



**A. M. Phelps.**



duced to the "spring-pole," which was regarded as a marvelous improvement on the maul mode of mashing corn, and afterwards came the more convenient horsemill, which was thought the limit of mechanical invention in grain grinding.

In 1811 Mr. Scales enlisted as first sergeant in Captain Hargrave's company in the war of 1812, and he participated in the battle at Tippecanoe. After the close of the war he removed to what is now the northeastern part of Warrick county, settling near Selvin. His occupation was principally that of a farmer, although he taught school a great deal of the time. He was accustomed to reading, and possessed what at that time and place was a very uncommon education. Consequently, his services during the greater part of his life were of a public or official nature. He was twice assessor of Warrick county. In 1843 he was elected sheriff of the county and held the office two years. He was elected county treasurer in 1847 and was holding this office at the time of his death. He raised a family of sixteen children, nine girls and seven boys, and has a large number of descendants still living in the county.

He was a man of fine physique and a true type of the "old Scotch gentleman." He was of a sociable, mirthful disposition, and possessed a fund of thrilling and amusing anecdotes of personal experience in his early settlement. He died in Boonville in 1848, at the place where Hon. B. S. Fuller now lives.

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#### A. M. PHELPS.

The marriage of Cadwell Phelps and Margaret Hamilton was consummated February 19th, 1775. Of this union four children were the issue, among whom was A. M. Phelps, the subject of the present sketch, who was born January 6th, 1798, in Hartford, Windsor county, Vermont, where his father, who was of English extraction, had settled some two years previous.



At that period the country was almost a wilderness, and the newness of the territory, in connection with the father's limited means, made the education of his children rather a slender affair. To make amends for this the lad, A. M. Phelps, when released by his father at the age of nineteen, worked two years at ten dollars per month, then entered the Royalton Academy, Vermont, and was a student there for about a year.

But long before this the fame of the great west had reached the green hills of Vermont, and had so gained the attention of young Phelps that at the early age of fourteen, when his father one day pointed out to him an adjacent tract of land on the south side of the farm, and which was then for sale, following it with the remark: "Abraham, we must go to work and try to make money enough to buy that farm for you to possess when you become of age." His reply was: "Father, when that day arrives I am bound for the West."

On the 10th of June, 1820, with wardrobe packed and slung over his back, and only thirty-three dollars in his pocket, he bade adieu to his New England home, and set his face westward so intensified with the idea of his land of promise that four hundred miles of foot travel was to him no dissuasion.

Cleveland, Ohio, was his objective point, and between it and his old home were many long and weary miles. His start was on Monday, and on the following Sunday he came to a church on the Mohawk river, New York, where a congregation was worshipping inside, and a large number of boys playing ball outside, which, to him, looked oddly enough, coming, as he did, from the land of steady habits.

In a few days he reached the Genesee country, New York, and saw in process of construction what was in that day sarcastically termed "Governor Clinton's Ditch," the same which is now enlarged and known as the Great Western Ship and Barge Canal.



Shortly after this he reached Lake Erie at a point four miles below Buffalo, and called Black Rock, where the steamer *Walk-in-the-water*, the first and only vessel of its kind then running on western waters, was to make its departure on the next day. Steam navigation at that time was so crude and imperfect as to be akin to failure; therefore, on the appointed morning those concerned thought that to make the vessel walk in the water, a tow line from the steamer with four yoke of oxen hitched to it would make the feat more certain, and, besides, there were Niagara Falls not so far off as could be wished under the circumstances, whose current might give the boat a backward motion, notwithstanding its steam power. It would look as though the calculation was well made, for when all was ready it was found that the combination of ox muscle and steam power made the boat advance at least two miles an hour. When the danger of the current was passed and the oxen unhitched the boat had a speed of from four to five miles an hour, which enabled Mr. Phelps, who had taken passage in it, to reach Cleveland, distant two hundred miles, in fifty-six hours. But steam power, as applied to navigation, was then in its infancy, and the novelty of calling oxen to the aid of steamers has long since become obsolete.

An uncle and aunt who lived in the little town of Newburgh, situated some six miles back of Cleveland, induced a visit of two weeks. This town will not now be found on the map, for years ago the growth of Cleveland had absorbed Newburgh.

This visit over, the young adventurer again set out with his face still westward, and his next stop was at Franklin, on the Big Miami, thirty-five miles north of Cincinnati, where he taught school in the same house two years and six months.

