

# When Lone Jack Aspired to be a County Seat.

**L**ONE JACK is a quaint old town in the extreme southeastern corner of Jackson County. The region is one of Arcadian beauty and the town is the center of history and romance, and of vaulting municipal ambition. Lone Jack once aspired to become a county seat and this ambition came within one vote of attainment. Here is a long forgotten bit of history. Lone Jack is known in the annals of the great Civil War on account of the bloody battle fought there and the story of this battle has obscured the stories of political and social activities. The well-nigh successful effort to make a county seat at Lone Jack is one of the most sensational chapters in local history.

AN ARDAICIOUS MOVEMENT, THIS.

The project for making a county seat at Lone Jack arose about the time of the expiration of Gov. L. W. Boggs's term in the governorship of the state—1840. Governor Boggs lived in Jackson County, at Independence. The Lone Jack project did not contemplate the removal of the county seat from Independence; the movement was one of even greater audacity. The plan was to create a new county and thus avoid, if possible, the opposition of Governor Boggs. The new county was to be made up of portions and slices of territory taken from Jackson, Cass, Johnson and Lafayette counties. These four counties corner near Lone Jack, which by this arrangement, would have been at the center of the new county. The plan required the enactment of a law by the state legislature and here the scheme failed by one vote. The movement culminated in the winter of 1841 or 1842, though the agitation began some years earlier. The new county was to be named Donalson, in honor of Andrew Jackson Donalson, nephew and private secretary of President Jackson. The county of Jackson had been named for the hero of New Orleans before he became President and the county seat had been named Independence, as the chief characteristic of Jackson, who was regarded as a man of unbounded independence. President Jackson's native state, North Carolina, had sent out a large colony to Lone Jack. They used to call Lone Jack "Little Surrey," because so many people had come from Surrey County, North Carolina. Among these was an ambitious young man by the name of Caleb Winfrey, a medical student, then engaged in teaching school. This young school teacher was one of the prime agitators for a new county, and was an active delegate in the county convention, which was the first and only convention ever held in "Donalson" County. The young school teacher graduated in medicine a few years later and began the practice of his profession at Lone Jack where he had his office and conducted the first drug store in that part of the country; around this drug store raged fiercely the battle of August 16, 1862, Doctor Winfrey himself commanding a company of Confederates.

THE "DONALSON COUNTY" CONVENTION.

The Donalson County convention for the nomination of county officers was held at the home of Samuel Yankee, a mile southeast of Lone Jack. A full set of county officers was nominated. These officers were to receive appointments and commissions from the governor immediately upon the creation of the new county. The convention was very exciting, according to the memory of Doctor Winfrey, now a resident of Kansas City, and who is probably the only man living that took part in the convention.

One of the nominees for county judge was Archibald Ridding of Cool Springs. Ridding afterwards founded a college at

Cool Springs and patriotically named it Chapel Hill of North Carolina. In those days Cool Springs was a postoffice and Riddings kept a store and was postmaster, receiving the mail once a week from Independence. Riddings was, therefore, well known, and being highly respected, the young schoolteacher, Winfrey, had no difficulty in securing his friend's nomination for county judge. John Green of Cass County was named also for county judge. It should be noted, however, that Cass County was at that time Van Buren County; the name was changed in 1849.

#### A CRAZY APPORTIONMENT OF JONS.

Rubin E. Fulkerson of Lafayette County was named for sheriff. The purpose was to distribute the offices around somewhat among the four counties. Perhaps the most exciting and sensational nomination made by the convention occurred when it came to select a circuit clerk. A young man by the name of Josiah M. Carter, who was at the time clerking in Tate's log store at Lone Jack, received the indorsement of the convention. Mr. Carter was well qualified for the office, but the chief recommendation which carried him through was a beautiful and very popular sister. The young men of the convention were bolaterously in favor of Jos Carter. Doctor Winfrey has forgotten which of the young gallants finally won the prize, but he is certain that Miss Carter was a potent factor in the Donalson County convention. Of course, delegations from Lone Jack went to Jefferson City to push the scheme for a new county, but when the bill came up for the final vote in the house, there was wanting just one vote. The project was not again taken up.

#### A DAY OF SHIFTING BOUNDARIES.

The scheme for a new county with Lone Jack as the center and the seat of justice, was not at all preposterous. The counties of the state were not fixtures then. Every legislature was called upon to create new counties and to change county names. Again the ambition of Lone Jack was reasonable at that time. There was a sort of indefinite feeling in the public consciousness that somewhere along the western border of the state a great city was about to come into existence. Lone Jack did not consider the river as a necessity to the existence of a great city. Independence was several miles from the river and was the largest city in the West; Liberty, in Clay County,

was four miles from the river, and was a flourishing town; Westport set back four miles from the river, and was really the only competitor that Lone Jack feared in the race for municipal supremacy, and George Tate, the Lone Jack merchant, had left Westport for the greater prospects of "Little Surrey." Lone Jack was therefore forging ahead of Westport. Kansas City and Leavenworth were rivals, but Lone Jack feared neither of them.

Lone Jack was happily located on two highways of trade and travel. Here was the cross roads of two important stage lines, one from Warrenburg to Westport Landing and the other from Lexington to Harrisonville. Westport Landing was the most convenient point for emigrants to secure ferry services to the Platte Purchase, and Harrisonville invited travelers to the rich Indian

traffic of the Southwest. Lone Jack was right on the old Osage Indian Trace followed by the Indian traffic between the Kaws and Osages, from time immemorial. The black jack tree which stood on the high prairie and which gave Lone Jack its name was an old Indian signal. Evidently Nature intended to nurture a great metropolis right here at Lone Jack. If the place could be designated a county seat, the plans of Nature would be maternally aided. Even genius felt the ailments of the greatness of Lone Jack; Martin Rice, the poet, lived here and earnestly sought to aid the new county.