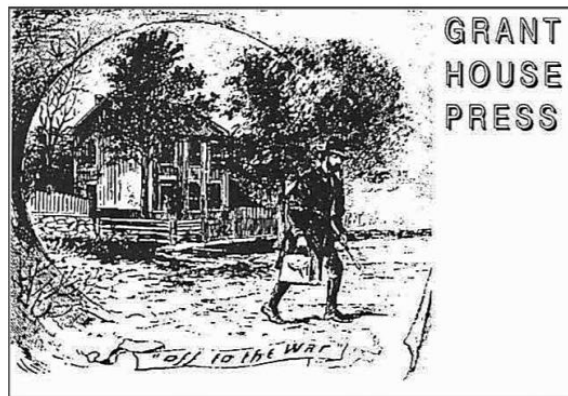


SOME EARLY CLANS, ABODES, & ROADS

in Geneva, the Fox Valley, and Beyond

by

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23 Kane Street
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The front façade of the Bristol Farmhouse once located near the west bank of the Fox River on the northwest corner of River Road and the State Road to Dixon's Ferry in Geneva Township, Kane County, Illinois. (HABS, 1934)



The back façade of the Bristol Farmhouse. The small sign over the rear door says "Entrance Bar Room." Notice that the north and south gable façades are the same with centered doors suggesting that the building is two small homes rotated and combined. (HABS, 1934)

Henry A. Miller, M.D., the fourth and youngest son of Hendrick and Mary Blanchard Miller, came to Geneva in 1836. Dr. Miller must have been favorably impressed as more members of the Miller clan joined him in 1837.¹ Migration was in the Miller family's blood.² Judge and former U.S. Congressman Isaac "Daddy" Wilson arrived in Batavia in 1835 with his large family that included his nineteen year old youngest son Isaac Grant Wilson. Judge I.G. Wilson was later a Genevan.

The first members of the Miller clan to migrate to northern Illinois were Harmon Miller and William A. Miller, the second and third sons of Hendrick and Mary. The pair's 1835 land claims remained in the same location straddling the Kishwaukee River 25 miles northwest of Geneva. However, their homesteads were "moved" by the Illinois Legislature twice within two years: first after being located in LaSalle County in 1835, their claims "moved" to the new Kane County in 1836, and then "jumped" to the even newer DeKalb County in 1837.

Harmon and William Miller were prominent citizens almost immediately upon arrival. "A 'settlers meeting,' at a given time and place, therefore, came to be the watchword, from shanty to wagon, until all were alarmed. Pursuant to this proclamation, a 'heap' of law and order-loving American citizens convened on the 5th of September, 1835, at the shanty of Harmon Miller, then standing on the east bank of the Kishwaukie [sic], nearly opposite the present [1868] residence of Wm. A. Miller in the town of Kingston."³ Amazingly, William Miller's unusual two-story log home stands in 2020 near the banks of the Kishwaukee.

Dr. Henry A. Miller was a newly minted physician in 1836, having just graduated in the spring of that year from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District of New York at Fairfield. Martin Van Buren, Jr., was one of Henry's 162 classmates.⁴ He was Geneva's second postmaster then called La Fox P.O.

Disinterest, neglect, and decay have recently erased two important structural artifacts of the Miller family's presence in Geneva, but a few remain.⁵ An examination of one of these relics reveals just how many aspects of Geneva's formation were touched by a Miller.

¹ Sending an advance member or two to explore and assess new territory was a common strategy among the pioneer families of Northern Illinois. Often this was the first link in what is termed "chain migration." Davis, James Edward. *Frontier Illinois. A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. p83-4.

² The oldest Miller son, Horace, was born in Schaghticoke, Rensselaer Co., N.Y. in 1803. Middle sons Harmon (1806) and William (1810) were born in Trenton, Oneida Co., N.Y. Henry (1813) was born back in Schaghticoke, NY. The original North American Miller was a Protestant religious refugee from the German Palatine Region of the Rhine Valley in about 1710 when he settled in the Hudson River Highlands in the town of Montgomery, Orange County, N.Y.

