CHAPTER XXII.

FREMONT TOWNSHIP.

By Martin C. Decker.

The history of a community is to a large extent embodied in the lives of its great men. There are few history-making changes that are due wholly to natural causes, most of them being if not entirely at least greatly influenced by human agency.

In this particular the Town of Fremont is no exception. Its growth has been the slow and steady growth of a prosperous rural community. The changes that have taken place within its limits are the changes brought about by the sturdy pioneers who have inhabited its borders during the last seventy-five years and who have transformed its rolling prairies and undulating forests into such a beautiful farming district that as one sees today its beautiful homes surrounded by wide fields of waving corn and golden grain one involuntarily exclaims, "This is certainly a land that God made."

The settlement of what is now known as the Town of Fremont was commenced in 1835. Among the earliest settlers were Daniel Marsh, William Fenwick, Dr. Bryan, John G. Ragan, Hiram and Elisha Clarke, Oliver Stephen, Alfred Payne, Nelson and Thomas Darling, Joseph and Samuel L. Wood, Thomas H. Payne, Oliver Booth, Charles Fletcher, P. P. Houghton and Michael Murray.

Daniel Marsh came in the year of 1835 and made a claim of land early in 1836. Mr. Marsh's place was the home now owned by Peter Meyer and this part of the town was for a long time known as Marsh's Settlement.

John G. Ragan, Michael Murray, Oliver Booth, Charles Fletcher and P. P. Houghton all came to the Town of Fremont in 1836, having emigrated from the State of Vermont, which State furnished many of the early settlers who located in the eastern and southern part of the town. Oliver, Stephen and Alfred Payne settled about a mile or mile and one-half west of what is now the village of Rockefeller.

John G. Ragan's name is so closely identified with the early history of the town that he has been styled the "Patriarch of Fremont." He was for many years one of its most influential citizens and was elected County Commissioner in 1844 and was afterwards Sheriff of the County.

Thomas H. Payne was also from an early date a prominent citizen of the county. He was one of the County Commissioners at the time of the removal

of the county seat from Libertyville to Little Fort, now Waukegan. It was his vote which decided the question in favor of Little Fort, it being the idea at that time to contribute everything possible towards the building up of the latter place so as to make it a marketing center and place of shipment on the lake, a railroad through the county being at that time considered a remote possibility.

The earliest permanent homes were erected in 1836. The first permanent house built in the Town of Fremont was that of William Fenwick and was erected on the south side of Diamond Lake.

The first postoffice established in the Township of Fremont was in 1839 on the road from Half Day to McHenry, about a mile or so north of the south town line and was called Darlington, Charles Darling being the first postmaster. It existed for about three years when it was discontinued and in 1844 the Gilmer postoffice was located in the southern part of the town. When this postoffice was petitioned for, the name suggested was that of Wentworth in honor of John Wentworth, then representative in Congress from the district of which Lake County was a part. The petition was sent to Mr. Wentworth at Washington, but upon receiving it, fearing that he might not be able to get the petition granted and wishing to serve his friends in that vicinity in which Mr. Ragan was an acknowledged leader, Mr. Wentworth erased his own name from the petition and inserted that of Gilmer, knowing that the postmaster had been much attached to Mr. Gilmer, late Secretary of the Navy, whose sad fate had cast a gloom over the entire country, he having been killed by the bursting of a gun on board the United States Steamer Princeton on the 28th day of February, 1844. The petition as amended was granted without objection and that name has been applied to that district and the district south of that ever since. Mr. Ragan was appointed as first postmaster of this office and urged with much earnestness that the town be named Gilmer. Another postoffice was afterwards established near the center of the town and was called Fremont Center, and another was located one mile and one-half east of that at a place which was at first called Dean's Corners, after E. D. Dean who owned much land in that vicinity and later erected a large barn at the cross roads there. The name of that place was later changed to Ivanhoe.

