

To the Ironton Library Association:

Ladies & Gentlemen.

Having been requested to write the History of Ironton by the members of this association, and in compliance with this request, you will allow me to go back to the early settlement of this valley. The original name of this valley, of which the city of Ironton is now the center, was 'Lost Cove,' as called by the Delaware Indians (who made this their hunting ground) on account of its being so entirely surrounded by hills and mountains.

In-or-about the month of May 1807, a white man by the name of Ephram Stout, made the first clearing in this valley, on the south bank of the creek which still bears his name, near the spring now called the Mill Spring, near the residence of T.P. Russell. For many years this valley was but thinly peopled with here and there a small clearing, and although many parties of hunters visited the many buffalo and deer licks which here abound, in quest of game, little or nothing was known of the vast Mineral resources of this country until about the year 1836, when some gentlemen by the names of Van Doren and Pease heard of this country, and after having visited it and found it a country-like unto one spoken of in the Scriptures, "a goodly land, a land of wheat and barley ; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness. Thou shalt not lack anything in it ; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills though mayest dig brass," they formed a company for the development of the mountains of Iron Ore one of these visits, a lady in company, after admiring the beautiful scenery called the valley "Arcadia" from its fancied resemblance to

Arcadia in Greece. This company which J.L. Van Doren was the president, spread the fame of this land, far and wide, by means of maps and pamphlets ; and much mental work was done, much time spent in lecturing through the eastern states, on the unknown wealth of the West.

In the year 1837 this company was offered 500,000 dollars for one half of the property by a capitalist in Boston, the offer was refused, then the money crisis set in, and not another opportunity for disposing of it was again offered for a number of years.

As the fruits of the lectures of this company in the eastern states, many families were persuaded to leave their comfortable homes for a wider field in the far West. On hearing of the failure of the company, many of these turned aside to the broad prairies of Illinois, others remained here and organized the first Congregational church in Missouri ~~in the year~~

Finally in the year 1847, another Iron Company was formed in St. Louis and preparations were being made for working the Iron ore. About this time the Rev. J.C. Berryman with a corps of teachers and laborers, moved to Arcadia and founded a Seminary. In 1848 the Iron Company erected furnaces, stores, &c. The Seminary was completed and a new impetus was given to immigration. Many new farms were made, houses of a better class were built, stores put up at different points. In the year 1853 the first dwelling house was built in what is now the city of Ironton, by P.J. Brown now owned by Mr. House. Soon after, another house where now stands the Ironton Hotel, also two stores,

one by H.N. Tong & Aubuchon ; the other by Col. C. Russell & Dr. Williams, now occupied by L. Thomason.

The county now having a sufficient population, a new county was formed out of the portions of Madison, Wayne, Renolds [sic], Washington and St. Francis [sic] counties. The following county officers were elected J.V. Logan, Moses Edmonds, John W. Miller, county justices, John Cole, Sheriff, J.T.F. Edwards, clerk, Alex Rayburn county commissioner. In anticipation of the new county, H.N. Tong and David Carson had purchased all of the tracts of land lying on the East and South side of Shepard [sic] Mountain of Col. C. Russell, A. B. Guild & wife, and Wm. Russell, containing 112 acres. Tong and Carson had this tract of land laid out into town lots, and the trees and brush cleared off, the streets graded. In the mean time the County Court ordered an election for a county seat. As the villages of Arcadia, Ironton, Pilot Knob and Middlebrook were all candidates for the county seat, for all of these places had been offered. Tong & Carson came forward with the offer of each alternate lot, the proceeds of the sale was to go towards the building of a Court House. This office was accepted by the people, and Ironton became the county seat. The proceeds of the sale of these lots donated, amounted to the sum of \$10,602.68.

Ironton now the county seat of Iron county, became the center of business. Inhabitants began to pour in, houses and stores sprung up as if by magic. The Ironton House built by H.N. Tong. The post office removed from Arcadia, D. Humphrey, P.M. [Postmaster].

