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A Historical, Developmental, Progressional, and Regressional Survey of Humboldt, Illinois

Peter Francis Genta

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in History at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

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A HISTORICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL, PROGRESSIONAL, AND REGRESSIONAL SURVEY OF HUMBOLDT, ILLINOIS.

BY....
PETER FRANCIS GENTA
MAY 1955.
A HISTORICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL, PROGRESSIONAL, AND REGRESSIONAL SURVEY OF HUMBOLDT, ILLINOIS

A Thesis
Presented to
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Peter F. Genta
May 1955
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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I am going to retrogress to the year 1833 and present a historical, developmental, progressional, and regressive survey of the village of Humboldt, Illinois to the present day. I chose this topic because of my close association with the people of this community through my teaching experiences here during the past three years. I feel that there is something interesting about this village which to me, before I began teaching here, did not exist. My interest in it now is a personal one stemming from my associations with the community.

In the preparation of the material for this paper, I felt that my best method would be to arrange personal interviews with some of the older residents of the community. In these interviews I gathered first-hand information which I am using as my background material. I realized that these interviews were my only source of incidents peculiar to this topic. Various residents whom I interviewed would refer me to others whom they believed might be able to provide me with additional information on the early history of Humboldt. I acknowledge the cooperation of these residents of the Humboldt community in providing me with this basic information. These residents were quite willing to give me information, and they have expressed their desire to read a complete story of their community from the 1830's to the present day.
CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS OF HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY

The historical beginnings of the Humboldt community date back to the year 1833. In that year Jesse Fuller and his family came from Virginia and settled on the east side of the Kaskaskia River at the place which is now Humboldt, Illinois. In the early fall of 1836, John Poorman, grandfather of the John Poorman now residing in Humboldt, came from Pennsylvania and settled in the northwest corner of the Humboldt township in Section 31. The home that the elder Mr. Poorman built stood back in the field north of where Mr. Poorman's son now lives. During the same year Jackson Hoots came from North Carolina and settled in the section of land south of where Mr. Poorman settled on Section 6. In four short years, other families came to this prairie land and settled on nearby land east of Mr. Poorman. These families were: Frank Fleming, W. E. Hawkins, Henry Horn, and Ben Beaver.

These early settlers endured many hardships and privations in their determination to establish new homes in this fertile prairie. In their coming from the East some families came by oxen-drawn wagons loaded with their

1. Interviewed Mr. John Poorman Jr., September 3, 1954.
household belongings. Most of the families drove a few cows and sheep. Some of the sheep were used to start flocks for wool for the family clothing; others were used for their meat supply. Other families had horse-drawn wagons, while still others rode horseback and had pack horses to carry their belongings. The roads they followed on their westward journey were mere "paths" through this virgin prairie.

As early as 1837-38 Jesse Fuller had a horse-driven grist mill near the Kaskaskia River, some three miles from where the Poormans settled. This mill served the first settlers and kept them supplied with meal.

The settlers on the east side of the river were often compelled to swim the river in order to get their grinding done. They would take their grist by oxen team to the bank of the river, swim the oxen across, haul the grist by canoe across the river, and then the oxen would haul the grist on to the mill to be ground. This mill was located west of the present Cooks Mill. When they returned with their meal they repeated the unloading, loading, and reloading after crossing the river in the opposite direction.

There was a water-driven mill located near Cooks Mill. It would operate only during those times of the year when the water level was high enough to provide the water power for

turning the wheel. It is said that this mill stood idle most of the time.

The early settlers believed that the best mill was True's mill some ten to twelve miles to the north. The meal ground here was of a higher quality so the settlers would sometimes make this longer journey. They usually made this trip at night because of the annoyance of flies that pestered both the men and the oxen. Several settlers would go together and hitch three or four yoke of oxen to a wagon and begin their journey to the mill.