There is a high round hill or mound which rises above the prairie in the northwestern part of the town. Probably Thomas H. Payne, Joseph Wood and Joel H. Johnson were the first white people to set foot upon this spot of ground, and at the suggestion of Mr. Payne, on account of the commanding position of the hill over the surrounding prairie, they gave it the name of Fort Hill and the settlement which sprang up in that vicinity in 1837 was for a long time known as the Fort Hill settlement. In the spring of 1838 a postoffice was established in this vicinity, with Joseph Wood as postmaster, which was known

as the Fort Hill postoffice. All of these postoffices have recently been discontinued and at this time of writing there is no postoffice within the Town of Fremont, all of its inhabitants being supplied with mail at their door daily by the advanced system of Free Rural Delivery.

The first road laid out in the town was in the fall of 1836 and was a road running from what is now Wauconda to Half Day. The old "Yankee Tavern" was built upon this road by Erastus Houghton, who came to the town in the fall of 1836.

The first marriage said to have occurred in the Town of Fremont was that of John G. Ragan and Hannah Tucker on January 9, 1839. They were married by Hiram Kennicott, a Justice of the Peace.

The first white child born in the town was David Booth, in November, 1837.

The first death was that of Oliver Booth, who died in the spring of 1840. He was buried at Bangs' Lake and his funeral sermon was preached by Samuel Hurlbut, father of Henry Hurlbut, now living in the village of Libertyville.

J. G. Ragan was the first Justice of the Peace and was commissioned by Governor Duncan in 1837.

One of the earliest Fourth of July celebrations in Lake County was held on the 4th day of July, 1842, at Fort Hill. Crowds from all parts of the county attended this celebration, coming in loads across the surrounding prairies. George Thompson was the orator of the day. The day's festivities were marred by a very sad accident, when a young son of Elisha Clarke, who lived near Mechanics' Grove, was accidentally shot and killed by a pistol held in his own hands.

The first school house in the town was built in the Marsh settlement about 1839. The first school was also taught here, the teacher being Laura B. Sprague of Half Day.

The Fremont Congregational Church was organized February 20, 1838. The first meeting was held in the log house of Alfred Payne, midway on the road from Ivanhoe to Rockefeller. The church was organized with sixteen members, twelve of whom were from Hartford, Washington Co., New York. The first elders were Hiram Clark, Elisha Clark and Oliver L. Payne. The first members of the church were Elisha Clark, Cornelia A. Clark, Hiram Clark, Melinda Clark, Alfred Payne, Oliver L. Payne, Mary Payne, Mercy Payne, Ira Harden, Phoebe Harden, Sarah Harden, Emeline A. Schanck, Matthew Hoffman, Lucy Hoffman, Paulina Norton and Nancy Gridley. The first church was Presbyterian in form but changed to Congregational in 1844. The present church building at Ivanhoe was erected in 1856.

A Catholic Church called the St. John's Roman Catholic Church was organized in 1841 and a church building was erected in the southwestern part of the town. The first members of the church were John Murray, Michael Murray, Hugh Devlin, Felix Givins, Robert Conver, Michael Sennott, John Roney, Will-

iam Simmons and John Ryan. The St. Mary's German Catholic Church was organized in the early fifties and the church building for many years stood on the road south of Fremont Center but that building having been destroyed by fire they now occupy a handsome edifice just east of Fremont Center.

The Methodist Episcopal Church at Diamond Lake was organized in 1858 and their building erected in the same year. The first members were William Wenban, Gideon Wenban, Charles Whitney, Samuel Hurlbut, Mrs. Daniel Cruver and Mrs. Stephen Bennett.

The Town of Fremont takes its name from Gen. John C. Fremont, who at the time the town was organized had acquired fame as a western explorer.

The first election to get an expression of the people on the question of a name was held at a school house in the vicinity of Marsh's settlement on January 12, 1850. Christopher Seeber, Chas. Darling and Chas. H. Bartlett acted as judges as that election and William Clarke as clerk. There were 55 votes cast. The vote stood as follows:

For Gilmer, 25 votes; for Haddam, 17 votes; for Fort Hill, 9 votes; for Tickleville, 2 votes; for Seneca, 1 vote; for Hale, 1 vote.

