs. Evans & Patterson, who prize and ship their tobacco. This place is the business center of the northern part of the township, while the people of the southern part do their trading at Roanoke, a larger village, which lies partly in Howard and partly in Randolph county, the main business part of the town and its post-office being in Howard County.

There are two voting precincts in Silver Creek township, one at Mt. Airy and the other in that part of Roanoke which lies in this county.

Mt. Airy is located on the public road leading from Huntsville to Roanoke, about 7 miles from the former place and 12 miles from Moberly. There is plenty of coal in this township and the local demand is easily supplied, for which purposes only have the mines been so far developed. The indications are, however, that with proper facilities for transportation, a large business could be done in shipping this mineral to outside markets.

There are two corn and saw mills in the township, one owned by J. C. Head and the other by James Bagby. The latter is engaged also to some extent in the manufacture of flour.

OLD SETTLERS

Silver Creek has held on well to its old settlers, and quite a number who settled there before and about the time the township was organized are still living there in advanced age, while the descendants of most of those who have since died, yet cling to the homes of their childhood and linger around the graves of their fathers.

Among these are John Viley, who has been judge of the county court, Nicholas Dysart, George W. Dameron, once sheriff, Woodson Newby, James Goodman, Morgan Finnell, William Burton, William Thompson, William R. Burch, George Ellis, Newton Bradley, Jeff. Fullington, Samuel Cockrell, John Minor, Paschall Troyman, Leven I. Dawkins, John Vaughan, Cornelius Vaughan, Allen Mayo, John Alexander, William E. Walden, William Nichols, Roderick O'Brien, William Holman, Joseph Holman, Sr., John Sears, Sr., Hardy Sears, Iverson Sears, Allen Mayo, William Mayo, Valentine Mayo, John Rowland, Younger Rowland, D. R. Denny, Samuel C. Davis, Isaiah Humphrey, William Fort, Asa Kirby, John Head, Ambrose Medley, Basil Mc Davitt, Sr., Roger West, James Davis, Rev Samuel C. Davis, Thomas Bradley, Tolman Gorham, Jr., Thomas Gorham, Ambrose Halliburton, William Morrow and Joseph Morrow.

Mr. William Mathis, better known as Uncle Billy Mathis, emigrated from North Carolina in the year 1827 and erected his cabin, in primitive pioneer style, on 80 acres of land entered at government price, within five miles of where Mt. Airy now stands, and he is still living, in his 81st year, within a half mile of that place, having been a resident of the county 52 years. He was married when he came to the State, but never had any children. He was here before the county was organized, and mentions William Holman, Abraham Gross and James Dysart as residents when he came, the first of whom was engaged in running a horse mill.

Jerry Jackson came with Uncle Billy from North Carolina, and settled in the same neighborhood, but immigrated to Texas several years ago.

About the year 1837, Capt William Upton, another old settler, opened a store at his place in connection with D. C. Garth, who lived at Huntsville, and had another store there. A blacksmith shop and a tobacco factory were soon after erected, and the place was first called Uptonsville. The enterprising people of the vicinity, however, were not long in obtaining a post-office, which was christened Mt. Airy, a name which has ever since borne. Capt. Upton, several years before the late war, sold out his farm and store and moved south of the Missouri river, where he still lives, so advanced in years.

The business at Mt. Airy has several times since changed hands and for the most part during the late Civil war was entirely suspended.. It was afterwards revived and increased, and its renewed prosperity has been well maintained. The mercantile establishment there, for several years immediately after the war, was owned and managed by James B. Thompson, Esq.