In the year 1858 the Ironton Furnace newspaper [was] edited and published by James Lindsay, which soon had a large patronage. This year many buildings were put up among which were Ben Bower's Candy Shop, Vollens restaurant, a furniture store by A.B. Guild, where now Delano & Sons keep a large assortment of all that goes to make up the outward man. The I.O.O.F. built their hall, the lower story being used by the Presbyterians for a church. Rev. John Donaldson, pastor, now occupied by the "Enterprise," the successor of the "Ironton Furnace," a drug store was also erected by Dr. Farrar, now owned by C.O. Fairchild. Also a store by A. N. Hunt, and on the 4th of July the corner stone of the Court House was laid, with all due ceremony, speeches, music, toasts &c and in the northeast corner stone was buried a copy of the Declaration of Independence, a copy of the Ironton Furnace, with some other papers and a few silver coins of the United States.

In the year 1859 many more buildings were erected; the brick store of Tong & Carson, and filled with a large stock of goods of all kinds. Those were days of cheap goods, a calico dress for 90 cts and all other things in proportion ; only think! Coffee 12 1/2 cts per lb, Sugar 6 1/4 cts, Flour \$5.00 per Bbl, with no scarcity.

The store now owned by Thomas Macklind was built this year, also the Baptist church, now owned by the Methodist Episcopal Church - North; the Presbyterians also commenced building a church edifice, but owing to the unsettled condition of the country was not finished until 1867, is now well filled with hearers of the Word. Rev. D.A. Wilson, pastor.

In ~~May~~ Feb 1859 the Legislature passed an act incorporating the town of Ironton. A.N. Hunt elected the first Mayor of the city of Ironton, Fin Mitchel, city marshal. The Court House was also finished and all kinds of business attended to until the year 1860 which being the year in which Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States ; This was the beginning of some of the most important events of the American History. This year began to see the political horizon obscured with clouds and dark forebodings, a looking for of evil to come.

All business flagged, the wheels of trade clogged, all were a dismal face, until the year 1861, when actual war came down upon the land, and is it necessary for me to call to your mind all the scenes of the next four years? Now our streets were filled with armies and all the munitions of war, how many houses were desolated, how devastation and ruin followed in its train? Shall I call to mind the 26th and 27th of Sept. 1864 made memorable by the bombardment of Fort Davidson by Gen. Price's army of 20,000 men, and its evacuation and destruction by a small detachment of U.S. troops, who gallantly held it for two days.

But all this is past and let us try to forget and look forward to better days. 1865 came and with it Peace - Sweet Peace, now business resumed its accustomed activity. Once more the sound of the hammers and saws were heard, new houses and stores were erected ; inhabitants began to pour in, our churches were once more filled with worshipers, our school houses with scholars ; and now all is peace and prosperity, with a goodly number

of inhabitants who are ever ready to give aid and comfort to the needy, to visit the sick, build churches, sustain Sabbath schools, as well as day schools, to make surprise parties for the good ministers or a fine Wedding for some friend ; and now in the year 1868 we have a town containing one court house, 2 churches, 4 schools, 2 newspapers, a land office, 6 large wholesale and retail stores, a drug store, reading room, Flouring Mill & machine shop, 2 tin shops, 3 wagon & smith shops, a post office which is well sustained as this is a reading community. The number of different kinds of newspapers and magazines taken through this office is 126, 2 large hotels, a livery stable with its omnibus, hacks, buggies, horses &c. We have also a Masonic order. Independent Order of Odd Fellows, with its large hall nicely furnished ; Good Templars, and a Lyceum well sustained by the professional part of the community ; and a corporation containing 229 acres ; a most efficient mayor and board of alderman, who are a terror to evil doers and a praise to those who do well. And last, but not least, the Ironton Library Association.

Theodore Russell 1868

(T.P. Russell)

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