No name having received a majority of all the votes cast there was a sharp contest to see which name should be adopted. Petitions and counter petitions were presented to the commissioners having the matter in charge. Delegations of citizens representing the names of Gilmer and Haddam appeared before the commissioners and urged the name of their choice. The party in favor of Gilmer was headed by John G. Ragan, while the Haddam delegation was headed by James S. Clarke.

Mr. Clarke and many of his neighbors were natives of Haddam in the State of Connecticut and naturally were very enthusiastic in their support of that name. Neither of the contesting parties being willing to yield in favor of the other, the name of Fremont was finally adopted as a compromise and instantly gave almost universal satisfaction.

The first town meeting of the Town of Fremont was held in 1850. The following is a copy of the notice posted for the meeting:

Town Meeting.

The legal voters of the Town of Fremont in Lake County, Illinois, are hereby notified to meet and assemble at the house of Peter C. Schanck in said town, on the first Tuesday in the month of April, A. D. 1850, at 9 o'clock in the forenoon of said day, then and there to hold their first Town Meeting, in accordance with the statute provisions in such case made and provided.

Given under my hand and the seal of the County Court of Lake County at Waukegan this 11th day of March, A. D. 1850.—Amos S. Waterman, "Clerk of the County Court."

The following is a copy of the minutes of the first Town Meeting:

Pursuant to the above notice the legal voters of the town having assembled at the house of Peter C. Schanck in said Town of Fremont, in the County of Lake, on the first Tuesday of April, (being on the second day of the month), in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty.

Whereupon on motion of Eli P. Penniman, A. B. Partridge was chosen Moderator of the meeting.

On motion of Samuel L. Wood, Christopher Seeber was chosen Clerk of the meeting.

J. H. Wesscher. Esq., one of the Justices of the Peace in and for the County of Lake, being present, administered the necessary oath to the Moderator and Clerk, after which the polls were declared to be open, the certificate of said oath being now on file in the office of the Town Clerk.

On motion of Charles O. Walter the place of holding the next Annual Town Meeting be at the house of Peter G. Schanck.

On motion of Christopher Seeber, Stud Horses and Boars shall be restrained from running at large at all seasons of the year, and Rams shall be restrained from running at large between shearing time and the first day of December of each year.

On motion of Thomas H. Payne, Peter G. Schanck was chosen poundmaster.

On motion of Henry Ames, amended by H. Clarke, it was voted that all fences except picket fences shall be four and one-half feet high, and all picket fence shall be four feet high, to constitute a lawful fence.

The polls of the meeting were closed at 6 o'clock P. M. and the Moderator then proceeded publicly to canvass the votes and without any adjournment, having completed the canvass, the following result or statement was read by the Clerk, to the voters present, towit:

Hurlbut Swan received sixty-four votes for Supervisor; Christopher Seeber received sixty-five votes for Town Clerk; Beach received one vote for Town Clerk; Isaac H. Smith received fifty-seven votes for Assessor; I. H. Smith received three votes for Assessor; Isaac Smith received five votes for Assessor; Eli Penniman received twenty-eight votes for Collector; Deming Gibbons received thirty-eight votes for Collector; D. Gibbons received two votes for Collector; A. B. Partridge received thirty-nine votes for Overseer of the Poor; Addison B. Partridge received seven votes for Overseer of the Poor; Henry Ames received eighteen votes for Overseer of the Poor; William Colvin received sixty-six votes for Commissioner of Highways; Thomas H. Payne received sixty-one votes for Commissioner of Highways; Joel B. Thomas received fifty-four votes for Commissioner of Highways; J. B. Thomas received five votes for Commissioner of Highways; Thomas Payne received three votes for Com-

