

## William Henry Smith Memorial Library of the Indiana Historical Society

CAROLINE DUNN

In the papers of Henry P. Thornton, an Indiana lawyer, which came to the Society last year as the gift of his grandson, J. F. Thornton, are several printed and manuscript items concerning the efforts of the veterans of the War of 1812 to obtain pensions for themselves and their families in the decade from 1850 to 1860. Meetings, local, state, and national, were held agitating the subject; resolutions were adopted; and pressure was brought on Congress and other officials.

At a meeting of citizens of central Indiana counties, held February 9, 1850, as described in a newspaper clipping, Governor Wright spoke on the deeds of the frontier militia of 1812 and on the right and need of the survivors and their families for aid. They, as well as the soldiers of the Mexican War, should be remembered by a grateful country. The veterans passed resolutions stating that the soldiers would require pledges of candidates for Congress and the legislature to use their best efforts to secure a "grant from the National bounty."

A national convention in Washington in January, 1855, is reported in two other clippings. Here General Leslie Combs delivered a stirring address on the deeds and sufferings of the soldiers of 1812 concluding, "let us go before Congress now and ask for justice, not for charity, and if they refuse, we will 'meet them again at Phillippi.' They shall hear our voices at the polls, as loud as drums and trumpets, next election day, and in the Presidential campaign of 1856."

April 6, 1857, the veterans of Lawrence County, Indiana, met in Bedford and approved a memorial to Congress and appointed delegates to a state convention called for June 18. Major Thornton was one of these delegates.

Included in the material is a manuscript draft for a joint resolution of the Indiana legislature urging passage by Congress of a bill on pensions.

A state meeting and organization in Ohio are described in an undated clipping. In addition to reminiscing and some political bickering, here too resolutions were adopted, for, said one of the speakers, to many the government's tardy

grant of land had come too late, in old age they were without comforts, and the law should be amended, also, to provide for the widows and orphans.

Also in the collection are parts of two issues of *The Old Soldier's Advocate*, which was issued in Cleveland in 1859 and succeeding years and which gave news on pension legislation, interpretation of the laws, and information on obtaining land warrants and pensions.

The book purchase of recent months in which the library takes greatest delight is *Sketches of Louisville and its environs*, by H. M'Murtrie, M.D., printed in Louisville in 1819. The author seems well-informed and writes interestingly. He discusses the geology and antiquities of the region, lists the flora, describes in considerable detail Louisville and its development, New Albany, Clarksville, Jeffersonville, and Wyandotte cave. He considers at length the proposed canals around the Falls and strongly advocates one on the Kentucky side. And he gives descriptive lists of Ohio River steamboats of 1812 to 1819 and of the earthquakes of 1811-1812. A frontispiece map shows the rapids in the river, the falls and the adjoining land on both banks.