



Brown County Journal

September 15, 2011

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society meeting
October 3

Brown County Genealogical
Society meeting
October 11

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Rhonda D.

Origins of the Names of the Full Moon

I'm sure everyone has heard of the Harvest Moon in the fall, the most beautiful moon of the year. It seems to sit right on the horizon and looks to be the biggest of all year. This is the Harvest Moon this month. Full Moon names date back to Native Americans of what is now the northern and eastern United States. The tribes kept track of the seasons by giving distinctive names to each recurring full Moon. Their names were applied to the entire month in which each occurred. There was some variation in the Moon names, but in general, the same ones were current throughout the Algonquian tribes from New England to Lake Superior. European settlers followed that custom and created some of their own names. Since the lunar month is only 29 days long on the average, the full Moon dates shift from year to year. Here is the Farmers Almanac's list of the full Moon names that are more commonly used. Check their website for other names that have been used at: www.almanac.com

- ~ January - Full Wolf Moon: Amid the cold and deep snows of midwinter, the wolf packs howled hungrily outside Indian villages, thus, the name Wolf Moon.
- ~ February - Full Snow Moon: Since the heaviest snow usually falls during this month it was named thus by the native tribes of the north and east.
- ~ March - Full Worm Moon: As the temperature begins to warm and the ground begins to thaw, earthworm casts appear, heralding the return of the robins.
- ~ April - Full Pink Moon: This name came from the herb moss pink, or wild ground phlox, which is one of the earliest widespread flowers of the spring.
- ~ May - Full Flower Moon: In most areas, flowers are abundant everywhere during this time - thus, the name of this Moon.
- ~ June - Full Strawberry Moon: This name was universal to every Algonquian tribe. The relatively short season for harvesting

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- strawberries comes each year during the month of June.
- ~ July - Full Buck Moon: July is normally the month when the new antlers of buck deer push out of their foreheads in coatings of velvety fur.
 - ~ August - Full Sturgeon Moon: The fishing tribes are given credit for the naming of this Moon, since sturgeon, a large fish of the Great Lakes and other major bodies of water, were most readily caught during this month.
 - ~ September - Full Corn Moon: This full moon's name is attributed to Native Americans because it marked when corn was supposed to be harvested. Most often, the September full moon is actually the Harvest Moon, which it will be this year.
 - ~ October - Full Harvest Moon: This is the full moon that occurs closest to the autumn equinox. In two years out of three, the Harvest Moon comes in September, but in some years it occurs in October. At the peak of harvest, farmers can work late into the night by the light of this Moon. Corn, pumpkins, squash, beans, and wild rice the chief Indian staples are now ready for gathering.
 - ~ November - Full Beaver Moon: This was the time to set beaver traps before the swamps froze, to ensure a supply of warm winter furs. Another interpretation suggests that the name Full Beaver Moon comes from the fact that the beavers are now actively preparing for winter.
 - ~ December - Full Cold Moon: Sometimes called the Full Long Nights Moon, during this month the winter cold fastens its grip, and nights are at their longest and darkest.



Horse Thief Detectives of Brown County

In the early days of Brown county horses were a necessary part of farming and transportation and were considered a valuable asset. Indeed early tax records show that a tax was levied on the number of horses an individual owned. In the early 1800s horse thieves were so numerous that the county sheriff couldn't handle all of the reports of horse thefts, especially in the far reaches of the rugged hills of Brown County. Thus, began the formation of bands of citizens to protect their property into groups called Regulators in the 1840s; and over the years organizations developed that were to be called Horse Thief Detective Associations. The earliest records of these organizations are difficult to find since the Brown County courthouse fire of 1873. But stories can be found of some of these earlier organizations in other sources. Some accounts can be found in unusual sources such as biographies and county histories.

