

## TOWNSHIP HISTORIES KANKAKEE, ILL.

The Kankakee Co. Atlases of 1883 included histories of the townships in the county.

The following is a list of the several townships composing the county of Kankakee, with the dates of their organization as a part of Kankakee County.

Yellowhead, June, 1853; Rockville, June, 1853; Bourbonnais, June, 1853; Momence, June, 1853; Aroma, June, 1853; Limestone, June, 1853; Salina, April 27, 1854; Kankakee, February, 1855; Manteno, March 12, 1855; Sumner, September 12, 1855; Essex, September, 1855; Otto, 1855; Pilot, March 11, 1857; Ganeer, February 15, 1859; St. Anne, March 11, 1857; Norton, March 11, 1857; Pembroke, February 17, 1877.

### AROMA TOWNSHIP

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Aroma was named by James L. Romer (a play upon the surname) who was sent out from New York as a collecting agent. The name as suggested by Mr. ROMER, was adopted by the WILBURS, Slocum and Alvin. The first house was built by the first settler, Isadow SHOBAR, on the south side of the river (near Mr. Lemuel MILK's country residence) in 1834. The second one to settle near was Chesley RAKESTRAW, who built on the river below Aroma, on land now owned by H. P. LOWE. This was in 1835. A. M. WILEY bought the land, consisting of two sections, of the Indian chief ME SAW KE QUAW in 1850, so says Mr. E. R. BEARDSLEY. The WILBERTS bought forty acres, and laid out the village of Aroma. Began the improvement of the water-power in February, 1852. They had the dam about half built, some of the timber on the ground, and the excavation for the mill pit completed, when the firm became insolvent, and James L. ROMER was appointed trustee of the property. E. R. BEARDSLEY bought this valuable water privilege of said trustee in the fall of 1855; the next year he continued the work by cutting the race and completing the dam. The mill is of the most substantial character, having the heaviest walls of any building in the county. It is built throughout of stone, three stories in height and has four run of buhrs. Some of the early settlers of Aroma Township were CASE and Jasber P. WADLEY, Isadow SHOBAR (or CHOBAR), Isaac M. BAKER, Mr. ELLIOT and Samuel EXLINE, 1833; Revilo BEEBE, 1836; David MEIGGS, 1834; William BAKER 1832; Oscar and Lucius CASE, Chesley RAKESTRAW, Peter, LOW, William RAKESTRAW and Samuel JOHNSON, 1835; Dr. Hiram TODD, spring of 1836; Oliver BEEBE, 1837 or 1838; James BYRNES, Nathaniel and Alphonso MELLE, 1838; Samuel WETMORE, 1848; Capt. Robert RANNEY, 1849; Alexander DAY, 1845; Dr. Samuel HAWLEY, 1853; Isaac PAULEY and Henry W. BURTON, 1854.

The saw mill was located south of the grist mill on the bank of the river. It was built in 1858 and abandoned about 1866.

A large wagon and carriage shop was put up in 1860, but was converted into a paper-board mill in 1863. In 1866, the wrapping paper mill was completed and rented by Mr. BURTON to Messrs. MAXWELL & MOSELEY. The property came into the possession of Mr. W. G. SWANNELL in 1875, who assumed the sole charge of the manufactory and soon put it upon a paying basis, using 1500 to 2,000 tons of straw during the year and employing twenty-five persons in the different departments of the business. This year, an important improvement has been made by enlarging the building--adding to its capacity, and the addition of a steam engine of sixty-horse-power for the purpose of supplying the motive power during the stages of high or low water in the river. Mr. S. Winton SKELLY is the foreman and Mr. Henry LEAVITT Secretary. The other manufacturing interests dependent upon this splendid water privilege for power are a carriage repair and machine shop and a planing mill, built in 1875 and occupied by McELWAIN, HUBBLE & Son. The grain elevator was built in 1879 upon the water-power grounds depending also upon it for its motive power. It is managed by Homer INGALLS, agent for O. W. JOHNSON. Mr. Revilo BEEBE says Augustus M. WILEY bought of Shobar's heirs (CHOBAR). The land on the south side of the river was bought by Van HIGGIN OF Chicago, of Isaac CHOBAR, one of Isadow CHOBAR's sons (I supposed, but Mr. BEARDSLEY's deeds show, or only name Susan, the wife, Zoe, the daughter, and George, the son as heirs). The first settler in Beebetown was Mr. ELLIOT, who built his log cabin at BEEBE's Ford in 1833 or a little before. David MEIGGS bought his improvement early in 1834. They held the first quarterly meetings of three years in Mr. BEEBE's barn, Rev. BEGGS or MORRISON preached the first sermon. Dr. Hiram TODD lived on land now owned by David SHANNON, near the river. In 1834, there were but few log cabins in what is now Aroma Township. CHOBAR's at the ford near where Mr. L. MILK's country residence now stands, two at Beebe's Ford, one near the James BYRNS' Homestead; Chesley RAKESTRAW built a cabin below Aroma on land now owned by H. P. LOWE. These comprise all then within the township.

