

CHAPTER XIX

NEW MADRID AND MADISON COUNTIES

BLOWS TO NEW MADRID—INCORPORATED AS A CITY—LONG THE COUNTY SEAT—POINT PLEASANT
—PORTAGEVILLE—FREDERICKTOWN.

We have set out that New Madrid was incorporated in 1808. It grew slowly, however, and in 1811 contained only two stores and a few houses. Many of the inhabitants of the town moved away after the earthquake, and for several years affairs were at a standstill. The town was greatly benefited, however, by being selected as the seat of justice for the county. This was in 1822. In 1834 the town was reincorporated by the county court, and again in 1868. The trustees in 1834 were: William Pierrepont, Geo. G. Alford, Dr. Robert D. Dawson, Ashael Smith and Alphonse Delaroderie.

The early merchants were: Robert G. Watson, Robert McCoy, Matteo Bogliolo and Geo. G. Alford. In the decade from 1840 to 1850 business was transacted by H. T. Maulsby, Napoleon LeSieur, B. Powell, Richard J. Waters, Samuel Allen, W. B. Harper and Thomas Dowd. In 1856 the merchants were: Allen, Waters, R. A. Hatcher & Co., Hunter & Watson, F. V. LeSieur, T. J. O. Morrison, and Warrington & Pennell.

BLOWS TO NEW MADRID

The town suffered greatly during the war, as did most southeast towns. It was the scene of several skirmishes and battles. During 1862 General Pope laid regular siege to it.

The Confederate forces defending the town were numerous and well-armed and several Confederate gunboats were in the river. Pope landed near the town with a large force, but doubted his ability to carry it by assault or to hold it in face of the fire from the gunboats. He accordingly contented himself at first with surrounding it as far as possible and ordered heavy guns from Cairo for a siege. The attack on New Madrid was a part of the movement for opening the river, and had for its immediate object the capture of the strongly fortified post of Island Ten. Finally, not being able to dislodge the Confederates from New Madrid, he took possession of Point Pleasant and New Madrid was evacuated. It had been repeatedly fired upon and suffered from this and other attacks. Many houses were burned and much property destroyed.

One thing which dealt a blow to the prosperity of New Madrid during and after the war was the destruction of the Blanton plank road. This road led across the Little River swamp to West Prairie, near Clarkton. It offered the people of Dunklin and Stoddard counties access to river transportation at New Madrid and drew a considerable trade to that town. Its destruction cut off this trade and caused it to seek other outlets.

In spite of these various misfortunes, the

citizens did not lose faith in the final prosperity of their town and they did not abandon it. It grew slowly during the years, its prosperity keeping pace with the opening and improving of the land about it.

INCORPORATED AS A CITY

In 1878 the town was incorporated as a city of the second class. John W. Brownell was mayor and the aldermen were H. C. Latham, T. H. Digges, John E. Powell, and F. Kopp. Since that time the city government has been maintained and the town has had a prosperous history.

Some of the merchants, following the incorporation, have been Mann Bros., G. V. LeSieur, H. C. Latham, Hunter & Mathewson, Lilburn Lewis, Henry Jasper, T. H. Digges, and Parks & Akin. At the present time there are some forty business establishments, including general stores, special mercantile establishments of various kinds, and some manufacturing plants. The latter include some woodworking plants, cotton gins, electric light and water works plant, and grist mills.

The town is situated on a branch of the St. Louis Southwestern, which runs from Lilbourn to New Madrid. There has just been constructed a new railroad from Marston on the Frisco to New Madrid. This was built by home capital, having been promoted by E. S. McCarty, who has built a number of lines in this part of the state and northeast Arkansas. This is an unusually well-constructed and equipped line and will probably be extended to connect with other systems.

LONG THE COUNTY SEAT

New Madrid has been the county seat for many years, but has been unfortunate in having the court house destroyed by fire.

Other towns have desired the removal of the county seat, and while they have not so far been able to secure its removal, they have been able to prevent the rebuilding of the court house at New Madrid.

There has recently been erected a new and commodious Catholic church, which is an ornament to the town. There are two other churches, the Methodists having recently built a well-arranged brick building for their use. The town maintains a good public school, having a large brick school building. There are two weekly papers, the *Weekly Record* and the *Southeast Missourian*. They are both well-edited and influential papers.