missioner of Highways; T. H. Payne received one vote for Commissioner of Highways; J. L. Price received one vote for Commissioner of Highways; J. C. Price received three votes for Commissioner of Highways; James C. Price received two votes for Commissioner of Highways; Sheldon Wood received sixty-six votes for Justice of the Peace; Henry Ames received thirty-eight votes for Justice of the Peace; Addison B. Partridge received thirteen votes for Justice of the Peace; A. B. Partridge received fourteen votes for Justice of the Peace; Henry E. Ames received three votes for Justice of the Peace; Eli J. Penniman received thirty-nine votes for Constable; E. J. Penniman received seven votes for Constable; Deming Gibbons received sixty-five votes for Constable; Gilman Goodale received three votes for Constable; A. V. Smith received four votes for Constable; Ashville V. Smith received eight votes for Constable.

According to the above results the following named persons were duly elected to fill the following offices, to wit:

Hurlburt Swan, Supervisor.
Christopher Seeber, Town Clerk.
Isaac H. Smith, Assessor.
Deming Gibbons, Collector.
Addison B. Partridge, Overseer of the Poor.
Sheldon Wood, Justice of the Peace.
Henry Ames, Justice of the Peace.
William Colvin, Highway Commissioner.
Thomas H. Payne, Highway Commissioner.
Joel B. Thomas, Highway Commissioner.
Deming Gibbons, Constable.
Eli J. Penniman, Constable.

The first two Town Meetings were held at the residence of Peter Schanck on what was later known as the E. B. Harden farm and still later as the Wenzel Dietz place. The next four Town Meetings were held at the home of Daniel Marsh on what was later known as the Peter Meyer place.

In 1856 the Town Meeting was held in the school house near Fremont Center and in 1857 in the school house at Dean's Corners, alternating between these two places on succeeding years until the year 1895, when by a vote of 110 to 74, it was decided to hold the Annual Town Meetings at Ivanhoe. This proposition had been voted on several times during the preceding twenty-five years but had until this time always lacked sufficient votes for passage.

The following is a list of Supervisors, Town Clerks, Assessors, Collectors and Commissioners of Highways elected in the Town of Fremont from the date of its organization to the present time:

SUPERVISORS

1850-52	Hurlbut Swan.	1868	Hurlbut Swan.
1853	A. B. Partridge.	1869-70	Charles Phillips.
1854	Hurlbut Swan	1871-72	C. C. Morse.
1855	Isaac H. Smith.	1873	Charles Phillips.
1856	Hobart E. Swan.	1874	R. J. Hoyt.
1857	Joshua B. Thomas.	1875-78	W. L. Conocise.
1858	John G. Ragan.	1879-81	John Woolridge.
1859-60	Hurlbut Swan.	1882	S. H. Swan.
1861-62	Isaac H. Smith.	1883-86	Albert L. Hendee.
1863	C. H. Bartlett.	1887	Michael Wirtz.
1864	Isaac H. Smith.	1888-90	Lewis H. Bryant.
1865	Thomas Rawson.	1891-94	Frank Thomas.
1866	Charles Phillips.	1895-98	C. P. Thomas.
1867	A. B. Partridge.	1899-1911	H. C. W. Meyer.

TOWN CLERKS

1850	Christopher Seeber.	1863	David Armstrong.
1851-52	A. B. Partridge.	1864	R. D. Maynard.
1853	Henry Ames.	1865-81	Reuben Osgood.
1854	Theodore F. Swan.	1882-90	E. G. Payne.
1855	A. B. Partridge.	1891-92	J. H. Newton.
1856	S. H. Swan.	1893-98	H. C. Payne.
1857-62	R. D. Maynard.	1899-1910	Frank Dolph.