Dr. BLAKESLEY, a Thompsonian, or herb doctor, practiced some at an early day, but Dr. Samuel HAWLEY was the first regular practitioner resident in Aroma Township, unless Dr. TODD practiced while a resident. There was very little sickness until the land became more extensively cultivated. Mr. BEEBE says it was five years before he had the ague (shakes). The first and only church was built at Aroma Village in ----. Before this meetings were held in the houses having the largest rooms, and after the schoolhouses were built in them.

The first township officers were elected at a special election held June 21, 1853, Daniel BEEBE, Moderator. As a result of said election, the following were declared elected as the first officers of the new township: Supervisor, James BYRNS; Town Clerk, Lorenzo W. KIBBONS; Assessor, Daniel BEEBE; Call and Constable, Capt. Robert RANNEY; Highway Commissioners, Nathaniel MELLEN, Elisha PARSONS, and Jesse BROWN.

Besides the milling and manufacturing interests are the

extensive ice houses for storing the pure ice of the Kankakee River. We will speak of the first company organized for that purpose.

The Kankakee Crystal Ice Company was organized by Messrs. Adam Earl, Moses FOWLER and E. A. TOLLBERT, Secretary of Lafayette, Ind., in 1874. The plant (or cash investment) was \$65,000. It was incorporated in 1877 by Messrs. E. R. BEARDSLEY, Capt. George W. HARRISON and H. P. LOWE. The capacity of the two huge buildings is 42,000 tons, which is shipped mostly to the Southern markets. Capt. Harrison has been the superintendent since the first organization. They employ from forty-five to 325 hands, according to the work being done shipping or storing the ice crop. In connection with this business they use about 350 tons of hay during the season, obtained from the surrounding country, and from forty to forty-five car-loads of saw-dust, obtained from the mills at Lebanon, Ind. They use a sixty-horse-power engine with the most improved machinery known to the business. One item of expenditure is three car-loads of lumber in the shipping season for car doors. Having \$3,000 invested in the most ingenious and improved ice tools exclusive of the machinery already mentioned. Among other things, we may mention the employment of a carpenter and blacksmith on the many repairs necessary the year round. The machinery for loading the cars is the invention of Capt. HARRISON, an automatic ice leader. They have two of these in use, costing about \$700. The expectation now is that of building other large houses to fill in the space between the present buildings, making the establishment the largest of the kind in the world.

Lemuel MILK, Esq., is proprietor of the Waldron ice houses. The Waldron ice houses were begun by building the first house in 1876. This was struck by lightning and burned the next year (1877), Mr. MILK thereby losing the first crop of ice stored. He rebuilt the same year and re-filled. In 1880, he built another extensive house adjoining. This year (1882) has seen the completion of still another house, above the others on the river, at the mouth of Spring Creek, which is only the beginning of a group of such buildings which will give employment to numerous men, as well as being a source of revenue to the public-spirited and enterprising owner. Capital at present invested is from \$12,000 to \$15,000.

Supervisors--James BYRNS, 1853; George COOPER, 1855; A. M. WYLIE, 1856; Revilo BEEBE, 1857; E. R. BEARDSLEY, 1858; W. L. LEGG, 1861; N. G. HALSEY, 1862; James BYRNS, 1864; George COOPER, 1866; James BYRNS, 1869; George COOPER, 1870; E. R. BEARDSLEY, 1871; James BYRNS, 1873; Revilo BEEBE, 1874; H. GRUVER, 1878, still in office (1883).