Because of poor roads and transportation grist mills developed in places near the settlements. This shows that the grist mill was an essential factor to the settler. He needed to have a mill nearby where he could have his grain ground into meal.

With the lack of stores nearby to supply them with their needs, the early settlers had to make provision for their needs. Such was the case of soap, both laundry and toilet. Every family made its own soap; so every family had an ash house and an ash hopper. The family saved its wood ashes the year around so that when soap-making time came they would have enough ashes to make the soap. The ash hopper was

3. Interviewed Mr. Carter Cuppy, September 6, 1954.
a very simple wooden hopper shaped somewhat like an arrow tip. The ashes were put in this hopper and water was poured over them daily. From this filtered mixture came the lye that was used to make soap. Whenever enough lye was collected it was poured upon scraps of fat, bones, and tallow that had been saved during the year. This mixture was boiled in an outdoor kettle for hours until it was reasonably thick. Then it was poured into flat wooden boxes to harden. This was the cleaning substance of the early settler for both laundry and toilet use. To some of the soap mixture an artificial perfume was added to make the toilet soap more pleasing.

For the early settler keeping a family record in the family Bible was a tradition. This record was kept in ink to preserve it for future generations. The pens were made from selected goose quills. For the ink the settlers used the bark of "Jack" oaks or maple trees. This bark was boiled with water and then copperas, a green crystalline astringent sulfate of iron, was added to give it color and make it permanent. This mixture made a good black ink. Upon the paper where this ink had been used very fine sand was sprinkled to aid in its drying.

5. Ibid.
These early settlers had to endure many dangers among which were wolves and various kinds of snakes. The settlers were constantly on guard for wolves which still roamed the prairie. Much stock was attacked and killed by wolves during these early times.

The first death in the Humboldt community was caused by a rattlesnake bite. In 1841 a small daughter of John Poorman was bitten and in less than eight hours she died after suffering intense pain. On another occasion a group out gathering wild strawberries saw twenty some snakes in a single day. As late as 1850 one settler, Mr. W. R. Hawkins, saw and killed three full grown rattlesnakes while he was plowing one round of sod.

Although in many respects these early settlers were self-sustaining, they, nevertheless, relied on provisions received in exchange for their excess farm products. In the year 1841 John Poorman and several other settlers loaded their wagons with products and left for Lafayette, Indiana which was eighty miles away. They took bacon, barrels of lard, barrels of butter, and soap which they sold in order to buy some family necessities. For the bacon they received two dollars and fifty cents ($2.50) per hundred pounds; lard, sixty cents ($.60) per hundred

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pounds; and the butter, five cents ($ .05) a pound. In exchange for these farm products they bought sugar, salt, cotton cloth, a few items of clothing, notions, leather, and other family supplies. Because of the great distance to Lafayette this trip was made only once a year. In anticipation for the journey the entire family efficiently planned what their needs would be for the coming year so that they might make their purchases wisely.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY FROM 1850-1900

The years 1850-1900 were a period of many changes, developments, and growth to the Humboldt community.

Probably the most influencing aspect of this era was the building of the Illinois Central Railroad through this area in 1854. Shortly after the rails were laid, the railroad company built a depot and freight office. It was erected on the west side of the tracks just opposite the present one. The first agent was Dr. Wesley Wampler, grandfather of Reece Wampler who now lives in Humboldt. The railroad owned one half of all the land on either side of the tracks. The railroad well, water tower, and pump station were located just south of the south foot crossing. The water tower was operated by horse power. Various settlers who lived near the tracks furnished the wood for the railroad engines.

Soon after the railroad was built and established there arose a need for a hotel. It was located near the depot and was owned and operated by "Uncle Billie Hilla-goss". In the late fifties many settlers who moved to

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8. Interviewed Mr. Reece Wampler, September 10, 1954.
this area would stay at the hotel until they could build a house. The hotel, however, burned in 1865.