ASSESSORS

1850	Isaac H. Smith.	1868-70	Ira J. Hoyt.
1851	Thos. H. Payne.	1871	Charles Phillips.
1852	Isaac H. Smith.	1872-73	E. G. Payne.
1853-54	E. F. Johnson.	1874-75	S. H. Swan.
1855	Samuel S. Wood.	1876	Ira J. Hoyt.
1856	Isaac H. Smith.	1877-78	S. H. Swan.
1857	Henry Ames.	1879	Ira J. Hoyt.
1858-59	Isaac H. Smith.	1880	S. H. Swan.
1860	A. B. Partridge.	1881	A. L. Hendee.
1861	Hurlbut Swan.	1882	Ira J. Hoyt.
1862	A. B. Partridge.	1883-85	C. P. Thomas.
1863-64	Ira J. Hoyt.	1886-88	Delos Ames.
1865	A. V. Smith.	1889	George E. Hardin.
1866-67	S. H. Swan.	1890-91	George M. Traut.

1892-94	C. P. Thomas.	1901	W. H. Skinner.
1895	George M. Traut.	1902	George M. Traut.
1896-99	A. G. Fisher.	1903-04	A. H. Meyer.
1900	Charles Enault.	1905-10	Frank Dietz.

COLLECTORS

1850	Deming Gibbons.	1880	W. H. Price.
1851-54	S. L. Wood.	1881	H. C. Meyer.
1855	David Goodale.	1882	George C. Hardin.
1856	Daniel Armstrong.	1883	C. M. Decker.
1857	W. P. Thornton.	1884	John Deinlein.
1858	Daniel Armstrong.	1885	E. G. Payne.
1859	David Goodale.	1886	George Beshel.
1860-62	Reuben Osgood.	1887	Christian Meyer.
1863	Thad. M. Bliss.	1888	Frank Dietz.
1854	Ira J. Hoyt.	1889	George Brown.
1865	N. C. West.	1890	H. C. Payne.
1866	C. F. Bliss.	1891-92	Carl Dorfler.
1867	W. H. Price.	1893-94	Asa Joice.
1868	Peter Jacoby.	1895	Frank Deitz.
1869	Richard Benwell.	1896-97	Frank Dolph.
1870	E. B. Gorham.	1898-99	C. G. Small.
1871	Henry Kern.	1900-01	Henry Luebbe.
1872	Christian Hapke.	1902-04	Frank Dietz.
1873	Peter Rich.	1905-06	L. H. Keiler.
1874	William Bartlett.	1907-08	Henry Luebbe.
1875-76	J. S. Deinlein.	1908	P. J. Wagner.
1877-78	Henry Nordmeyer.	1909	Frank Dolph.
1879	Frank Deitz.		

The following are the persons elected for Highway Commissioner each year, there being three elected for one year each until 1862 when one was elected each year for a term of three years, unless a vacancy occurred:

HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS.