³ Boies, H. *History of De Kalb County*, 1868. p354.

⁴ *Circular and Catalogue of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District of the State of New York, in Fairfield, Herkimer Co.* Albany, N.Y. 1839. p21. George Washington Richards, M.D., from the Western Reserve of Northern Ohio, had graduated from Fairfield in 1828 (p19) and founded Illinois' first Medical School in St. Charles in 1842, the year after Dr. Henry Miller died in Geneva. Martin Van Buren, Jr., did not graduate from Fairfield. He died at age 42 in Paris in 1855. He has been the compiler of his father's memoirs, an assistant during his father's presidency.

⁵ The "Widow Stoakes House" at 130 East State Street and the original 1½ story Miller structure of the "Miller-Gully House" at 122 East State Street were both demolished in 2018 after being allowed to deteriorate by the City of Geneva's lack of code enforcement. Mary Love Miller Stoakes (1812-1889), Hendrick and Mary Blanchard Miller's second daughter, was the "Widow Stoakes." Mary's first husband, James Lawrence Stoakes, was her stepbrother, as was her second husband, Clement Vickers Stoakes. Hendrick Miller's third wife had been Mary Lawrence, the widow of Reverend James Stoakes. The Stoakes and the Millers had other connections.

The above pictures are of an early Geneva structure that still stands, if obscurely. The Bristol Farmhouse is listed on the Historic American Buildings Survey, a 1930s Works Progress Administration designation more exclusive than the National Register of Historic Places. Only three HABS listed buildings exist in Geneva, and a Miller was associated with two of them.⁶

The Harvey Bristol Farmhouse was something of a local landmark as early as March 1839. An Illinois State Law of that month and year appointed a commission to “mark, locate and, establish a State Road from Fox River...to Dixon’s ferry...” This commission was to begin the road “...at or near a house built by Harvey Bristol and now occupied by Horace Town...” The HABS writers dated the structure to “about 1843.”⁷

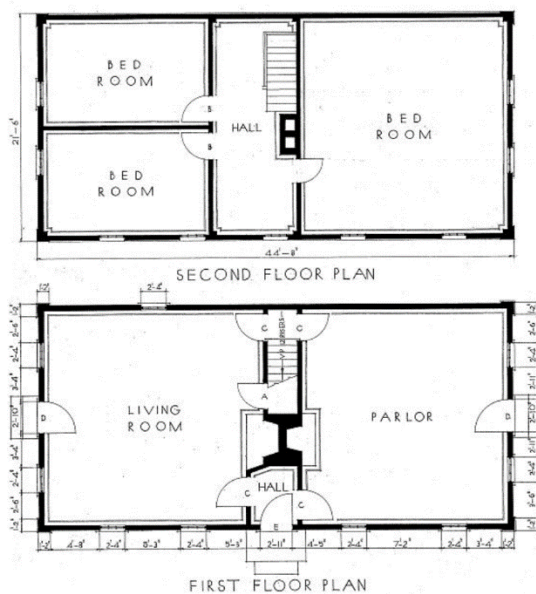
The Illinois Act that commissioned a “State Road...in the counties of Kane and Dekalb” and directed that the road originate “...commencing on the west bank of Fox River, at or near a house built by Harvey Bristol and now occupied by Horace Town...” As will be seen when the roads that existed in the 1840s are examined, the Bristol Farmhouse was literally “at” the commencement of the legislatively prescribed road. (Appendix A)

A careful look at the photos and architectural drawings in the HABS survey shows that Bristol Farmhouse appeared in 1934 as a vernacular Greek Revival styled 1½ story tall, one room deep, low-pitched roofed, center-hall structure with a centered main entrance in the non-gable west façade and another entrance in the south gable façade. The architectural accents are typical Greek Revival details. But some quirks are apparent.

Typically, vernacular Greek temple-style structures have their gable end facing the street. Placing the non-gable side to the road would be unusual in Geneva, where so many such structures were built. The Bristol Farmhouse appears to exhibit classic Greek architectural symmetry. But it is not genuinely symmetric. The “eyebrow” windows under the eaves are centered over the first floor east façade fenestrations, as they should be. A basement exists under both sides of the house, and windows in the southern foundation are below the upper fenestrations. The north foundation has no windows but does have a covered basement entry in the rear western façade.