In 1859 A. A. Sutherland donated ten acres of ground to the railroad for a town-site. The first name given to it was Milton. It was named for James Milton True, who had a general merchandise store and who was known throughout the county as Milton True.

A postoffice called Milton Station was established in 1858 with A. A. Sutherland as Postmaster. The first mail route was twenty-five miles long. Ira McGee was the first mail carrier. He delivered the mail by horse and buggy. In 1861 Silas Wood became Postmaster; and he, in turn, was succeeded by G. W. Gray. Later other changes were made with changes in administration. In 1875 the name of the postoffice changed to Humbolt. About 1902, by government authority, the spelling was changed to Humboldt. This spelling applied to both the township and the village. According to Mr. James Hamilton, this change in spelling was made because there was another village in the state of Illinois with the spelling "Humbolt". The postoffice was located in the store of A. A. Sutherland until 1888. In this year it was separated

from the store. The new postoffice had a lobby which was well stocked with stationery and notions.

The increase of settlers in this area brought about a need for stores. In 1859 the first general store was built and conducted by Dr. Wesley Wampler, the railroad ticket and freight agent. In 1860 John Payne came from Paris, Illinois, to settle here and he opened a second store. The first drugstore was built in 1868 by Dr. C. M. Odell, and later another one was opened by Hawkins and Steward. Both of them were located on the east side of the railroad tracks on what was known as "Main Street".

By the year 1875 there were two taverns in the village. One of them was located in the Odell Drug Store. In 1884 "Aunt Mary" Lyrule operated a saloon and pool room. It was located where Max Munson now lives.

The early settlers found that their most valuable asset in this new settlement was the fertile soil. "Humboldt Township is one of the prettiest, the wealthiest, and the most productive townships of the county. .....

Through the south half of the township is a portion of a fifteen-mile water-shed, the crest of which is thought to be the highest point in the county."

Because of the fertile soil, agriculture became an important factor toward the monetary growth of this area. Although farms were not large, they were productive. Corn and broomcorn were the principal crops. The first grain elevator was built in 1859. It was owned and operated by James Milton True. It was located on the west side of the tracks. For the first ten years of its operation corn was the principal load the railroad hauled from this area, but, within a decade, broomcorn became the predominant load and continued to be until the turn of the century.

With an increase in the agricultural enterprise a nephew of James Milton True began the first blacksmith shop. It was located at the same place as the present blacksmith shop. The main type of work done then was harness making and repairing. Today at the same location is the same business house but it does a different type of work. The one today is operated by Mr. Don Thorpe who does some blacksmithing but does more welding and tractor repairing.

1865 saw the beginning of a new enterprise in this community. That was the raising of broomcorn. Humboldt became the center of broomcorn raising in the world.

13. Interviewed Mr. Don Thorpe, September 18, 1954.
This crop demanded much care and help at harvesting time. After the soil was prepared for the crop, the grain was planted by a two-row planter pulled by a team of horses. The plants were cultivated in the same manner as Indian corn during the growing months. It was the harvesting of the crop that brought about the want for additional help.

It was not an uncommon sight, during cutting time, on Sunday morning to see a farmer coming into town with a hayrack attached to his wagon. He had come to solicit all of the available help to bring in his broomcorn crop. Mr. Cash Baird said that in the year 1866 it took seven weeks to take care of sixty acres of broom corn. All the crop was cut by hand, and seeded with hand seeders. Then it was laid on slats in sheds to dry. After it had been dried for about six weeks it was bundled into bales and shipped by rail to all parts of the country. As the industry grew two broomcorn warehouses were built for storing the broomcorn. Buyers from various parts of the country came to Humboldt to buy this crop. From the years 1870-1890 about ten thousand acres were grown annually. After those years the annual acreage began to decrease.

As the farming business increased the needs of the
farmer grew likewise. He needed a store where he could buy tools, repair parts, and seeds. So in the year 1869 the first hardware and seed store was opened and operated by Bill Reeves, one of Mr. Cash Baird's nephews.

