

ALMS HOUSE OR COUNTY FARM – 1860

When the 1860 census of Greene County, Illinois, was taken the Alms House was in section 7, township 10 north, range 12 west of the 3rd principle meridian. This was approximately 4 miles northwest of the city of Carrollton. George Vaughn was keeper of the poor farm. He and his wife and their 5 children lived there. Ten other persons lived with them but it is unclear how many of them were wards of the county. Some of the persons in the home may have been employed by Mr. Vaughn to help with the farm labor. The county farm consisted of 80 acres and Mr. Vaughn had 80 acres of land adjoining it.

752 927 927	Vaughn, George	39	M	W	FARMER	6300	800	VA		Keeper
	Mary	32	F	W				NY		
	Julia G	11	F	W				IL	X	
	Susan J	08	F	W				IL	X	
	Edna C	06	F	W				IL		X
	George A	04	M	W				IL		
	Mary	01	F	W				IL		
	Hilly, Lydia	25	F	W				IL		X
	Londy, John	40	M	W	F. Lab.			IRE		
	Leonard, James	87	M	W	Printer			NY		Pauper
	Odle, Gabriel	55	M	W				IL		Pauper
	Wilson, Mrs.	60	F	W	Domestic					
	Sweeten, Lucinda	21	F	W				IL		Crippled
	Silkwood, Thos.	21	M	W				IL		
	?? , Daniel	35	M	W	F. Lab.			IRE		
	Dagley, Charles	35	M	W	D. Lab.			IRE		
	Conner, John	65	M	W	F. Lab.			IRE		

The White Hall Register – White Hall, Greene Co., Illinois – Saturday, June 14, 1873 – Vol. IV, Number 43

In 1870 Greene County exchanged her old farm and improvements for the present site, four miles northeast of Carrollton, and at once adopted a plan and let the contract for a building. The house is of brick, two stories and basement, heated by hot air. The house and appurtenances including land, cost the county about \$12,000.

Joseph C. Brown, had been keeper for 10 years, keeping the paupers 8 years at \$1.45 a week, including board and clothing. For the last two years Mr. Brown, received \$1.75. Last December a new letting was had, and several bids from \$1.75 down to \$1.40 were put, and Mr. Asa Stone, received the award at \$1.45 a week. He is now guardian of the poor. The following is the list of cases, in order of seniority in the institution:

1. Lucinda Sweeton, aged about 40, deformed and idiotic – has been an occupant from the first, has never walked, has some sense of perception but incapable of taking care of herself. She lies and grimaces, and twist her deformed hands, and mutters a sort of inarticulate language. She is sister of the late Azariah Sweeton, of Walkerville.
2. Elizabeth McClenning, has also been a pauper from the first. She is about 35 years old, has had two children, both dead. She works well under notice, washing dishes, etc. but has no management. She has never married.
3. Sarah Vickers, French decent, came here from Wilmington, from Kansas there. She was broke down with fever and entered 6 years ago, has had small-pox in the house, and has had attacks of swelling and eruptions.