In 1934 Bristol Farmhouse was the John Nottolini Tavern. The “Entrance” sign was above the south door, and the “Bar Room” sign was over a rear door to the west, probably as a tip of the cap to the well-remembered days of prohibition when furtive comings and goings were favored for drinking establishments. The “formal” covered entry to the east bore no signage.

⁶ Captain C.B. Wells’ home was HABS listed in 1935 (located at 220 S. Third Street), and the Unitarian Church registered 1936 (located at 102 S. Second Street) are the other two HABS buildings. They remain on their original sites. *Historic Preservation Plan*. City of Geneva, Geneva, IL. 17 Nov 2008. p16. Harvey Bristol built his house in the S.W. corner of Section 10 of Township 39n (Geneva Township). His neighbor to the east across the Fox River was C.B. Dodson. The house that Dodson built across the River is said to have been the first frame house in Geneva, but the Bristol house is probably older. Other “first-framed” candidates were the Brown-Rathbone House on the north side of State Street between River and First Streets, the McElwain home at 102 S First Street, the Patten store NW corner of State and First, and the Miller-Le Baron House at 101 Hamilton. (Gibbons, p299,522.) The Bristol house was made of oak timbers pegged with oak pegs. (Johnck, F. “Bristol Farmhouse HABS Description.” Chicago, 27 Mar 1934. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, Harry [sic] Bristol. Bristol Farmhouse, River Road, Geneva, Kane County, IL. Geneva Illinois Kane County, 1933.) The original location of the Bristol house has been further described by Bussy Nelson of Batavia who wrote, “My dad was born in a little house up where the Campana building is now located. Later, John Nottolini owned that house in which he had a small tavern.” *The Batavia Historian* Vol 41, #1, Jan 2000. p1-2. A close inspection of the HABS photos shows two signs on the house: “Entrance” above the door in the south façade, and “Bar Room” above the door on the west façade. The H.A.B.s description says John Nottolini was occupying the house in 1934 and was owned by E.J. Hahn of St. Charles. Finally, the River and the Fabian stone fence can be seen in the photo of the west façade, placing the Bristol house on the west side of River Road, then (1834) numbered Route 22 and now Route 31.

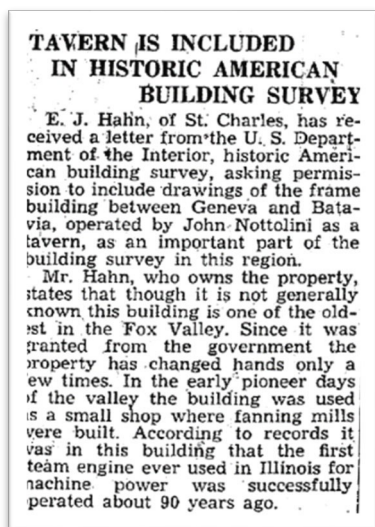


Harvey Bristol died in 1845, but his brother Oliver occupied the farmhouse after him. Oliver was mechanically inclined and used the building to fabricate fanning mills. These initially hand-cranked “mills” winnowed the wheat from the chaff much more efficiently than the more ancient manual methods of “chaff before the wind.” Geneva had three individuals engaged in the manufacture of fanning mills in the 1840s.⁸ Oliver also operated an early steam engine at the site.⁹

Although not documented, a likely life story of the Bristol Farmhouse is that the original house was a 1½ story structure 21½ feet square with a brick or stone fireplace and a loft. A root/storm cellar foundation was

underneath and made of locally quarried limestone. This structure’s gable end probably faced River Road (i.e., Batavia Ave/Route 31).

This scenario would be consistent with the evolution of many Kane County log structures from the same period, such as those occupied by the Paynes, Haight, and then the Herringtons. Initially, a single rectangular log structure was built, usually 18 to 20 feet square. A year or so later a similar structure would be constructed about ten feet away. A single roof was placed over both structures, including the space between them. This double log abode became known as a “dog-trot” house. In 1835-6, Daniel Shaw Haight built just such a structure on a lot that now is the corner of State and Madison Streets in Rockford.