Another industry that developed as farming grew was tile making. In the 1870's an Englishman named Mr. Sutton opened and operated a tile factory. He made building bricks and drainage tiles. Many of the farmers began tiling their farms because it increased yields. There were a few brick homes built after this industry began. The first one, however, was built by Mr. Sutton himself.

Until the settlers had a church, they would meet at a neighbor's house and have church services. Sometimes they were unable to obtain the services of a minister; when this happened someone was selected to read from the Bible. The service didn't close in an hour but lasted from two to three hours. Occasionally, the services lasted most of the day. The settlers would meet at a different home each Sunday and a pot-luck dinner was served. After eating and a brief recess services were resumed until mid-afternoon. One of the customary activities of the church service was lining a hymn. As there were no hymn books

to pass out to the settlers the leader assumed the wording for them. From his Missouri Harmony Song Book which contained the music written in buckwheat notes he read two lines. The congregation then sang the same two lines. Then the next two lines would be read and sung. This procedure was followed until the entire hymn was sung. The verses of the song were not distinguished; instead, the entire song was paraphrased as a whole regardless of length.

The first church building in this community was erected in 1859. It was the Methodist Episcopal Church located one mile west of Humboldt in Section 6. In the year 1868 the church building was moved into Humboldt. In 1870 the building was torn down and the wood and other materials were shipped to Larned, Kansas. They were used in the building boom of that city. However, in the same year another church was erected on the same site. This church is still in use today. To it have been added a Sunday School room and a vestibule. Some of the early trustees of the Methodist Church were John Poorman, John Lowden, and Judge Walker. The first pastor was Reverend William Mitchell. He was succeeded by Reverend John Hookstep.

The Disciples' Church known as the "Church of Christ", was built about 1870 at a cost of one thousand dollars.

W. B. Hawkins one of the village druggist, was an early elder of this church. The church was reorganized in 1897. This particular church always maintained an active Sunday School. Much of its success was attributed to E. M. Mulliken, superintendent, trustee, and elder of the church. S. E. Moore, James Daugherty, and J. S. Grant were other church officers.

A Catholic Church, known as the Church of the Holy Angels, was built in 1870 under the direction of Reverend Father John Mangin. It was located in the southwest edge of the village. Because it was impossible to maintain a resident priest in such a small village, the church was abandoned in 1898 during the pastorate of Reverend Father Michael Martin. The building was torn down in 1902 and the lumber was used in the building of a two-story house by Thomas Cowten.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church was established in 1882. This church had a good sized congregation as many of the people living in the community were German Lutherans.

Another church that was built and later abandoned was the Presbyterian Church. It was built in 1882 and was located in the west part of town. The congregation
disbanded in 1890. The building was then used as a cow shed, and later on it became a broomcorn warehouse.

The last church established in the village of Humboldt was the Christian Church. It was built in 1895 at a cost of one thousand dollars. It was located where the present church stands. The church was later reorganized.

The village of Humboldt began growing shortly after the development of the railroad and almost immediately the people felt that educational opportunities for their children were necessary. This brought about the building of schools in the township at various locations. "The first school in Humboldt was the result of a divided district. In 1861 a small school house was built in Section 4 on the John McNutt land, a short distance east of Humboldt. The first directors of this school were John McNutt and Richard Brown, and among the early teachers were Nana Humiston, John H. Moore and M. G. Stevenson. In 1870 the district was divided, the little school was abandoned and in the same year the Humboldt school, a two-story building, was erected. Among the early teachers were: R. T. Barr, John H. Moore and M. G. Stevenson. In 1893 it was burned and another was erected." This particular school served the Humboldt community until the present

school was erected in 1934 in the village of Humboldt.