1850 Wm. Colvin, Thos. H. Payne, Joel B. Thomas.

1851 Wm. Colvin, Chas. Darling, Sheldon Wood.

1852 Hobart E. Swan, Joel B. Thomas, Christopher Seeber.

1853 Hobart E. Swan, Joel B. Thomas, Christopher Seeber.

1854 Jas. C. Price, Geo. S. Brainard, Joseph Pitkin.

1855 Hobart E. Swan, John B. Madole, Robt. Lyons.

1856 D. S. Putnam, J. B. Sherman, Geo. S. Brainard.

1857 S. H. Swan, Reuben Farnsworth, W. L. Converse.

1858 Clark Jones, Reuben Farnsworth, Chauncey Lusk.

1859 Nicholas Smith, Chas. Darling, Hobart E. Swan.

1860 Hobart E. Swan, Chas. Darling, A. V. Smith.

1861 S. H. Swan, Anthony Putnam, W. L. Converse.

1862 John G. Ragan.

1863 Chauncey Lusk.

1864 S. H. Swan.

1865 Anthony Putnam.

1866 D. Armstrong.

1867 M. L. Earle, Michael Traut, to fill vacancy.

1868 J. D. Stevens.

1869 Michael Traut.

1870 Thaddeus M. Bliss.

1871 Stephen E. Payne, Levi Price to fill vacancy.

1872 Jas. B. Gray.

1873 Barney Behm.

1874 Stephen E. Payne.

1875 Wm. Beach.

1876 John Wagner.

1877 Henry Grabbe.

1878 Edwin Cook.

1879 J. S. Deinlein.

1880 Edwin Cook.

1881 Wm. Tupper, Thomas Boyes, to fill vacancy.

1882 C. P. Thomas.

1883 August Hapke.

1884 Wm. A. Tupper.

1885 Geo. Krosche.

1886 Barney Behm.

1887 W. H. Skinner.

1888 F. P. Davis.

1889 H. C. Meyer.

1890 Geo. Davis.

1891 Fred Converse.

1892 H. C. Meyer.

1893 Geo. Davis.

1894 J. S. Deinlein.

1895 M. C. Wirtz.

1896 Geo. Radke.

1897 Andrew Wagner.

1898 M. C. Wirtz.

1899 Geo. Radke.

1900 Andrew Wagner.

1901 M. C. Wirtz.

1902 Fred Voelker.

1903 John Hertel, Jr.

1904 M. C. Wirtz.

1905 Fred Voelker.

1906 J. S. Deinlein.

1907 C. A. Hapke.

1908 Fred Voelker.

1909 J. S. Deinlein.

The above is an indication of those who have taken an active interest in the affairs of the town since its organization and of those in whom the people of the town have expressed trust and confidence by electing them to public office. A history of a town whose chief merit is the large number of stable and worthy citizens that it has produced instead of its being the home of one or two great men must necessarily be more of a statistical than of a narrative nature. Of those whose names appear above many deserve special mention, but lack of space will prevent the mention of but a few whose influence and reputation has extended far beyond the limits of their own town.

One of the staunchest pioneers of the town of Fremont was Hurlbut Swan who was born in the State of Connecticut, June 9, 1797, and came west in 1845 and bought a section of government land in the northern part of the Town of Fremont. He was a very versatile man and an apt speaker and was known by his neighbors as Deacon Swan. They used to say of him that it might be that he did not know any more than many other people but he certainly knew how to tell what he did know. He was sent to the State Legislature several times and was an influential man at Springfield, being a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1847. He was an honest, upright man, a firm believer in the teachings of the Bible and a strict believer in Sunday observance. Hobart E. Swan, a brother of Deacon Swan, came to Lake County in the '40's and located on the farm where the present Hendee milk platform is located. Their sister, Harriet, was the wife of Gilbert Beckwith, who came to Lake County in 1848, whose son, Charles Beckwith, is still a resident of the town.

Another sturdy pioneer was Addison Bliss Partridge, known throughout the town as Deacon Partridge. Deacon Partridge was born in the State of Vermont, February 26, 1807. He was twice married, the only surviving child of his first marriage being a daughter who was married to Edwin D. Dean of Fremont and who died in 1855. Deacon Partridge came to Lake County in 1844 and took up a quarter section of land in Fremont, built a home about half a mile east of the village of Ivanhoe and became one of the best known and best beloved citizens of this community. He was the Moderator of the first town meeting held in the township and the leader in the movement which resulted in the erection of the Congregational Church building. Always patriotic and public-spirited, in 1862 he enlisted in the army and helped to secure many volunteers. He was chosen as First Lieutenant of Company C of the Ninety-sixth Regiment, Ill. Vol., and served nearly six months, when failing health compelled him to resign and return home. He died in 1888. His second wife, the mother of Charles A. Partridge and five other children, died in 1901. Both were buried in the Ivanhoe cemetery. The first burial in this beautiful "God's acre" was that of Charles Stebbins, the beloved father of Mrs. Partridge,.who had shared with the family the experiences of pioneer life in Lake County.

Charles A. Partridge, a son of Deacon Partridge, has also added luster to the fame of his town by the valiant service that he performed for his country in helping put down the rebellion and by the active part that he has taken in the affairs of his county since that time. He has held many offices of trust and confidence in the county and has served a term or two in the State Legislature and during recent years has been an officer and a recognized leader in the G. A. R. of this State.