One such story can be found in a journal kept by a visiting minister, Eli T. Farmer, in 1846. From Minister Farmer's accounts of the conditions of wild and woolly Brown County, "A certain region of the county was known throughout by the undignified name of Big Hog Thief Settlement while another was known as Little Hog Thief. Many vicious bad men lived in both neighborhoods and these men became so desperately wicked and audacious, that they absolutely stole every good horse in a wide circuit and extending into

the adjoining counties. They became so bold and powerful that good citizens were compelled to organize a band of Regulators.” Neighboring counties worked together to help each other run the thieves out of their territory as some of these theft rings ran through many neighboring counties.

Another account related in the local newspaper, the Hickory Withe April 1857, a short article read, “John V. Martin and Andrew Fry, arrested for horse-stealing, were tried last week. The horses charged to have been stolen by Martin and Fry have been recovered and were found in Clay County.” Upon examination of the court case two horses had been stolen from Daniel and William H. Arwine in the southwest part of the county. During the hearing the accused asked for a change of venue stating the reason, that “they feared for their life.” Martin and Fry stated that a number of influential citizens forced a partial confession from them by threatening harm to them. It was not stated if these influential citizens belonged to any group such as Regulators but it was likely in this case. This is the closest account of a vigilante group involved in a horse theft case. Martin and Fry were indeed convicted of horse theft and spent their time in the county jail.

The later organized citizens’ groups of the late 1800s were formed in the far outlying areas of Brown County and were then called Horse Thief Detective Associations. The National Horse Thief Detective Association, the NHTDA, was first established in the United States in the 1840s copying previous organizations began back in the British Isles in the late 1700s. As time passed later records are found that show that many of these groups were formed in Brown County after the advent of the Civil War during Reformation. Laws were passed to give validity to these organizations in 1866. By this time the NHTDA had become a far reaching organization in Indiana. Their organizational hierarchy was well developed with officers and meetings to bring member groups together once a year. They would share information and encouraged all groups to promote themselves to other counties. There were four of these groups that were recorded in Brown County.

On June 4, 1878 a band of men formed together and called themselves the Horse Thief and Felony Detectives of Hamblen Township. This is the first known recorded Detective Association in the books of the Brown County Recorder’s office. A couple of the more interesting Articles in their courthouse record were:

1. There are to be three policemen in each school district and they are to be paid \$.50 per day when on duty.
2. Members are to be taxed, but not to exceed \$5.00 every three months, to defray the expenses in capture of any stolen property.

Term of the association was for a five year period with a renewal at the courthouse if members wanted to continue their organization. Officers were elected and the first members were William Walker, James W. McIlvain, John Wirey, John P. Prosser, Jacob R. Walker, Uriah Wisby, George Petro, Joseph M. Young, Asa F. Duncan, and Joshua Metheny. Membership grew over the years. This seems to be the longest operating



John Wirey, Sr.



John Wirey Jr.

association in the county. Their organization lasted according to courthouse records sometime past 1918 when an entry was made for renewal of their organization's Articles of Confederation.

By the early 1900s these Horse Thief Detective Associations became more popular. With Burns' Revised Statutes of 1901 initial regulations were put into effect for these associations. By 1907 the Indiana State Legislature put into law an Act concerning the workings and institution of Horse Thief Detective Associations. In Indiana these organizations had to be registered and these records can be typically found at the local courthouse. Section One of this Act stated "That any number of persons, citizens of the State of Indiana not less than ten and their associates and successors, to any number are hereby authorized to

form themselves into companies for the purpose of detecting and apprehending horse thieves and other felons, and for mutual protection and indemnity against the acts of such horse thieves and felons, as hereafter provided." With these new laws these organizations were now given more credibility and authority to act according to Indiana state law. One interesting section to note is under Section 7 the "Aid of Peace Officers," it states that "Said corporation shall have power to call to their aid the peace officers of this state, in accordance with law, in the pursuit and apprehension of all felons and in reclaiming stolen property and restoring it to the owner or owners thereof."