Prior to the building of the first school in Humboldt proper in 1870 many small schools were built in the country surrounding the village. The earliest school recorded in the area was the one in "Blue Grass Grove" in 1859. This was a grove of timber lying one mile southeast of Humboldt. It got its name from the blue grass that grew abundantly at this particular spot. "The building was 16 x 24 feet, and often as many as sixty-five children attended the school. It was moved about 1868 two miles east of the W. K. Watson farm in Section 2, and a year later one-half mile south to the Richard Brown farm in the same section. It served the community for ten years until 1879 when a new building was erected in Section 11, on the Timch land, for which the school was named."

In the early sixties a school was built in the southeast corner of Section 28. It was long and narrow. Because of its weak construction, its roof sagged in the center so it became known as the "Sway-back". Among "Sway-back's" earliest teachers were Mrs. Clint Hutchinson, M. G. Stevenson, W. D. Hanna, and C. G. Chrisman. In 1875 this school was torn down and a new school house was built.

Another school of the early sixties was the Floyd School in District # 69. It was erected on the south line of Section 30 and was a very small school. One of its early teachers was Mr. Walters who was also a teacher of instrumental and vocal music. An early board was composed of Hugh McKane and Dudley Leuthan. In 1869 the school was moved across the line to the present site in Section 31. "In 1898 a large and commodious building took its place. It has a belfry and bell, is nicely papered and the walls are ornamented with pictures."

Located in the northwest part of Section 20 on the Douglas County line near the border of North Okaw was the Hartford School. It was built in the early sixties also, and was in District # 121.

In 1863 the Antioch School was built in the northeast corner of Section 35. An early board consisted of John Beavers, Samuel W. Orcutt, and James Beggs. Among Antioch's early teachers were A. G. Chapman, Emma A. Wright, and Mary G. Orcutt. The school building was a substantial frame building; and, with the exception of an eight-foot addition built in 1904, the building remained unaltered and continued to serve as an educational center for District # 67.

In 1865 a school called the Black School was built in the northern part of Section 8 on the Black farm. The

first school board was composed of Alfred Grooms, J. W. Seaman, and George Moore. Among the Black School's first teachers were M. G. Stevenson, R. P. Barr, and E. P. Walters. Three years after this school was opened the people decided to move it three-quarters of a mile south to the John Moore farm in the southern part of Section 8. It became school district # 72.

In 1865 another school house was built in what is now District # 122. It was near the line between Sections 23 and 24, and so the school district included parts of both sections. "Naturally the directors were divided in their choice of location, and when a majority belonged to the opposite section the school house would be pulled across the road, until it had been moved four times. Thus it got its name of 'Pulltight'."

The Poorman School, District # 71, was originally built in 1868, three-quarters of a mile south of where it now stands. An early board was made up of W. A. Poorman and S. H. Gasaway. Among its early teachers were M. G. Stevenson and R. P. Barr. In 1876 it was moved to the southwest part of Section 5, where it is now located.

The Doran or Bean School, District # 76, was erected in Section 29 in 1869. The first board members were C. J. Baird, S. C. Doran, and J. W. Farrar. Some of its early teachers were Maggie Donelson, Erastus Kinzel, and John Moore. In 1882 this school was abandoned and the present school was built at the west boundary of Section 9.

The Wesley School was also erected in 1869. It was built in the southwest corner of Section 13, where it served School District # 74. Jacob Ernst, Allen White, and J. Gideon were the first board members. William Webster, R. P. Barr, and Thornton Ashbroek were some of its first teachers.