4. Jane Bacon, about 22 years old, grand-daughter of the late Chas. Mattison, on the Hurricane, west of Carrollton. She came up from the poor house. She is injured in the limbs and is also weak minded. She tends to Lucinda Sweeton, and an orphan girl in her ward – never married
5. Mary Alexander, silly girl, about 20 years old. She was taken in with Small-pox, and gave it to the others at the old house. She does not work for herself or anyone. She was the silly witness in the case against Jack Alexander, her father, charged with hanging Elisha Stout, some ten years ago, in court.
6. Robert Eoff, age about 50 years, from White Hall, insane on religion, politics, and everything else. Does no work and troubles nobody. Is rather a fine looking man.
7. Wiley Malone, complains of some pain, and age and debility. Lays around but is no trouble; about 60 years old, several years in, from near White Hall.
8. John Carmody, are 79 years, born 1795 in Ireland, related to the family of the name in the county. Old age and infirmity. Does no work, is no trouble, has been in two years.
9. William Grills, from Greenfield, came 9th March last, previously had been kept by his friends. He is deformed and generally disabled, dropsy, etc. He is helpless, a bad case.
10. Tim Brown, from wet of town, Irishman, blind but not otherwise disabled. No use as help and has to be led. Had one blind eye and lost the other by a lick by Thomas Fitzpatrick, of Carrollton, last year.
11. Patrick Virden, Irishman, consumptive, and weak, helps in chores, a year in, no trouble.
12. James Boyle, Irishman, 50 years old, two years in, and humor in the blood with sores. Is handy and not much trouble
- 13, 14. Melinda Johnson, and child, 18 months old, daughter of William Johnson, deceased, crippled in one arm, can hardly take care of her child. Not married
- 15, 16, 17, 18. Mrs. Parnell, and 3 children, young, from Seeley's Mill, was sent in for confinement, and child died. Husband supposed to be in California, to be discharged soon.
19. Lucy Hartless, (Old Granny) She had lived in Carrollton, and is the same Judge Hinton recovered judgment against in the county for keeping. She is well and very useful, but is peevish and must have her own way. Is good with, children, chickens, and other pets.
20. Taylor Harris, child of Miss Stout, who died in the poor house, 3 years old. Weak eyes, supposed to be illegitimate son of one Harris, near Kane.
- 21, 22. Lizzie Brown, and child, 7 weeks old, born in poor house, wife of blacksmith who deserted his family in Carrollton. Systematic neuralgia. Is likely to be on hand some time.
23. Bead Hooper, daughter of William Hooper, deceased, near Woodville. She is the same that worked at Leggett's saloon, Carrollton, and was defrauded of her wages. Bad luck and down in the mouth.
- 24, 25, 26, 27. Mrs. Mills, and three children, crazy, from near Athensville, brought in by her husband, for safe keeping till she can be sent to the asylum, very poor and is supposed to be abandoned. Three nice little children, 8, 6, and 2 years, all boys to be out to raise.

When Mr. Slone came in	paupers	29
Discharge since 9 th March		13
Received in same time		11

At least three are hopelessly insane, and it would be justice for the county court, to make special allowance for the such cases. Henry Whalen, insane ran away, 30th May. From reports a number of children have been begotten and born in the poor house. There is necessarily both laziness and licentiousness among the paupers, but the warden is not responsible for this, and the present keepers are making a resolute struggle for good government and morals there.

The general appearance and air of the establishment is good and the house and place seems to be orderly and quiet. On Sundays, as it is a pleasant drive, many visitors come in and the warden and family take great pains to show the place and inmates.

The room is 20 x 26 for chapel, has never been furnished. There has been no move made to provide the county house, with either religious services, instructions for the young or amusements. A three acre garden, a good orchard, a nice farm, fruits, etc. will afford the pauper good living. The place has good water, three wells and a cistern. The heating and cooking apparatus work well, the only objection is, the furnace makes the house too hot ordinarily.

Table linen, has been first introduced by Mrs. Slone. The paupers do the washing and do it pretty well. One thing needed is a full set of window blinds or shades, as all rooms are exposed to sun and vulgar gaze.

The improvements on the farm are progressing in the way of clearing, fencing and ditching.

Deaths Recorded in the Almshouse Book – Greene County, Illinois

This book runs from 1876 until December 1, 1928. However, several pages are missing and it is not complete. Over this 52 years there were several supervisors of the almshouse. Some kept good records, while others were rather poor. There may have been some deaths that occurred at the almshouse, that were not recorded in this book. The place of burial was not shown until 1900.

The record books for the almshouse were always kept at the home. When the County Farm, as it was called, went out of existence and passed on to private hands the record books were left there. A few months ago this single book was discovered and returned to the Office of the County Clerk of Greene County.

The condition of this book is so poor that we could not make photocopies of the entire book. However we were able to make copies of part of the pages. Because of its poor condition the original book WILL NOT be used until the pages are laminated to preserve them.

- 1 – Age last birthday
- 2 – Marital Status
- 3 – Birthplace
- 4 – Residence before admission to almshouse
- 5 – Date of Admission
- 6 – Date of Death
- 7 – Place of Burial/Remarks

Transcribed by Carol S. VanValkenburgh
January 21, 2003

INHABITANTS OF THE ALSHOUSE IN THE 1880 CENSUS OF GREENE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Virden, Pat	W M 67	Boarder	S IRE	IRE	IRE
Bacon, Jane	W F 27	“	S IL	IL	IL
Sweeten, Lucinda	W F 40	“	S IL	IL	IL
Hooper, Beda	W F 32	“	S IL	IL	IL
Alexander, Mary	W F 29	“	S IL	IL	IL
Hartless, Lucy	W F 59	“	W CAN	CAN	CAN