He then hired as a hand on a flat boat bound for New Orleans, but before starting invested all his money in the purchase of flour and chickens. His funds enabled him to lay in forty barrels of



flour and thirty dozen chickens. This was in April 1823. The Miami was the river of mill-dams, and the boat had to run over twenty-four of these before the Ohio could be reached, consequently a rise in the river must be had before the boat could start.

The voyage down the Ohio was a very pleasant one, and his opportunities for examining the towns and country along the banks were quite good.

Of the many places that came under his observation on this trip, Evansville attracted his attention most, and he selected it as the place of his permanent residence.

While in Louisiana and Mississippi he had learned that the reeds used in weaving were so scarce as to command a very high price. This inspired his ingenuity, and on his return to Evansville, which was in June, he went into the manufacture of weaver's reeds, the canebrakes of Kentucky being his chief field of supply, and so assiduously did he work at this that by the middle of November he had about one hundred of these articles ready for sale.

The reeds necessitated the construction of a large skiff with a canvass covering to give shelter from the weather, and when completed, he, with a boy named Jones, whose mother's name was Abbot, made his second trip to the South, where his reeds were peddled out at from two to five dollars each, the pay being partly made in beef hides, deer skins and beeswax, which he sold in New Orleans.

While making this second trip he became acquainted with a Philadelphia merchant at Vicksburg, who bargained with him to peddle goods for one year, Florence, Alabama, being designated as the place where the merchant would supply Mr. Phelps with the goods. To carry out this project his second return to Evansville was followed by a trip to Florence, where he prepared him-



self for his new undertaking, in which he was engaged something over a year.

His next movement was to sell his peddling equipage, retaining, however, the horse on which he travelled to Memphis. There he disposed of the horse, and took steamboat passage for Natchez. In this city he came in contact with a Mr. Wade, from Boston, with whom he contracted for a supply of goods, which he agreed to peddle out in a floating trip down the river, a skiff being used for the conveyance. When a return was desired a steamer was employed to take the skiff to Memphis, when a new supply was laid in and a new trip commenced. Five trips were thus made in one season which realized him in the way of profit about one thousand dollars. This he invested in a stock of dry goods, boots and shoes, and returned to Evansville, in June, 1827.

On July 17th, 1827, he was married to Miss Frances Johnson, with whom he had formed an acquaintance about a year previous.

The following October he put all his goods in a small flatboat, employed a yellow man named Dave, who formerly belonged to Hugh McGary, one of the founders of Evansville, and again started down the river on a peddling expedition. He reached New Orleans in January, 1828, where he purchased a fresh stock of goods, and from this may be dated his permanent establishment in business, for on his return to Evansville he commenced mercantile trade, in a frame house which then stood on the present site of Marble Hall.

His first clerk was James G. Jones, the Judge, and beloved of after times, who was then about fourteen years old, and who lived with him some two years, when Mr. Phelps sold out his stock of goods. While in business he took in pork and nearly all kinds of produce, which he shipped to New Orleans in flat boats, making two or three trips a year.



In 1830, after selling out his stock of goods, and finding himself in possession of some two thousand dollars of United States paper, he resolved to visit his old home in Vermont, from which he had been absent ten years.

On his return he stopped at New York, where all his money and some credit were invested in a fresh stock of goods, which he opened in Newburgh, Indiana, he having decided to make that town his future place of residence. This occurred about the 1st of October, 1830.

Since then he has travelled in the stage coach and canal boat more than forty times for the purpose of laying in goods, New York and Philadelphia being the places where he bought his heaviest stocks.

In those days the whistle of the locomotive had not echoed among the passes of the Alleghenies, and the travel worn western merchant found himself on the Atlantic seaboard for the purpose of laying in goods at an expense and fatigue that would astonish business men of the present times.

For many years after the removal of Mr. Phelps to Newburgh his competition was very slight, while his means and credit soon established for him a heavy business. Though the town was at that time only a hamlet and the country very thinly settled, yet customers from Pike, Dubois, and Spencer counties made Newburgh their commercial center, and built up for Mr. Phelps a large produce business. In addition to this, of the settlers who were then living on Congress land, many of them got him to purchase their lands for them, allowing him a reasonable interest, and he giving them time to make their payments, and sometimes rendered them further assistance by taking their produce and shipping it to New Orleans. This bartering business required the employment of several flatboats every year to take off the produce that came into his hands, and the county records show



that about one tenth of the lands in Warrick county have passed through his hands.