In the early seventies the Brewster, or "Pleasant View", School was built on some of J. Brewster land on the east boundary of Section 28. J. Brewster, C. J. Bishop, and H. Mohlenhoff were early board members Charles Kincaid, S. M. Leitch, and G. R. Hamman were teachers. In the year 1890 a larger and better school replaced the old one and Miss Katrine Morgan of Mattoon, Illinois, was the new teacher in the new building. The name "Pleasant View" was suggested by the fact that the school was located on the crest of the water-shed.
The last school built in the 1850-1900 era was the Union # 8. It was established in 1872, and later it became known as the Zion School in District # 75. It was located in the southwest corner of Section 18 and was built by M. S. Ashworth and William Thornton. Frank Terry, John H. Moore, and M. G. Stevenson were early teachers at Zion School. Later another building was erected in 1899 to replace the original one at a cost of seven hundred dollars. Miss Nellie Camery was the first teacher in this new building.
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Location of the First Schools in Humboldt Township
NAMES OF THE FIRST SCHOOLS AND YEAR ESTABLISHED

A. "Blue Grass Grove" School--1859
B. "Sway-back" School--Early 1860's
C. Floyd School--Early 1860's
D. Hartford School--Early 1860's
E. First "Humboldt" School--1861
F. Antioch School--1863
G. Black School--1865
H. "Pulltight" School--1865
I. Poorman School--1868
J. Doran or Bean School--1869
K. Wesley School--1869
L. Humboldt School--1870
M. Brewster or "Pleasant View" School--Early 1870's
N. Union #8--1872
O. Tinch School--1879

( The letter corresponds to the school's location on the preceding map.)
CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUBSEQUENT REGRESSION OF THE HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY FROM 1900-1955

In 1900 the town hall was built. It was located on the west side of the Illinois Central Railroad track on Main Street. The erection of this building was a source of civic pride for now the community had a specific voting place and a location for town meetings.

Shortly after the building of the town hall it was converted for school purposes. The ninth grade of work was offered to the community locally. The following year the tenth grade was provided; in the succeeding year the eleventh year of work was added. Because of the lack of facilities the last year of high school was not offered in the village at this time. However, those parents who were able sent their children to the Mattoon or Arcola High School to finish their high school education. So the town hall served both civic and educational purposes. The students anticipated election days. These days were 20 school holidays.

The Illinois Bell Telephone Company established a telephone exchange in the village of Humboldt in 1902.

20. Interviewed Mr. Carl Niemeyer, October 4, 1954.
The exchange was located on Main Street in a building owned by J. M. Lozier. The company had two telephone operators until the early 1930's. At that time the company decided that it would be more economical to install an automatic exchange rather than maintain two operators in the village. This exchange became a branch of the Mattoon system.

In 1902 the village took another step toward improvement when they voted to lay the first sidewalks. They were quite an improvement over the muddy "paths" the people were accustomed to using. As told to me by Mrs. Toland, it was not an uncommon sight during a rainy time to see someone "up to his knees in mud".

The elevator fire in 1901 caused much excitement in Humboldt. This elevator built in 1859 was owned and operated by James Milton True. As a result of this loss Mr. True retired from the elevator business. The next year the Cuppy brothers built an elevator to replace the original one. This elevator is still operating under the Cuppy ownership.

In 1902 the I. O. O. F. Lodge donated fifteen acres of ground for cemetery purposes. This additional area adjoined the original cemetery which was located one mile west of Humboldt. The lodge had opened this one in 1885 on land donated by

Mr. John Moore. He also donated one thousand dollars worth of trees for the cemetery. The first person buried here was a daughter of Mr. Moore. Mr. S. B. Moore, a life-time resident of the community, told me that he remembers her burial very clearly. It was during the winter. The people drove their teams over the fences because the snow was so deep.

John Poorman and Benjamin Franklin opened the first bank in Humboldt in 1904. It was known as the First National Bank of Humboldt and operated until 1942. The most influential cause of opening this bank was the broomcorn boom. Because broomcorn laborers were paid in cash daily, the farmers needed a local place to obtain the cash. These farmers knew that they might easily be robbed by these migratory laborers; so they didn't want to keep too much cash on hand. The bank also did much business in the form of farm loans to the surrounding community. The residents give two reasons for the closing of the bank in 1942. At that time Mr. Poorman was at a retiring age and there seemed to be no one available to assume his position. The other reason was the war scare. Many people were not willing to continue their banking in a small town bank so they withdrew their accounts and began doing their banking in Mattoon or Arcola. Consequently the owners decided to declare the bank "out of business".

