

Tom Payne, earliest Fremont settler, arrived in 1836

Thomas Payne was one of the early settlers in Fremont Township. Born in New York State, he started his westward immigration with four other young men in 1836. Journeying much of the way on foot, he passed through Chicago on his way to Fremont, which was then part of Cook County. When Mr. Payne made his claim, remains of wigwags were still in evidence and Indians were frequent visitors in the neighborhood.

After planting his crops in the spring of 1837, he returned to the East for his wife and children. He had married Miss Susan Smith, a native of Seneca Falls, New York, on April 25, 1834 and they became the parents of 12 children. There was Eugene B. Payne, who served as Colonel of the 37th Illinois Infantry during the Civil War, married Miss Delia Wright of Connecticut and was later employed in the Pension Department in Washington, D.C.; Isaac S. Payne, who died at the age of 19; William, who enlisted, but before his regiment was called into active service, died of measles in camp in Chicago; a daughter, Mary; Fred, who was Corporal in the 37th Regiment and was killed at the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas; Edward G., who married Elvira Butrick and became a merchant in Rockefeller; Esther, who died in infancy; E. Estelle, who became the wife of Arthur A. Payne, a merchant of Ivanhoe; Frank

H., who became a successful physician and surgeon in Berkeley, Calif.; Thomas, who died in infancy; Harry, who became a farmer in Ivanhoe; and another daughter, Agnes.

After engaging in general farming for some years, Mr. Payne started a nursery business on his 160 acres and became a leading nurseryman in the county. Early records note that he acquired his possessions through his own efforts and that he deserved great credit for his success, which was brought about through his industry, enterprise and perseverance.

In politics, he was a Whig until the dissolution of the party and cast his first Presidential vote for John Quincy Adams. In 1856 he became a staunch Republican. He was frequently a delegate to county conventions and served as one of the first County Commissioners of Lake County after its separation from McHenry when Commissioners Nelson Landon, Charles Bartlett and himself made the selection of Waukegan as the county seat.

Mr. Payne was vitally interested in education and gave his children excellent training to prepare them for the practical side of life.



STUDENTS at New Rockefeller School — 1897