The present population is 1,882. New Madrid is well situated. It is at the lower end of the great sand ridge known as the Sikeston ridge. Its soil is fertile, there are some fine shade trees, and the town presents a pleasing appearance. Just south of the town is a great Indian mound, which local tradition says is the site of De Soto's camp. The site is not that of the original town, as that has long since been swept away by the river.

POINT PLEASANT

Point Pleasant, in New Madrid county, was settled in 1815 by Francois LeSieur. He conducted a store until his death in 1826. John Woodward operated a combined hotel and store at the same place. Steamboats, however, were prevented from landing at the town because of the formation of a sand bar in the river, and for this reason the business of the town was transferred to a new site about one mile further south. On this new site there had been a wood-yard in operation since 1817. It was conducted by Alphonse Delaroderie. It was in 1846 that the new town was laid off and building begun. The first houses erected for business were ware-

houses. They were built by John Woodward and Pleasant Bishop. The first merchant of the town was John J. Cox.

For years the town was an important and flourishing one. Large stores were erected. The population grew. An academy was chartered in the early days and all indications pointed to the place as designed for the site of a thriving city. Unfortunately for its inhabitants, the river began to encroach upon the town. At first the caving was just south of the main part of the town. Gradually it extended up the river, until many of the houses had to be moved back. So rapidly did the bank cave in at times that it was almost impossible to remove the houses fast enough to save them. After several successive removals, the site was abandoned by many of the residents, who were attracted by the growth of Portageville, which began to acquire importance through the construction of the Frisco Railroad through it. These causes greatly reduce the population of Point Pleasant and the historic name is preserved by only a handful of houses.

PORTAGEVILLE

Portageville, in the south part of New Madrid county, now a flourishing town, had its beginning in 1848, when Edward Meatte and Charles Davis established a store there. In 1851 Robert G. Franklin succeeded them.

Later Edward DeLisle became interested in the place and carried on a mercantile establishment for many years. Others came and the town grew slowly. Two causes at last made it an important and flourishing town: the ruin of Point Pleasant and subsequent removal of many of its inhabitants further from the river, and the building of the Frisco Railroad. The land about Portageville is fertile and when it was cleared up

and drained, the farming interests thus made possible gave an impetus to the town. Its present population is 987 and is rapidly increasing. It has wood-working plants and cotton gins, besides general and other stores.

The Farmers Bank was organized in 1905 and has a capital of \$20,000. The Portageville Bank was chartered in 1903. Its capital is \$20,000. There is a good system of public schools and the usual church organizations.

FREDERICKTOWN

This town, which was the successor of St. Michaels, was laid off in 1819. The land was owned by Nathaniel Cook and the commissioners appointed to set out the limits of the town were Theodore F. Tong, John Burdette, Joseph Bennett and Henry Whitener. The first stores in the town were owned by S. A. Guignon, S. B. Pratte and Moses and Caleb Cox.

Not much growth was made by Fredericktown until after the building of the Belmont branch of the Iron Mountain Railroad. There was always some business transacted, and the list of merchants includes six or eight names at any particular time, but the growth was, on the whole, slow for many years. The first paper published in Fredericktown was a Free Soil paper, called *The Espial*. It was established in 1847 by James Lindsay. An account of the other newspaper enterprises of the town is given in the chapter on newspapers. The first lodge was organized November 25, 1848. This was Marcus Lodge, A. F. & A. M. The meetings were held in the court house for a time, and F. L. Sullivan was the first temporary master.

The town was incorporated for the first time in May, 1868, and on November 28, 1903, it was incorporated as a city of the third class. The first mayor was R. Albert. There are now

four general stores in the town and about fifty other business institutions, but no factories of any considerable importance. There are three banks and the town is supplied with electric lights. The Union American Lead Company owns and has operated mines in the vicinity of the town, but the company has suspended operations for some time. Among the important interests of Fredericktown are Marvin college, and its good system of public schools. In another place we gave an account of the founding and some of the history of the college, which attracts to the town a number of students and families who come for the purpose of educating their children.

During the last four or five years Fredericktown has suffered in an unusual way from

calamities, a number of destructive fires have swept away some of the best and most important buildings and, too, the town has been damaged by serious floods; it is situated on the Little St. Francois river and some of the town is on ground subject to inundation. Its situation is a delightful one and few places offer a more pleasant site for residence than Fredericktown. Its population is 2,632. It is situated on the Belmont branch of the Iron Mountain Railroad and is now and has been for many years the county seat of Madison county.

There are two weekly newspapers published in the town. *The Democrat-News* is Democratic in politics and *The Tribune* is Republican.