After this Act passed in 1907 the Gold Point Horse Thief Detective Association No. 142 was formed in the north central section of the county. The principal territory that they covered was Spearsville and Nineveh R. R. 2. Members for the first year were: John W. Walker, E. L. Sleighter, and James Huntsman. Members on the record were: William E. Walker, James M. Dine, Enos L. Sleighter, Albert Abbett, Newton A. Richardson, Porter M. Groves, James A. Dallas, Enoch Abbett, Joseph Dine, Charles M. Walker, and Wm. E. Parsley.

And in 1918 the third such association created was the Needmore Horse Thief Detective Association No. 119 of Jackson Township which is in the far northeastern section of the county. The first members were Wm. W. Prather, R.H. Fleener, Jacob M. Dagg as Captain, Wm. E. Prather, R. H. Fleener, James M. Fleener, J. O. Hawley, and Wm. F. Arnold, John Fleener, Elmer Tutterow, Frank McLary, and Wes Curry.

The Hamblen Township Horse Thief Detective Association No. 4 was formed in 1918. This was most likely a reformation of members of the earlier Hamblen township group. Their principal territory was rural Nineveh and the neighboring Brown County area. This seems to be the last such organization that was recorded in Brown County books. Members that were listed in the record were Charles Hathorn,

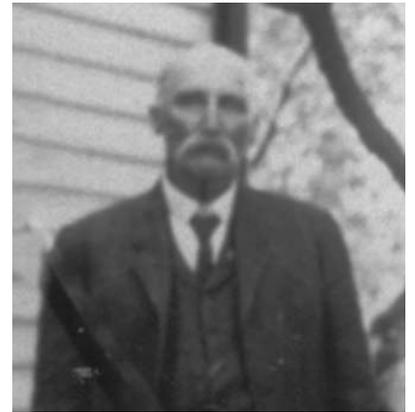


J. M. Fleener

Charles C. Campbell, Courtland Groves, Porter Groves, Alfred C. Oaldon, Virgil G. McQueen, J. W. Settle, John H. Condon, William E. Parsley, and Benton Schrougham.

Without considerable time to study court cases of thefts in Brown County, all one can find are stories and their mention in county records. One of these stories that came to light from a family history is about a young man, Jackson Keaton, with a history as a neighborhood thief who stole a horse and was convicted in Brown County in 1874. As the story goes he was apprehended by Uriah Wisby. As the facts were uncovered during research of this case it was not confirmed there was an involvement of a Horse Thief Detective Association in the court case. But Uriah was known to have been a member of the Hamblen township association.

One might find in Brown county that an individual often belonged to more than one group. Indeed there was cooperation and communication between all these detective associations and those of neighboring counties. The function of these later Detective Associations in Brown County seemed to have played the role of a neighborhood crime watch. They were certainly a lot tamer version than the earlier Regulators that ruled in the early 1800s. As soon as these organizations became known in their territory thefts seemed to have dropped off considerably. Finally, we don't know how many thieves were actually apprehended and what dangers the members of the associations encountered. Possibly just the knowledge that one of these organizations had been formed in the area might have just provided a good enough excuse for these horse thieves to move on. It's certain that these organizations did exist in the county for some time and are documented in county records. They played an important role in our history as a mostly rural county.



Uriah Wisby

Brown County Historical Society ~ October program

Next month's meeting will be on Monday, October 3 at 6:30 p.m. The program will be "John Dillinger's Connection to Brown County - The Day Jake Jenkins shot my Grandpa Herbie McDonald" by Diana McDonald-Biddle.

Brown County Genealogical Society ~ October program

Next month's meeting will be on Tuesday, October 11 at 7:00 pm.. Our program will be about "The History of Johnson Township." As many of you know Johnson Township no longer exists. But the people that settled the area and the many small communities that used to make up Johnson Township are worthy of a well-kept history and a source of many good stories. It will presented by Jeanette Richart, a descendent of these people.