The Humboldt community has provided several notables. Among those were: Mr. George Wallace, State Senator; Mr. John Hamilton and Mr. Edward F. Poorman, State Representatives. There have been several Coles County sheriffs from this township. They were: George Moore, Newton Baird, and S. B. Moore.

The first furniture store in Humboldt was begun by Mr. James B. Mulligan in 1915. His store was located on the east side of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. Besides the furniture store he later added an undertaking business which he maintained in the rear of the same building. He operated until the late twenties when he realized he couldn't compete with like businesses in the nearby towns.

A short boom for the village was the building of Route 45 through the town. The construction of this highway in 1923 provided work for many of the townspeople. At the same time the town streets and some of the country roads were improved by using rock and oil on them. Prior to that they were quite muddy during the rainy weather. This highway increased the sales for the gasoline station maintained by Mr. Ed Duncan. The Standard Oil Company built a station on the east side of Main Street which was the highway. The following year this company built a bulk plant. It is still operating at the same location. Its present manager is Mr. Hershel Dawson who services the rural area with gasoline.

and fuel oil.

There have been several doctors who served the Humboldt community. Dr. William Wesley Wampler was the first doctor and dentist. He came from Sheboygan, Wisconsin. An early physician was Dr. Edward Brewer. It is said that he wore long curls down to his shoulders. Some of the other doctors who practiced here were: Dr. S. C. James, Dr. B. M. Edwards, Dr. W. R. Asbell, and Dr. McDougal. The doctors came and went. Each would come and practice medicine for a short period of time. In doing this he would gain some prestige for himself and then he would leave for a larger town. For example, Dr. W. R. Asbell practiced here for about two years in the early 1900's and then went to Kansas City, Missouri. The only permanent doctor was Dr. McDougal who served the community from the early 1900's until his death in 1937. He so endeared himself to the community that he became known as "Uncle Doc McDougal". His office was located next door to the bank building. Dr. John Donavan also practiced in Humboldt from 1929 until the end of World War II. It is said that he promised to keep practicing here until another doctor were available to replace him. It so happened that a discharged Army doctor decided to maintain an office here two days per week. This doctor was Dr. J. Virgil Fishel of Arcola. He had this office for
two years; now he practices full time in Arcola. Dr. Fishel was the last doctor to practice in Humboldt. Many of the Humboldt people still seek his services.

Several young men from this area have become doctors. Among these are: Dr. Lowell Morgan, Dr. Robert Morgan, Dr. James Harvey, Dr. Carl Moore, and Dr. W. G. Wallace. Only one of these practices locally. He is Dr. W. G. Wallace of Mattoon, Illinois.

After World War I there seemed to be a prosperous era ahead. Farmers anticipated high prices for their grains. In fact, the farmers said the price of corn would never go below one dollar per bushel. Consequently, they began clearing more farm land and bought more farm machinery to farm additional acres. Some even bought more land by mortgaging their present farms. Then came the depression with the drop in farm prices. Corn dropped to twelve cents per bushel; oats, ten cents per bushel; and broomcorn, fifty to sixty dollars per ton. Today these same crops sell at prices like: corn, one dollar sixty cents; oats, one dollar ten cents; and broomcorn, three hundred seventy-five to four hundred dollars per ton. Many of these farmers lost their farms because they were unable to pay their mortgages. The community, likewise, was at a financial stand-still because it depended greatly upon the farmers' trade.

25. Interviewed Mr. Fred Davis, September 26, 1954.
The first local lumber company was started in the early 1900's. After the building boom of the early 1900's, the company moved from the village to Arcola because its volume of business had decreased so much that it was no longer profitable to operate in Humboldt. It now operates in Arcola and is known as the Okaw Lumber Company. It has changed owners several times since moving to Arcola. The present proprietor is Mr. Joseph Bilbrey.

