

THE FIRST INDIANA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

BY W. H. RAGAN.

[Extracts from a paper read at the annual meeting of the Indiana Horticultural Society, 1906, and printed in full in the proceedings of the Society for that year.]

IN August, 1840, I saw my father and mother, each well mounted, he with saddlebags filled to their uttermost capacity, and she with a good-sized bag swinging from the horn of her saddle, vanish from view into the wilderness that well nigh surrounded our cabin home, and for a period of almost or quite a week they were gone from us. On their return they had much to tell us about their visit to the great city and of the many things they saw and heard while gone. They had attended the first meeting of the Indiana Horticultural Society; indeed helped organize the society and had displayed the fruit they had carried with them, in saddlebags and pannier, at the exhibition that was held in the "Hall of the new State House," which had been graciously granted them for the purpose. The meeting was held on the 22d day of August, 1840. James Blake was president and H. P. Coburn acted as secretary. Many others besides my good parents had assembled themselves together on that occasion, with the common purpose in view of effecting an organization for the promotion of horticulture in our then new State. The movement was largely inspired by the leading spirit of the late Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, then a resident of Indianapolis, and pastor of one of its pioneer churches. At the time of this meeting the *Indiana Farmer* was in its first volume, as a monthly, though for three years prior to that date an irregularly published weekly, bearing the same name, had been conducted by John Osborn and J. S. Willets. In 1840 Mr. Willets became sole proprietor of the monthly *Indiana Farmer* and its columns gave abundant evidence of his cordial support of the newly born Horticultural Society. At the close of the year 1840, or soon thereafter, Mr.

Beecher assumed the editorial charge of the paper, after which its name was changed to *Indiana Farmer and Gardener*, which became the official organ of the society during the succeeding five years of its existence, or until Mr. Beecher returned East.

Of those who participated in this early meeting, my parents often spoke in their later life. Indeed, it was an epoch in their otherwise quiet lives, and the theme was so fascinating to them and was so frequently reiterated in the hearing of us children, that I almost feel as though I had really "been there," and that I am now relating this as an original story. I have already said that James Blake was chairman of this first meeting and that H. P. Coburn (father of General John) acted as secretary, and besides these, Aaron Aldridge, Martin Williams, Benjamin Morris, Cyrus R. Overman, James Sigerson, Joshua Lindley and many others were present and contributors to the exhibition. No prizes were offered at this exhibition, but many fine and rare specimens of fruits bedecked the tables. Joshua Lindley exhibited the first specimen grown in the State of the justly celebrated Williams Bon Chretien (Bartlett) pear. It was too precious to sample, but my parents were permitted to handle it and "sniff its fragrant perfume," which they likened unto that of a well-ripened muskmelon. At the close of the exhibition it was presented to the editor of the *Indiana Farmer*, who, later, had the following to say of it: "It became perfectly mellow in a few days; was very juicy and of excellent flavor, and we can recommend it as one of the best varieties of pears." From a historical standpoint, this item is one of much interest, since, from that day to this, the Bartlett, all things considered, has been our most popular and valuable pear.

I do not think my parents attended the second annual meeting of Indiana Horticultural Society, which occurred in the fall of 1841, but they did attend that of 1842. On that occasion a much larger attendance of members and friends of the cause is noted and there was made an exhibition of fruits and flowers that would do credit to the best efforts known to the present generation of horticulturists, and this result was not called forth by any tempting offer of prizes to be awarded, for but one was to be

competed for, and that one a set of silver teaspoons for the best seedling apple. There were a number of competitors for this prize, which, in the hands of a competent committee, was finally awarded to a seedling that originated in Putnam county and that was exhibited by Reuben Ragan. The spoons are yet in the family, two of the six having fallen to the writer's share of his father's estate, and it is needless to add that they are highly prized as interesting and valuable souvenirs of early-day horticulture in Indiana. Mr. Beecher was a member of the committee that made the award and he also proposed the name, "Osceola," a name that the apple has since borne. Osceola, for whom the apple was named, was the brave and daring chief of the Seminoles, who had then but recently pined and dined in the military prison at Fort Moultrie, Charleston, S. C., a victim to the treachery of "pale-faced warriors."