Surier, Samuel	W M 67	“	W DC MA MA
Johnson, Malinda	W F 29	“	S IL IL IL
Voils, Charity	W F 39	“	M TN TN TN
Dews, Richard	W M 76	“	S IL ENG ENG
Silkwood, Fannie	W F 39	“	S IL IL IL
Jones, John	W M 38	“	W IL IL IL
Allen, Geo.	W M 33	“	S IL IL IL
Hopper, Joseph	W M 69	“	W KY KY KY
Vanderhayden, Alvin	W M 78	“	W KY KY KY
Noland, James	W M 69	“	S IRE IRE IRE
Murphy, Ben	W M 07	“	IL IL IL
Henry, Patrick	W M 34	“	S MI IRE IRE
Gentry, Nancy	W F 52	“	S KY KY KY
Meritt, Patrick	W M 66	“	W IRE IRE IRE
Mulligan, John	W M 05	“	IL IL IL
McClelland, Henry	W M 26	“	S IL US US
Orton, William	W M 65	“	M TN NC NC
Huit, Elizabeth	W F 69	“	W TN TN TN
Hogan, Michael	W M 28	“	M IRE IRE IRE
Newman, Jacob	W M 35	“	S OH US US
Pruitt, Elizabeth	W F 45	“	S NC US US
McClelland, Elizabeth	W F 45	“	S IL US US
Shaku, Patrick	W M 80	“	W IRE IRE IRE
Kelley, James	W M 55	“	W CAN IRE IRE

White Hall Register, April 11, 1890 – OBIT – A. J. Gilbert’s sudden death, Thursday at one o’clock p.m., from complication of grip and pneumonia, at Mrs. Rebecca Liming’s, was a sad surprise to nearly everybody. A wife and two small children are bereft of the care of a kind husband and father and the world of a man, highly esteemed by all who knew him. The funeral will take place Saturday.

(NOTE) Alexander J. Gilbert & Miss. Mary J. Liming were married, 24 Dec. 1879, in Greene Co., IL, by Rev. B. B. Hamilton.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION FROM THE ALMSHOUSE BOOK – GREENE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Near the back of the book there was two pages that listed parents names. I have attempted to match the parent’s names with the names of people admitted to the almshouse. These admissions were between March 1, 1926 and December 1, 1928.

Transcribed by Carol S. VanValkenburgh

Part 2

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION FROM THE ALMSHOUSE BOOK – GREENE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

This record gives the date of birth of some of the persons living in the almshouse. A comparison of the names and the original admission dates leads me to believe that this record was started sometime in 1926 and names were added until the end of November 1928. It originally included three pages of names. One of those pages is now missing

Transcribed by Carol S. VanValkenburgh
January 29, 2003

THE ALTON TELEGRAPH, January 4, 1988

ALMSHOUSE BOOK TELLS GRIM TALES

By Ralph Helenthal for the Telegraph

The Greene County almshouse was the end of the line for some folks, a stopping place for others, but mostly it was a place of broken dreams.

The destitute, the poor, the orphans, the down-and-outers ended up at the place they called the almshouse, the county farm, the poor house. It was operated by Greene County long before the days of government aid or welfare. Most counties in Illinois had one.

The almshouse was run by the county from 1842 to 1950, but records are sketchy. County Clerk Eunice Batty has the Almshouse Register chronicling the years 1871-1928. The book is a ledger of suffering and a drama of tragedy, but it has some lighter moments.

According to the register, people were admitted to the facility by either the Superintendent of the Poor, the County Board, a physician or "by the Lord." The most common reason for admittance was "bastardy," the word of the time for illegitimate children.

Other categories were old age, insanity, St. Anthony Dance (people suffering from uncontrollable shaking or twitching), spring fever, idiotic, physical wreck and consumption (tuberculosis).

Some entries speak of desperation. One reads "father is dead, mother a strumpet." Other unhappy occupants of the almshouse were listed as "Old age, turned out by his children," "Old and played out," "good for nothing" and "dead beat." An entry dated 1900 says "off in the upper story."

Orphans in days gone by were shabbily treated, according to Greene County historian Eileen Cunningham. "When the almshouse sent orphans to local orphanages, they would put them on a train that ran through Greene County. The train stopped at several locations and farmers were asked to pick an orphan. Isn't that awful?" she said.