The Humboldt community has a voluntary fire department. It was begun in the early 1900's. At that time the village bought a hand pump which was used until the early 1920's. They bought a fire truck that Arcola had discarded. It was used until 1942 when they got another one from Arcola. The hand pump, although not used after the 1920's, is now in Mattoon. In 1950 the village traded it in on a 1946 Ford truck. This is the fire truck the village now uses.

Quite different from the other businesses is the Hamilton Hardware Store. This store was established in 1902 by Mr. James Hamilton and is still operated by the same proprietor. He is now seventy-seven years old; and, as he puts it, "he wouldn't think of retiring now". In his store he furnishes the local farmers with rope, tools, stove pipe, screws, nuts and bolts, buckets, pails, screen wire, and

fencing wire. His store at present is quite dilapidated and out-moded, but he continues to operate only for personal contentment. Unlike the average hardware store of today, he does not carry any electrical appliances. When asked where he purchases the merchandise that he stocks, he said that most of it comes from a hardware wholesale house in Mattoon.

Since World War II there has been a small building boom in Humboldt. Prior to this boom there was the beginnings of the Grafton Lumber Company in 1946. In the same year the American Legion built a home in Humboldt. It is used for Legion meetings, Auxiliary meetings, a weekly dance, youth center meetings, and other civic occasions.

The year 1949 brought about community changes all over the state with the consolidation of school districts. The Humboldt community was no exception. The Humboldt schools were consolidated with the Mattoon schools. At first, the townspeople were opposed because they wished to maintain their own school. However, certain people of the community were influential in bringing about this consolidation. Several community meetings were held to discuss the problem. It was at these meetings that the leaders were able to influence the community into consolidating with the Mattoon schools. They pointed out the educational advantages of increased facilities, of enlarged classes, and of wider subject selection in the high school. This consolidation did some damage to
the community. Because the high school students now attended the high school in Mattoon, the restaurant, grocery stores, and barber shop lost business. Before consolidation there was a grade school and a four-year high school in Humboldt. They were both located in the same building which had been erected in 1934. Now the village has a grade school and a one-year high school in this same building. Buses transport the country children into Humboldt and the high school students to Mattoon. The present school enrolment is one hundred ninety-three with twelve teachers.

The last major factor affecting the community has been the rerouting of Route 45. In 1954 the highway which had passed through the village was moved one quarter of a mile west of the village. This affected the business places. Gasoline stations lost sales. Since then the Standard Oil station closed although the bulk plant still serves the community. The grocery stores report a loss in volume. The restaurant isn’t serving as many meals as before, so the restaurant proprietor had to cut down on her help. She now operates the place alone. Another eating place and tavern has also lost much business. The owner is anticipating selling the business whenever he is able to sell it at his quoted price.

27. Interviewed Mr. C. E. Well, September 7, 1954.
Many people think that after a town the size of Humboldt has lost some of its services the population decreases. However, this is not true of Humboldt. Even though Humboldt no longer has its bank, furniture store, feed store, funeral home, and high school, its population has not decreased. In fact, it has increased steadily. Fourteen new homes have been built in the last ten years. Some retired farmers have moved into Humboldt. Several families have moved in but work elsewhere. They work in surrounding towns like Mattoon, Arcola, Charleston, and Tuscola. The National Petro-Chemical Corporation at Tuscola has had an effect on this increase in population. In the past three years since this corporation was established, the population of Humboldt has been increased by twelve. The present population of Humboldt is three hundred.

Because of the accessibility with the surrounding towns of Mattoon, Arcola, Charleston, and Tuscola, Humboldt is becoming a residential suburb of these towns. This is especially true of Mattoon because the high school students from Humboldt feel more closely associated with Mattoon than with the other towns. Probably in the future there will be still more integration of Humboldt with the surrounding towns.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