Of the many clerks who have been in his employ may be named his brother Cadwell Phelps, who, after two years of service started a successful business in Boonville. There was also Neely Johnson, afterward Governor of California, Henry Williams, Albert Hazen, Union Bethell, Smith Hazen, Isaac Adams, John DeArmon, Tillman Bethell, D. B. Hazen and Robert Hall, the most of whom are living and doing well.

In 1855, and indeed for some years previous, the coal fields of Southern Indiana were in process of development, and about this time the first coal shaft in the vicinity of Newburgh was sunk on Mr. Phelps' land. At a subsequent date in conveying this land to his children he reserved the coal privilege, though more recently he has entailed this upon his heirs. The magnitude of this business may be somewhat appreciated when it is stated that the royalty on the coal taken from these lands amounts to over two thousand dollars per annum.

His religious career dates from 1834, and in 1837 he built the first church in the county. This house was located in Newburgh, and, after its completion and preparation for service, was donated to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, of which body Mr. Phelps was a member. It was afterwards donated to Indiana Presbytery for school purposes, and there are those now living and holding prominent positions in the church who can remember that their initiatory was taken at Newburgh, and within the walls of Delany Academy, this being the cognomen of the house after its donation to the Presbytery.

Mr. Phelps may be regarded as Newburgh's pioneer merchant, and his removal from Evansville was with the view to supply a need, in making it more convenient for the farmers of Warrick and Spencer counties to ship their produce and lay in the neces-



sary supply of goods; and though the position was to him a lucrative one, and places him to-day among the wealthiest of his county, yet he has ever looked upon Evansville as the point for the great commercial emporium of Southern Indiana, and in consequence is to-day, as of yore, a warm advocate of railroad and other improvements that look to the enlargement of Evansville, and the growth of the surrounding country.

In this sketch we have the farm-boy, the school-teacher, the flatboatman, the peddler, and the merchant, and underlying all there is a tenacity of will, a fixedness of purpose, and a perseverance in effort that finally achieves the desired success.

The old gentleman is now in his eighty-fourth year, and though enfeebled by age, and so crippled in his lower limbs as to make locomotion slow and painful, yet his mental power remains unimpaired, thus proving, in part, that immortality to which all are hastening.

He lives with his family, surrounded by his children and grandchildren, a patriarch among his townsmen and friends, and, without any apprehension or regret, is daily looking for the call of the Great Master to another mode of existence.

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#### JUDGE JOHN B. HANDY.

A careful student, a successful lawyer, an able and just judge, is John Brackenridge Handy, Judge of the Second Judicial District of Indiana. He was born at Washington, D. C., on August 27th, 1828, and is the eldest of a family of eight children, of Edward G. and Attilia A. Handy, of which he and his brother, James H., the second child, are the only survivors. He is of Irish-Scotch descent, and is a nephew of John A. Brackenridge, one of the ablest pioneer lawyers of Southern Indiana. In 1841 his father removed to Boonville; resided on a farm in Hart township for a while, and finally settled three miles west of



# MINUTES OF SESSION.

Whereas, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1886, after a long life of 88 yrs. <sup>3 months &</sup> 26 days, it pleased Almighty God in his tender mercy to remove from his Church militant to his Church triumphant our dear Bro A.M. Phelps:—  
Be it Resolved:—

1<sup>st</sup> That the C.P. Ch. at Newburgh Ind. lost her Founder, and a supporter both in financial & spiritual matters, and the very useful member. Also the Session a faithful member & wise counselor.

2<sup>nd</sup> That the family, lost a kind, patient & loving father & grand father, and that we as a Session bow in submission to the divine will, & extend our sympathies to the bereaved ones, and with them rejoice at the prospect of meeting our father & Bro. in "Our Father's House".

3<sup>rd</sup> That the town lost one of its oldest and most useful citizens, and many a true & tried friend.

4<sup>th</sup> That a copy of these resolutions, dressed in mourning, be spread up on the record of this Church, and also a copy be sent to columns of the Conn. Presbyterian.

"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord +++ and their works do follow them",

Committee { M. L. Galloway  
G. A. Smith  
E. W. Butterworth.