Geneva Republican 23 March 1894, p1

Oliver Bristol used the farmhouse for his fanning mill factory (it is so labeled on the 1860 Adin Mann Map of Kane County). Curiously, both Mr. Hahn and the *Republican* failed to include the name of the operator of Illinois’ first steam-powered machine (likely a fanning mill). Oliver’s brother Harvey was a blacksmith by trade and was said to be “...prospering in the manufacturing of an improved plow” when he died in 1845.¹⁰

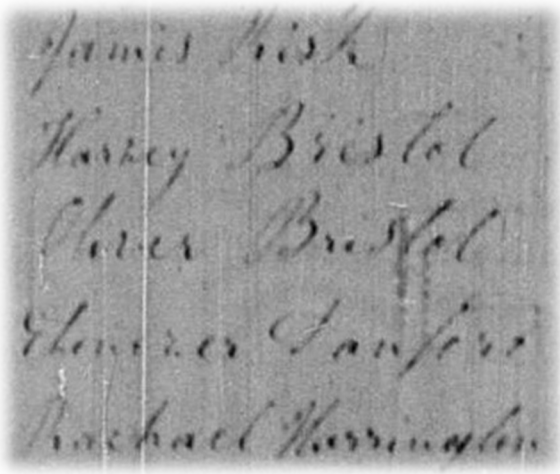
⁸ The author’s great-great grandfather George Wolcott Baker (1822-1900) from Vermont manufactured fanning mills during this period in Dixon, Il and later in Rochester, Mn. (*History of Olmsted County*, p48). Eli Lee, and Martin David (*Geneva City, Kane County Directory for 1859-60*) were also “fan mill men” in Geneva.

⁹ E.J. Hahn of St. Charles owned the Bristol Farmhouse in 1934. He told the *Geneva Republican* on 23 March 1934 that a steam-powered machine was used there in about 1844. This video shows a fanning mill powered by a steam engine:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBOGb1NJg5I>

¹⁰ Adams, A.N. *A History of the Town of Fair Haven, Vermont: In Three Parts*. Leonard & Phelps, printers, 1870. p305.

https://books.google.com/books?id=3UGKYyIG_ZcC. John Deere’s improved plow first appeared in 1837 fifty miles west of Gene



A snippet from the 1840 U.S. Census

The brothers Harvey and Oliver Bristol were among the earliest Geneva settlers.

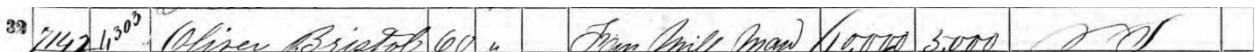
History's problem with them is that their land claims were made before the Federal Land Survey established parcel boundaries, and a decade before townships were created in 1848.¹¹ As a result, the Bristols are in a kind of historical limbo where they are neither claimed nor disclaimed by either Geneva or Batavia. Gibbons, an unusually meticulous local historian, at one point wrote of the Bristol Farmhouse:

"This was somewhere near Aurora, but most likely somewhere within the borders of Batavia Township."¹²

The 1840 Census illustrates one source of confusion. James Talcott Gifford, founder and name selector of Elgin, was the census taker for Kane County. Gifford's sister Louisa and her husband Charles Volney Dyer gave Geneva its name. James was a man of many talents, calligraphy not being among them.

On five consecutive lines towards the middle of Census Book Volume 4, page 16(30) labeled "Kane County" appear the names "James Kish, Mary Bristol, Charles Bristol, Ebenezer Monford, Rachael Harrington."¹³ At least this is how the Ancestry.com compiler who transcribed the names for purposes of digital text searching translated them from the Giffordese hieroglyphics.¹⁴

The 1860 Mann map shows two structures close together at the site of the Bristol Farmhouse. James Gifford, apart from his wretched hand, was a meticulous census taker who knew the rules. He was to identify the "head of household" and then enumerate by race, gender, and age the people residing there, plus their occupations. The conclusion seems inescapable that Harvey and Oliver Bristol were next-door neighbors (or lived in a unique duplex) in 1840. Both occupied the Bristol Farm House but at differing times. Oliver moved in after the death of Harvey. James Gifford did correctly identify one person in the Oliver Bristol household and three in the Danford household with occupations in "manufacturing and trade." The manufacturing in the first case was of fanning mills and mostly furniture in the second in 1840 (the Churchill Danford reaper had just been born about this time).



