

North Henderson Centennial

1871 - 1971

The first settler within the limits of what is now North Henderson Township was Govert Fleharty who located in Section 1 in the spring of 1833.

Others soon followed wintering just east of Mr. Fleharty in the winter of 1834 and 1835. In the spring of 1835, James Mann and his son Young C., Timothy Meeker, Benjamin F. and Harrison Brown made claims. The Notley Scott family came in 1837 and in the spring of 1839 Benjamin and Allen S. Brown made claims in the southeast part of the township. They were followed that fall by David Bruner and Andrew J. Holmes.

These early settlers always located in an area where water, wood, and prairie grass abounded. Old records state that this area was a "primitive paradise" where deer and wild game were plentiful along the streams and in the woods and prairies and that the prairies were "nature's own flower gardens". The early settlers came, bringing what possessions and livestock they could and erecting temporary shelter until a cabin could be built. Such a shelter in one instance was said to have been a rail pen covered with canvas.

The pioneers took refuge in a fort if one was nearby or in the tall grass or woods when they had warning of the approach of Indians. Often they took refuge at night and went back to their claims to work during the day.

Illness and epidemics also added to the hardships and it is recorded that there were ten deaths within one month in 1840 when scarlet fever broke out. The first burials in the township were in the Mann Cemetery in the northwest part of the township, the site given by James Mann.

The persons mentioned are only a few of the early settlers who played a part in the history of North Henderson Township. As we are interested in the 100 years the village has been in existence, this period has been reviewed as a background. Many residents of this area trace their ancestry to these first inhabitants of the township, the pioneers mentioned being the great-grandfathers of many of the present citizens.

Named Liberty

The township when first organized in 1854 was called "Liberty" but was changed to its present name on or before the town meeting in 1855, taking its name from the north fork of Henderson Creek which runs through the township. This is referred to as "Henderson River" in the old records.

The St. Louis Branch of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad which was built as the Rockford, Rock Island and St. Louis Railroad in 1871 determined the location of the village of North Henderson. The original railroad plan called for the line to enter the township at the southwest corner and to run diagonally across it to the northeast corner with a village to be located in the center of the township in the vicinity of the location where the township building for road equipment now stands.

This site was called Ethel and John Goff was the postmaster and storekeeper. When final plans for the railroad called for it to run through the south part of the township instead of the center, it was