The attendance at this third annual meeting of the society embraced, among others, the names of James Blake, James M. Ray, A. G. Willard, J. S. Willets, Nathaniel West, Aaron Aldridge, James Sigerson, Joseph Beeler, H. W. Beecher, Sherman Day, J. L. Richmond, L. Munsell, John Hobart, Abner Pope, C. W. VanHouten, Joshua Lindley, Calvin Fletcher, H. P. Coburn, A. F. Morrison, Powell Howland, Reuben Ragan, Martin Williams, C. R. Overman, Andrew Hampton, Cornelius Ratliff, Z. S. Ragan, George W. Merritt, N. Noble, William S. Hubbard and others of that day and generation, besides many of their wives and daughters. I well remember seeing my father and mother, with over-burdened saddlebags and pannier, leaving home to attend this meeting, and their return with the much-coveted prize they had won, and the stories they had to relate of the things they saw and the people they met, and these are some of the pleasant recollections of my child-life.

It is probable that the meeting and exhibition of 1842 marked the high tide of the society's existence, under its original organization. At any rate the organization ceased to exist, as such, with the return to the East of its chief promoter, the Rev. H. W. Beecher, which event, I think, occurred early in 1847. It is an honor and a credit alike to the horticulturists of our State that

the first society of its kind in the great West, now the home of the most noted organization of the kind in existence, should have been effected within our limits, and that, too, by men whose spirit of enterprise has been handed down through their own blood to the present day. All hail to their memories!

It may not be strictly appropriate to speak of the "reorganization" when the new society was not given the exact name of the old, for such is true. It was the "Indiana Horticultural Society" that was organized in 1840, and it was "Indiana Pomological Society" that was organized in October, 1860, but at the second biennial meeting, which occurred in January, 1863, the name was changed to Indiana Horticultural Society, and its meetings thereafter became annual. * * * The immediate credit of the organization of Indiana Pomological Society belongs more to E. Y. Teas than to any other one person. At the Indiana State Fair, held at Indianapolis in October, 1860, about twenty persons met on the evening of October 18, 1860, in the insurance office of Mr. Mayhew, on South Pennsylvania street, Indianapolis. * * * Notwithstanding the smallness of the number present, an organization was effected. Reuben Ragan was chosen president, William Miller, Abram Trueblood, J. W. Tenbrook and Lewis Jones, vice-presidents; William H. Loomis, secretary, and John C. Teas, treasurer.

Thus the Indiana Horticultural Society of to-day had its beginning. There were present on the occasion mentioned by Mr. Teas, according to the published records of that event, Lewis Jones, Wayne county; W. B. Lipsey, Washington county; Gardner Goldsmith, Marion county; C. Fletcher, Jr., Marion county; George M. Beeler, Marion county; T. A. Loyd, Tippecanoe county; E. Y. Teas, Wayne county; John Snapp, Johnson county; Joseph Ashton, Clark county; Dr. J. A. Warder, Cincinnati, Ohio, "and several other gentlemen." Among the "several other gentlemen" were J. W. Tenbrook, Parke county; John C. Teas, Henry county, and W. H. Ragan, Putnam county.

Lewis Jones presided at this preliminary meeting and Thomas A. Loyd acted as secretary. The form of an organization was

agreed upon, a committee consisting of Mr. Loomis, G. Goldsmith and E. Y. Teas having reported the same, after which a committee consisting of Dr. Warder, G. Goldsmith and E. Y. Teas reported the list of officers enumerated above, and the meeting adjourned to reconvene in the nursery office of Fletcher, Williams and Loomis on the following evening to further perfect the organization, etc.

Pursuant to the adjournment from the evening previous, the society reconvened on the evening of October 19, 1860, with a somewhat increased attendance. The president-elect not being present, Dr. George W. Mears, of Indianapolis, was called to preside, and Mr. Loomis took his place at the secretary's desk. Those present on this occasion, in addition to those mentioned as having been present on the previous evening, were: Dr. George W. Mears, of Marion; R. E. Ragan, of Hendricks; Dr. J. C. Helm, of Delaware; Abner Pope, of Marion; D. V. Culley, of Marion; John F. Hill, of Marion; Erie Lock, of Marion; Eliphalet Case, of Switzerland, and Thomas B. Morris, of Wayne counties. On motion of William B. Lipsey, of Washington county, a general fruit committee of seven was appointed. It embraced the following named gentlemen: Reuben Ragan, William Miller, E. Y. Teas, John Wright, J. W. Tenbrook, I. D. G. Nelson and W. B. Lipsey.

The first regular session of Indiana Pomological Society convened in the Supreme Court room in Indianapolis on Wednesday, January 9, 1861, in pursuance of adjournment. Reuben Ragan, president-elect, having declined, on account of age and infirmities, Hon. John A. Matson, of Putnam county, was called to preside.