The 1860 census put Oliver Bristol in Batavia Township, but his neighbor to the south was still James Risk. The transcribed census gives Oliver's occupation as "saw mill man," but it clearly is originally written "fan mill man." The "F" is the same as in "Farmer" for James Risk.

¹¹ Illinois Constitution of 1848.

¹² Gibbons, p359. The Bristol claim was entirely within what became Geneva Township.

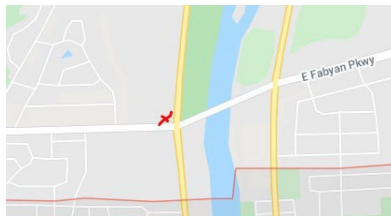
¹³ Year: 1840; Census Place: Kane, Illinois; Roll: 62; Page: 16; Family History Library Film: 0007643. Township not stated. The entries spanned two facing pages, which were numbered as one. The printed page numbers, both 16 and 31 were written in the corner. James Gifford recorded his own family on page 4 (7).

¹⁴ The author has submitted edits to the Ancestry.com database so that the five entries might be correctly identified by a search engine as James Risk, Harvey Bristol, Oliver Bristol, Ebenezer Danford, and Rachel Herrington. In fairness to James Gifford, the transcriber seemed to be having a bad day.

Bristol.¹⁹ The property line between Risk and the Bristol was also the 1860 boundary between Geneva Township and Batavia Township. This makes locating the Bristol Farmhouse 1840 site quite precise by ArcGIS layering of a historic map over a current one.



1872 Atlas of Kane County; Map of Geneva Township superimposed via ArcGIS on a 2020 map. Fabyan Parkway, as it goes west from the Bristol Farmhouse, is the “State Road” described in the March 1839 Act. The lines forming the little rectangle that surrounds the Bristol Farmhouse indicate that it was a separate real estate parcel. The Miller Distillery on East State St. was treated the same way by Mann. In the upper right is the “T” intersection of the road “to Chicago” commissioned by Kane County in 1836 with Crissey Avenue/Route 25 (described further in the text.).



Employing more traditional historiography, Bussy Nelson testified: “My dad, ... ‘was born in a little house up where the Campana building is now located. Later on, John Nottolini owned that house in which he had a small tavern.”²⁰ Oral tradition, in this case anyway, layers nicely on the ArcGIS.

So where was the Bristol Farmhouse, in twenty-five words or less? The red line in the top google map to the left is the corporate boundary between the Cities of Batavia and Geneva. The historic Bristol Farmhouse site, along with the still-standing landmark historic Campana Building are in 2020 within the City of Batavia.

¹⁹ James Gifford passed northward over the River Road from Batavia into Geneva. Ebenezer Danford lived just south the land of Racheal Herrington, the widow of Crawford Herrington (1799-1839), brother of James Herrington.

²⁰ “Almost 90 Years in Batavia - A Conversation with Russell (“Bussy”) Nelson.” *The Batavia Historian*. Vol.1, #4, 2000. p1. John Nottolini was renting Bristol Farmhouse from E.J. Hahn of St. Charles.



The previous page bottom map's red line is the boundary between Geneva and Batavia Townships. The Bristol Farmhouse site is well within Geneva Township but in the City of Batavia.

Ironically, the Bristol house was moved 3400 feet NNW. into the City of Geneva to 1618 Sunset Road, but the Bristol brothers are buried in Batavia. If you live in Illinois, you know that the boundaries for municipalities, parks, libraries, and school districts are all over the map.