The first pauper in Greene County, Cunningham said, was a woman named Lucinda Sweetin. "Her father was well-to-do, but didn't trust banks. He hid his money, but late in life lost his memory. When he died his daughter, who was 47 at the time, had nowhere to go," Cunningham said.

According to Carrollton historian Mabel Sheffer, the almshouse occupancy averaged 50-60 residents. Sometimes whole families were admitted until the father could

get a decent job. The county built small cottages around the bigger building to house the families.

“Everyone worked,” Sheffer said. “The residents farmed, milked, canned and gardened.”

Some died there. The records tell of residents being buried in unmarked gravesites. “There were no funds for cemetery markers,” she said.

The old graveyard is still kept up by county workers.

The last superintendent and matron for the almshouse were Everett Painter, 85, and his wife, Letha, of Carrollton.

Painter, who ran the facility from 1950-1960, said the residents and staff were “a very close family.”

“One of our best friends, Jim Voyles, lived there. He was slow mentally, but was one of the family. He had come to the farm when he was 9. He died there in 1958 at age 65. My best memory of Jim is seeing him pump water into a tin cup from the well.

“He would raise his hand and shake it wildly, waving to us. He didn’t seem to have any wrist bones because that hand would flop around loose. It was a strange sight. We missed him a lot when he died. I purchased a gravesite and stone for him myself.”

During their tenure, the Painters managed a staff of several workers and resident population that averaged about 30.

“When I came here, the home was losing money,” Painter said during a visit to the now derelict almshouse. “I told them I would make it a paying proposition and I did. For the first two years we all lived on white beans and milk from cows, but we made it.”

“The upkeep on the building was a full-time job. Now, this is a building,” he said, pointing to the three story edifice. “This building has walls that are 2 feet thick at the base and has over 30 rooms. It was a constant task just to keep it clean, but my wife did it.

Painter said keeping the building heated was also a problem because of lack of insulation. “When oil became cheap, we switched from a coal furnace. Oil was only nine cents a gallon, but even then the furnace burned seven gallons an hour. It fired a boiler so we could have steam heat. When it was going really well, it sounded like a runaway locomotive.”

Part of Painter’s duties was management of the county’s 360-acre farm. “We also had huge vegetable gardens and livestock,” he said.

Painter farmed the county land for 16 years after the almshouse was closed. Today Edward Guenter farms the land.

“The building is in bad shape,” painter said. “Most of the work we did has been undone I was sorry to see it go, but the welfare business took over and weren’t necessary anymore. I guess this building is unnecessary ____.

“There’s been talk of renovating it, but I don’t think that’s possible. It would mean raising taxes and folks aren’t going to stand for that. Probably the best thing would be to tear it down.”

“I guess that’s what progress is,” he said wistfully.

Transcribed by Carol S. VanValkenburgh
January 1, 2003

POOR FARM CEMETERY GETS MARKER

By Ralph Helenthal for The Telegraph

A cemetery at the Greene County Poor Farm finally has a marker in memory of the people who were buried in unmarked graves there.

The Greene County Board Saturday dedicated a memorial stone at a gravesite that received residents of the County Poor Farm over the years.

The Almshouse was in operation from 1842 to 1950, and residents with no families or money were buried in unmarked graves.

"There was no money available for gravestones," said County Board Member James "Deak" Guis. "There is a list of about 120 people buried here in the County Historical Society, but there are probably closer to 200 in this area."

The dedication is largely due to the work of Guis and fellow board member Gary Heberling.

"We cleared the area, which had grown up pretty bad," Heberling said. "We hated to see all those lives forgotten and unnoticed."

The stone for the marker was donated by Valsted Quarry near Hillview.

"I attended a funeral here in 1926," said Board Chairman Les Springman. "A resident was buried here, and I'll always remember what my dad said to me that day. He said 'Son, if you don't get out and work, that's where you'll end up.' It was a hard lesson."

Springman said he remembered some stones scattered in the cemetery, but over the years, they have disappeared.

Thelma Savage of Eldred came because she remembers an old lady, Carrie Woodman, who was admitted and died there years ago. "I'm not sure if she's buried here, but if she is, I'm glad she's remembered," she said.

Transcribed by Carol S. VanValkenburgh
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