

CANAWLERS AT REST

MINOR MEEKER

b. July 5, 1795

d. May 10, 1865

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Orange County, New York, was the birthplace of Minor Meeker. He was born on July 5, 1795. When he was only two years old he was orphaned. At the age of 10 he went to Seneca County, New York. He was drafted into the United States service at age 18 to fight with a regiment from New York in the War of 1812. Shouldering his gun in the fall of 1813 he marched to Niagara under the command of Colonel Swift, who had been an officer in the Revolutionary War. He was honorably discharged after only 3 months of service.

Following the war Meeker went to Steuben County, New York, and learned the tanning business from Allen Boardman. After he completed his apprenticeship, he took a job as a boat pilot for the lumber industry traveling 150 miles between Elmira, N. Y., and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Back then boats only went downstream so he had to walk on the return trip. One time he covered the 150 miles in three days.

In 1819 at the age of 24 Minor Meeker along with Minor Thomas and a number of families from other New England States started for the frontier. Minor Meeker and Minor Thomas were ministers in the Regular Baptist Church and were called Elder Meeker and Elder Thomas. They went from Olean on the Allegany River, then down the Ohio River by flatboat until they reached a point about five miles above Cincinnati. They stayed there until July. Meeker was the pilot on the nine day voyage. Then they went overland under the leadership of Minor Thomas to the "New Purchase" located in the western part of Harrison Township in the newly created Fayette County (January 1, 1819) out of Franklin and Wayne Counties. They called their settlement Yankeetown. Meeker settled in Connersville and worked for Mr. Rees in the tanning trade for which he had stud-

ied.

According to the Indiana State Library Genealogy Database, Rachel Thomas, the daughter of Elder Thomas, married Elder Minor Meeker on January 9, 1820. Rachel was born in Tompkins County, New York, on April 21, 1799. The couple lived on the farm of Elder Thomas. They had two children. Marcella was born on October 23, 1823. Chester C. was born on July 27, 1828.

Meeker bought an 80 acre farm on Big Williams Creek in Harrison Township near a saw mill. He built a log cabin on his newly acquired land and moved into it before it was finished. He then began clearing the land and farmed it. He also had a tan-yard on it around 1835. He tanned leather during the summer and during the slower months of winter made shoes and boots from the leather. He later owned the saw mill. He also was a distiller.

Meeker was always interested in public improvements such as the Whitewater Canal. Resolutions and proposals for internal improvements for Indiana were brought before the general assembly of 1825-26. The lawmakers incorporated the Whitewater Canal Company at the request of southeastern residents. There were forty thousand shares of capital stock at twenty-five dollars each. The company could sell the stock and receive land or money from the United States or any other state. It was to be overseen by seven directors. The incorporation would be nullified if no work or progress could be seen within two years.

In 1834 the Indiana General Assembly ordered a survey for the Whitewater Canal from Nettle Creek to Lawrenceburg. The survey shows the canal needs to go around the hills in southeastern Indiana thus extending into Ohio. In 1835 the General Assembly requests permission to construct part of the Whitewater Canal in Ohio. Ohio passes a law in 1836 agreeing to the request. In 1836 construction of the Whitewater Canal finally begins after ground was broken on September 13, 1836.

Between 1838 and 1842 the first bridge over the White Water River was built at Connersville in Fayette County. Minor Meeker, H. B. Woodcock and James Veatch were its builders. It stood until 1887.

By 1839 the Whitewater Canal was completed from Brookville to Lawrenceburg, but a stop order on most internal improvement projects was issued by Indiana. Work did not resume on the canal until 1842. It was completed to Laurel by 1843, to Connersville in June 1845, and to Cambridge City in October 1845. In 1847 the Hagerstown Canal Company completes the

Meeker was elected to the Indiana Senate in 1852 to represent Harrison and Union Counties and served in the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions

Meeker acquired extensive land during his lifetime. He was one of the township's largest landowners at the time of his death.

Some of Minor Meeker's land purchases:



March 20, 1821

Section 6 Harrison Township described as the east half of the southwest quarter of Section 6 along with William Brick, John I. Johnson, Hugh Dickey, David Anderson, and Ira Starr

Between 1820-1832

Section 12 of Fairview Township 4 North Range 11 East Was purchased by Minor Meeker along with James Smith, John Darter, Daniel Campbell, David Scott, Philip Bilby and Samuel Davis.

Between 1821-1822

Section 31 of Harrison Township 15 North Range 12 East along with William and Hugh Dickey, John Dailey and Ebenezer W. Finey and Collen Smith in 1822.

Prior to 1835

Section 34 Harrison Township, 80 acres of land near sawmill

Minor Meeker died May 10, 1865, had lived in Fayette county for 46 years and on his farm since its purchase. Rachel died March 1, 1881.

Chester C. Meeker married Susan A. Budd in 1851. She died in 1852. He then married Ann J. Johnson in 1856. Chester and Ann had six children.

Paulette Hays at the Connersville library found in *Old Cemeteries Of Fayette County* that Minor Meeker was buried at what is now Williams/Shortridge Cemetery. At one time there was a Second Regular Baptist Church on CR 450 West, north of CR 300 North, near Williams Creek, but the building was disassembled, moved to Tennessee and a substation built on its site. The cemetery is west of the substation through a field and into the woods and is in the NW corner of the Moffitt farm, on a hill overlooking Williams Creek. Yankeeetown used to be nearby at the crossroads at 400 North and had a school.

Malcom and Thelma Geise, who have lived near the cemetery for 70 years, recorded what they could read on 13 stones that were left on March 19, 1973. They found that the iron fence that once surrounded the graveyard has been stolen over the years and most of the stones are in the ground covered with dirt. The stones give the following information:

Minor Meeker was 69y, 10m, 5 days.

Minor's daughter Marsella, who died April 18, 1850 was 26y, 5m. 25 days.

Minor's son Chester's first wife Susan, who died November 2, 1852 was 26 y 7 m 1 day.

Mary Johnston charter member of the church

David and Phebe Thomas charter members of the



Chester Meeker's home on 400 N west of 450 W in Fayette county is now occupied the Geises. Photo by Phyllis Mattheis

church.

The Geises live in a house that was built by Minor's son, Chester, after 1852 when he bought his father's farm. While it was being built he lived in Minor's old home across the road. Chester's home was most unusual with double pillars on each side of the foyer entrance door and other single pillars on the front, two doors, a side porch with pillars, and a ballroom upstairs. Inside the walnut front entrance has a walnut banister and newel post on a self-supported winding stairs. The house looks like it could have been a lodge building as the stairs ascend to the large room upstairs.

Chester sold his house on November 13, 1865 after Minor's death in May. Later when Geise's purchased Chester's house, they tore down Minor's old house as well as a barn on each side of the road. Chester Kerr, one of Minor's great grandchildren, lives two miles south and 1/2 mile east.

Sources:

Special thanks to Jerry and Phyllis Mattheis, CSI members from Cambridge City, Indiana, for contacting Paulette Hays and the Geises to get information on Minor's burial place and where he once lived.

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