The upper map at the left depicts Kane and DeKalb Counties as they existed after the 1837 separation of DeKalb from Kane.²¹ When Kendall was created from LaSalle in 1841, Kane lost its bottom tier of townships, including Bristol, Little Rock, and Yorkville. In 1837 Geneva was between the towns of Charleston to the north and Lowell to the south. By 1845 (bottom map), those towns were renamed St. Charles and Batavia.

The only named town in DeKalb Co. in 1837 was "Athens"²² on Sycamore Creek, later called Kishwaukee River/Creek. Note the 1837 road from Geneva to Athens. However, The 1837 map is oddly distorted. "Charlestown" is where Dundee should be, and Geneva is closer to Elgin's position. Roads that angled towards the northwest were present for Geneva travelers toward Belvidere and Rockford, such as Burlington Road to Genoa Road to Cherry Valley Road.

The "termination of Haight's Road" (mentioned here later) was likely the modern Rockford/Cherry Valley route to Genoa Road thence to Genoa ("terminates" at Genoa). This was the general path Daniel Shaw Haight took when he moved from Geneva and founded Haightsville (East Rockford) in 1835. The road depicted in the 1837 map as passing through Geneva is more congruent with the Chicago Galena that roughly follows U.S. 20/Grant Highway.

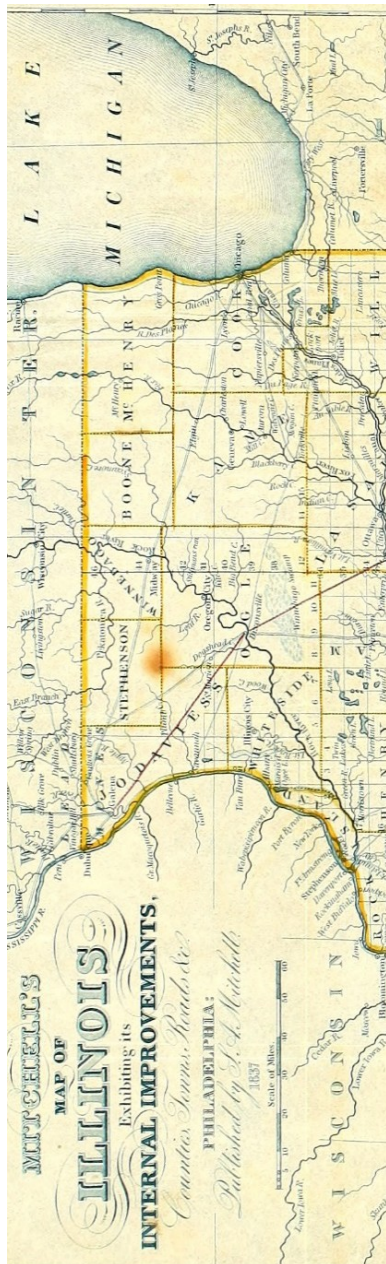
The lower of the two, the 1845 Morse map seems to have renamed "Athens" in DeKalb County to "Geneva," strangely enough. No further trace of either place has yet been found.²³ Sycamore is "Syracuse," although, before those monikers, it was just Orange Precinct (Geneva was in Sandusky Precinct).²⁴ Illinois Precincts predated townships, and they fluctuated in size and shape.

²¹ *Architectural Resources in the Oswego Survey Area*. Granacki Historic Consultants, 2009. p10.

²² Adams, J. N., et al. *Illinois place names*. Springfield, Ill., Illinois State Historical Society. 1989. p262. Adams lists seven Athens and two Athensvilles in Illinois, including townships and precincts. Modern Lemont was once Athens (Cook Co.). None are listed in LaSalle, Kane, DeKalb, or Winnebago Cos.

²³ *Illinois*. Entered ... 1844 by Sidney E. Morse and Samuel Breese. New York: Published by Harper & Brothers, 1845.