John A. Matson, of Putnam county, was elected president; William Miller, of St. Joseph county; Barnabas C. Hobbs, of Parke county; Oliver Albertson, of Washington county, and Lewis Jones, of Wayne county, vice-presidents; John C. Teas, of Henry county, treasurer, and William H. Loomis, of Marion county, secretary, each to serve for two years. Letters were read from Reuben Ragan declining to serve as president, and from Dr. John A. Warder expressing his deep regret at not being

able to attend the meeting, and complimenting the fruit growers of Indiana on their successful organization and its auspicious promise of future usefulness. A constitution was formally adopted and much valuable discussion was indulged in concerning varieties of fruits, their adaptability to our soils and climate, and especially their true names and various synonyms. It may be correctly inferred from this that our fruit nomenclature was, at that day, in a bad plight and that its correction and improvement was regarded by members of the society as its most urgent obligation.

The meeting continued for three days and finally closed after the adoption of lists of varieties of fruits which were recommended to the people of the State for general planting. These lists embraced thirteen varieties of apples; twelve of pears; one of cherries; six of peaches; one of quinces; three of currants; two of gooseberries; six of grapes; three of raspberries, and four of strawberries, and also, in addition to these, a list of fruits which were "recommended as promising well." At the October meeting of the society the secretary had been directed to publish a circular of inquiry concerning the various fruits and to send it out to the growers of the State. A total of twenty-four responses had been received and were reported by that officer, who presented them to the meeting. In these several responses the aggregate of fifty-six varieties were mentioned with more or less approval by the several correspondents.

The second biennial session of the society was held in the rooms of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture in the State Capitol, beginning on January 7, 1863. The attendance at this meeting was rather small, owing to the existence of the War of the Rebellion, then raging at its height. At this meeting the constitution was changed in two important particulars: First, the meetings were made to occur annually thereafter, and second, the name of the society was changed from "Pomological" to "Horticultural." The main object in this latter change was to broaden the field of discussion. Before it was restricted to the discussion of fruits alone, now any topic within the broad field of horticulture might be legitimately introduced and discussed.

Hon. I. D. G. Nelson, of Fort Wayne, an intelligent and thoroughly practical horticulturist and extensive fruit grower, was elected president; Gen. Joseph Orr, of Laporte, Lewis Jones, of Wayne, Hon. John C. Shoemaker, of Perry, and W. H. Ragan, of Putnam, vice-presidents; George M. Beeler, of Marion, secretary, and John C. Teas, of Henry, treasurer. Thirty-two paying members, including several of the leading fruit-growers of the State, were enrolled during the meeting. The meeting lasted for three days and the discussions embraced a large list of appropriate subjects. Mr. Sylvester Johnson first became one of us at this session, since which we have had no more faithful and attentive member, he having subsequently served the society for eleven years consecutively as its efficient presiding officer. He is our senior member in years, and but two are now living who antedate his enrollment as a member and who at all times have been constant and faithful to their original obligation. Two lists of fruits, one that was recommended for "general planting" within the State, and one that "promised well," appear in the published proceedings of this meeting. These have proved of great value to the planters of that day and to subsequent generations. No fixed programs were arranged for the early meetings, and prior to that of January, 1864, no formal papers or addresses were read or delivered before the assembled society.

Prior to the year 1866 the society was entirely supported by the membership fees of those who constituted it. In 1866 the Hon. George W. Hoss, then State Superintendent of Public Instruction, arranged with the society to place a bound copy of its transactions for that year in each of the then existing township libraries throughout the State. This generous proposition, in addition to the high compliment to the character of the work being accomplished by the society, also enabled it to make a much more favorable contract with the publishers, by reason of the greatly increased number of volumes taken. The reports for this year were also bound in cloth instead of paper, as heretofore. We therefore owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Hoss, as also to the individual members who, prior to that date, and to a large extent since, have borne the burden of expense in keeping alive our cherished organization.