Judge James Head, one of Silver Creek's pioneers, a resident when the county was organized, and one of the judges of the first county court, founded Roanoke on the Howard county line in 1838. The place at first went by several names, as suited the fancy of the settlers, such as Head's Store, and Van Buren, the favorite and successful Democratic candidate for the presidency for the year. But when the post-office was established there, at the suggestion of Judge Head, it was named for the residence of a favorite statesman of his native State -- the celebrated John Randolph, of Roanoke. The Judge Head emigrated to Randolph county, from Orange county, Virginia, several years before the county was organized. He was accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Fannie Medley and her husband, Jacob Medley, who settled near him, and was the first collector of Randolph county. Judge Head lived on his farm adjoining Roanoke, and carried on business in the town, until 1849, when he moved to Lockhart, Texas, where he died in 1875, at the age of 82 years. He was followed to this State in 1831 by his father and mother, and all his remaining brothers and sisters, except Mrs Minor Rucker, who came with her husband and family in 1837. They all settled in Randolph county. His father, John Head, and his brother, John Head, Jr. settled in Silver Creek, two miles north of Roanoke, the former on the farm where he resided until his death in 1852, and which the latter now owns and occupies. All the others settled in and around Huntsville. There were Dr. Walker Head, who was twice elected to the Legislature from this county, and at the time of his death in 1845, he had just been elected a delegate to the State Convention, to revise the Constitution. Mrs. Emily Chiles, Mrs. Sarah D. Allen, Mrs Amanda Garth, and Mrs Harriet Rucker were other members of the family. Mrs. Marsha Price, the youngest daughter, was single when she came to the State, and was married to General Sterling Price, at her father's residence in Silver Creek township, in the year 1833. Capt. John Head, who, as we have stated, resides upon his father's homestead adjoining the farm on which he settled in 1831, has been engaged in agricultural pursuits for 52 years. He raised a family of nine children - four sons and five daughters, seven of whom are still living. Capt. Head has always taken a lively interest in politics on the Democratic side, ever since the days of Andrew Jackson, for whom he cast his first vote for President in 1824.

Mr. Robert Smith, who owns a fine farm, upon which he operated a tobacco factory, half a mile east of Mt. Airy, is an old settler. He came to Huntsville in 1837, where he remained six years, and then moved to Silver Creek. He is now 73 years of age, and has raised a family of six children, three girls and three boys. In 1842 he bought the Cooley farm, one mile east of Huntsville. The farm is under-laid by a four-foot vein

of coal.

Mr. John Osborn has resided in the county 50 years, having emigrated from Orange county, Va., in 1835. He is now 67 years old. He purchased dry goods and other family supplies at Old Chariton, in Chariton county. Allen Mayo, Daniel Mc Davitt and William Ferguson were Mr. Osborn's earliest neighbors, having preceded him the settlement.

Rev. William H. Mansfield (weighed 300 pounds) resided one mile north-east of Roanoke, on the farm of 200 acres which he settled in 1831, and was one of the oldest men in Silver Creek township at the time of his death. He was born in Orange county, Va., and resided in this county 50 years. He was married in 1814, in Virginia, to Miss Salina Eddings, who still survives, and they have had 13 children. Mr. Mansfield was a veteran of the War of 1812, and drew the usual pension. He took a just pride in having participated in the stirring events of that great national drama, in which his valor and patriotism contributed to win imperishable honor for American and vindicated our national motto, "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." He never departed from the political faith which inspired his early manhood, and in his old age he adhered with unwavering fidelity to the principles which in his youth he drew his sword to defend. He was a devoted Christian, and a member of the Missionary Baptist Church for nearly three-quarters of a century. He was ordained a minister of the gospel in 1832, and for more than 40 years valiantly carried the banner of the Cross, until increasing age and corpulency compelled him to abandon the active duties of the ministry, when, under a conscious conviction of having finished his appointed work, he retired to the shades of a more private life. Being seldom away from home he was very often called upon to perform the marriage ceremony, and was noted for his clemency toward runaway couples, whom he never declined to unite, unless prevented by a legal barrier. He was remarkable for his sociability and hospitality, and always gave his friends a dinner on Christmas Day, and on New Year's 1878, he celebrated his golden wedding.

Mrs. Salina Mansfield, his wife, is the oldest lady in the township. She was born in Orange county, VA., in 1798, and is now 86 years of age. She is much beloved on account of her social and Christian virtues, and, like her husband, has been a zealous Christian and member of the baptist Church during the period of their married life. She was a few years ago quite active, rode horseback, and attended to the domestic duties of the family.

In this township an extra crop of corn is 50 bushels per acre, and the average 40. An extra crop of wheat is 30 bushels per acre, and the average is 21. An extra crop of oats is 45 bushels per acre, and the average is 25. An extra crop of tobacco is 1,500 pounds per acre, and the average is 1,000. Meadows are abundant and the hay crop is generally good.

Chapter IX History of Randolph and Macon Counties - 1884

Reformatted: 1 April 2023

Randolph County portion of the [MOGenWeb](#)