²⁴ A town to be named Syracuse, located in the near exact center of DeKalb County was proposed as the county seat but never came into existence except on a few maps. The five precincts in what is now DeKalb County were Orange, Kingston, Sycamore,



The Mitchell 1837 Map is more accurate than the two above.²⁵ Mitchell places Elgin in its proper position and shows “Midway,” the name selected initially by Dr. Goodhue for Rockford. Midway, like Charleston and Lowell, was an ephemeral moniker. Several places along the rivers were fordable during slack water by a stout wagon driven by an experienced ox-team handler like Daniel Shaw Haight. Mitchell shows the southern route to “Dixonville” and Galena crossing the Fox at Yorkville instead of Gray’s Crossing just south of Aurora near Montgomery.²⁶ Even when there were only two roads the unwary traveler often would end up on the wrong one, as Nathaniel Fish

Galena Sunday Aug. 10th I went to bed on Thursday evening at Chicago after paying my bill and requesting that I might be waked at half past 3 o’cl. for I had been afraid that the coach in which I had engaged a seat for this place would start at 4 o’clock. After a watchful night I fell asleep just about the time when I should have been awake as I had reason to suppose, and when the porter roused me, I was startled to find it was half past 4 o’clock. I dressed in a hurry, and then waited uneasily for some time fearing that the stage had gone without me, until the porter went to the office & returned with news that the stage would come round presently. It came accordingly. My baggage was stowed behind and I took my place in the coach, where I found four of my fellow passengers on board the Great Western -two ladies and two gentlemen- the Fort Jessup chaplain & another. This latter fortunately wished to know *how far down the river I was going*, so that from his question I discovered in good season that the blundering agent had sent for me the Peoria stage. We stopt at the City Hotel, whereas I got out with my luggage, others got in with theirs, and the driver told me that the Galena stage would be along presently as there were other passengers at this house besides myself waiting for it. It was an agreeable surprise to me...

Diary of a Trip from New York to the Falls of St. Anthony in 1845, N. F. Moore.

Paw Paw and Somonauk. However, William Miller was an 1836 election judge in Sycamore Precinct though his land ended up in Kingston Township. The land that became the Sycamore that became the County Seat was in Orange. *Commemorative*, p49-50. At the December term, 1849, of the DeKalb Commissioners William A. Miller, William J. Hunt, and Robert Sterrett were appointed to divide the county into townships for a new organization under the township organization law. They divided the county into thirteen townships, to which were given the following names: Genoa, Kingston, Franklin, Vernon, Liberty, Sycamore, Richland, Orange, Shabbona, Clinton, Squaw Grove, Somonauk, and Paw Paw. Chapman Brothers. *Portrait and Biographical Album of De Kalb County, Illinois*. Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1885. p773.

²⁵ Mitchell, S. Augustus, Joseph Meredith Toner Collection (Library of Congress), and Lincoln Collection (Library of Congress). *Illinois in 1837: A Sketch Descriptive of the Situation, Boundaries, Face of the Country, Prominent Districts, Prairies, Rivers, Minerals, Animals, Agricultural Productions, Public Lands, Plans of Internal Improvement, Manufactures*. Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell: Grigg & Elliot, 1837. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/gdc/scd0001.00147520311>.

²⁶ For the full map, see: <https://archive.org/details/mitchellsmapofil00mitc/mode/2up>

Moore did in 1845.²⁷

LAWS OF ILLINOIS.

249

AN ACT to locate and establish a State road in the counties of Kane In force, Mar.
and De Kalb. 2, 1839.

SEC. 1. *Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly,* That Isaac Wilson, Anson Root, Lemuel Morse, Alfred Churchill, Elder Ambrose, and Henry A. Miller, of Kane county, be, and they are hereby, appointed commissioners to view, mark, locate, and establish a State road from Fox river, in Kane county, westwardly, by a road running from Aurora, in said county, to Dixon's ferry, in Ogle county. Com'rs to locate road.

SEC. 2. Said commissioners, or a majority of them, shall meet at the house of Isaac Wilson, in said county, on the first Monday in May next, or within six months thereafter, and, after being duly sworn by some justice of the peace faithfully to perform the duties required [of] them by this act, shall proceed to locate, mark, and establish said road, commencing on the west bank of Fox river, at or near a house built by Harvey Bristol and now occupied by Horace Town, in said county; thence running westwardly until said road so to be laid out shall strike the said road leading from Dixon's ferry, taking into consideration the best route and the most advantageous ground for a permanent [road.] Time and place of meeting.