Below is an alphabetical list of those who were members prior to 1866, and the year in which they were such. By reason of time and space required, only the first year of membership is given, in case of each individual, many of whom became annual paying members, from and after their first initiation. Indeed this was, and has ever been, the rule:

Albertson, Oliver, 1865; Ashton, Joseph, 1860; Bayless, Lot S., 1864; Beeler, George M., 1860; Blair, J. W., 1865; Bond, S. R., 1865; Bond, Charles D., 1864; Brevoort, Ed S., 1865; Burnett, Steven, 1865; Caldwell, H., 1865; Campbell, George W., 1864; Carr, J. F., 1864; Case, Eliphalet, 1860; Conley, John J., 1861; Cox, Prof. E. T., 1864; Culley, D. V., 1860; Darrough, John, 1865; Dicker, James, 1865; Dunlop, John S., 1863; Fatout, D. B., 1863; Fawcett, J., 1865; Fisher, Stearns, 1864; Fitzgerald, T. H., 1865; Fleming, William, 1865; Fletcher, Calvin, 1860; Francis, John T., 1865; Freeman, John, 1865; Furnas, Dr. Allen, 1863; Furnas, Isaac, 1865; Goldsmith, G., 1860; Gregory, J. N., 1865; Harlan, Dr. J. B., 1864; Harrison, A. I., 1863; Helm, Dr. J. C., 1860; Hill, John F., 1860; Holmes, A. J., 1864; Hubbard, William S., 1864; Johnson, F. C., 1864; Johnson, Sylvester, 1863; Jones, Adam, 1865; Jones, Lewis, 1860; King, Edward, 1863; Lang, Louis, 1863; Lipsey, William B., 1860; Little, James A., 1864; Lock, Erie, 1860; Loomis, William H., 1860; Loveland, E. P., 1864; Lowder, Charles, 1864; Loyd, Allen, 1863; Loyd, Thomas A., 1860; Lupton, George, 1864; McCarty, Nicholas, 1863; McConnell, George W., 1864; Mankedick, Henry, 1863; Martin, J. H., 1864; Matson, J. A., 1861; Mears, Dr. G. W., 1860; Mendenhall, C. S., 1861; Miller, William, 1860; Morris, Thomas B., 1860; Morris, Samuel V., 1863; Morrison, Jacob, 1864; Myers, C. F. G., 1865; Nelson, DeGroff, 1864; Nelson, I. D. G., 1861; Nicholson, John H., 1865; Orr, Gen. Joseph, 1864; Parker, Christian, 1865; Pearson, Seth W., 1864; Pierce, John, 1861; Poole, Joseph, 1865; Pope, Abner, 1860; Ragan, Dr. G. T., 1863; Ragan, Reuben, 1860; Ragan, Robert E., 1860; Ragan, William A., 1863; Ragan, W. H., 1860; Ratliff, J. C., 1864; Reese, D. E., 1865; Ross, Charles, 1864; Rothrock, V., 1865; Rudisell, H. J., 1864; Schlater, William H., 1864; Shepherd, Rev. I. N., 1864; Shoemaker, J. C.,

1863; Simons, Thomas, 1863; Simpson, Archibald, 1861; Snepp, David J., 1864; Snepp, John, 1860; Springer, J. E., 1864; Sterret, Rev. Alexander, 1864; Stevens, Walter G., 1861; Stone, Gen. A., 1861; Stuart, Zimri, 1865; Tarleton, Caleb, 1863; Teas, Edward Y., 1860; Teas, John C., 1860; Tenbrook, John W., 1860; Thompson, Prof. S. H., 1865; Thornton, H. P., 1865; Troll, George R., 1865; Townsend, J. M., 1863; Trueblood, Abram, 1860; Van Camp, G. C., 1864; Wetmore, S. F., 1864; White, Jesse, 1865; Williams, Jesse L., 1864; Williams, Martin, 1860; Wright, Benjamin H., 1863; Wright, Capt. John, 1860; Young, H. H., 1864.

SAMUEL BIGGER.

Reminiscences by Jacob Julian in the Richmond Palladium. Kindness of Helen V. Austin.

[Mr. Jacob Julian was a native of Centerville and knew intimately the people and scenes of which he wrote. He afterward moved to Irvington, Marion county, and became a prominent lawyer in Indianapolis.]

AMONG the lawyers who during Judge Charles H. Test's time visited Centerville and sometimes appeared in court, was Samuel Bigger, who succeeded Judge Test as circuit judge, and in 1840 was made Governor of the State.

Bigger was a tall, rather fine-looking young man. He was fond of fun, and spent the most of his time playing on the violin in Noble's saloon and in joking with its inmates. He was a good-humored, pleasant fellow, apparently without energy or ambition, and was liked because of his social qualities. While, however, this was the public estimate of him, his intimate friends had confidence in his ability and ultimate success, and when Judge Test left the bench this jolly good fellow, this fiddler of the saloon, was made his successor. People soon found out that he was making an excellent judge. He did not prove an able lawyer, but with his good, strong sense and sterling honesty and