SEC. 3. Said commissioners shall, within six months after the location of said road, make a report of their proceedings to the county commissioners' court of the respective counties through which said road may pass. The said road, thus laid out and established, shall be a public highway of this State; and the county commissioners' court of said counties shall cause the same to be opened and kept in repair as other roads are. Said commissioners and the surveyor employed by them to survey said road shall receive for their services a reasonable compensation, out of the funds of the said counties through which the said road may pass, to be allowed by the county commissioners' courts of said counties. Report of proceedings. Com'rs and surveyor's compensation.

APPROVED, March 2, 1839.

Laws of Illinois, 1839. Robert Blackwell, p249.

Roads were high on the agenda for Illinois' nascent governmental units in the 1830s and '40's. The traveler, however, could not rely on any maps. The roads were not where they were drawn, and the places where the roads passed were not certain to even exist (many towns were platted, far fewer were built, and many that were started have disappeared).

The six commissioners were to meet at the house of Isaac Wilson in Batavia to be sworn in by a Justice of the Peace (possibly Hendrick Miller, Esquire).²⁸ Joining Wilson on the commission was Geneva's first resident physician, Henry A. Miller, M.D.²⁹ Henry, and "Daddy" Isaac Wilson were already acquainted. Henry Miller and Emma J. Wilson, Isaac Wilson's daughter, were married in Geneva on 7 Jan 1839 (probably by Hendrick Miller, Esq).

²⁷ Moore, N.F., and S.M.C. Pargellis. *Diary: A Trip from New York to the Falls of St. Anthony in 1845*. Newberry Library, 1946. p11-12.

²⁸ Hendrick Miller was elected as a Justice of the Peace in October 1837 from the Sandusky Precinct (the other three Kane Precincts were Fairfield, Fox River, and Lake). Peirce, Henry B., Arthur Merrill, William Henry Perrin, and Le Baron W. jr. & co. Chicago pub. [from old catalog]. *The Past and Present of Kane County, Illinois, Containing a History of the County ... A Directory*. Chicago: W. Le Baron, yr., & co., 1878. p247.

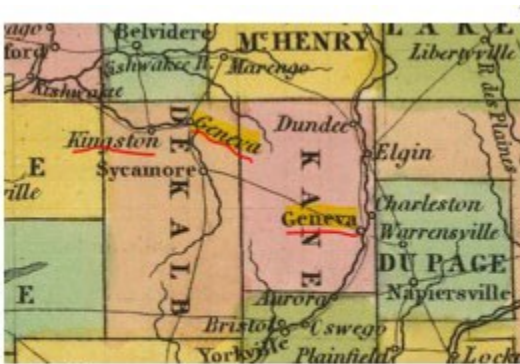
²⁹ Peirce, 247.

Physicians were represented both by Dr. Miller and by Dr. Anson Root of Elgin.³⁰ Little is known about Lemuel Morse except that he, like the Bristols, lived near the Geneva-Batavia township border, and that he had married Ellen Ann Park in Kane County on 29 March 1838.³¹ Elder Joshua E. Ambrose had been an early Baptist missionary in the Chicago region, but by 1838 he had settled down in Elgin with a flock of his own. Ambrose was married to Lucinda Wilson Root's daughter Eliza Root.³²

The six-man Road Commission was a Wilson family outfit. Isaac and his son-in-law Henry Miller were joined by another Wilson, brother-in-law, Alfred Churchill,³³ who had married Susan D. Wilson, the oldest daughter of "Daddy" Isaac Wilson (for whom Wilson Street in Batavia is named). The Commission members represented only the central Elgin-to-Geneva portion of Kane County.

The Road Commissioners were to map a road connecting Geneva to the more southern westerly mail route established in 1834 that crossed the Fox River at Aurora through Little Rock (still in Kane County until Kendall County was created in 1841) to Dixon in Lee County. The road would join the Peoria-Galena Kellogg's Trail at Dixon's Ferry over the Rock River. The northern westerly route from Chicago to Galena crossed the Fox in Elgin and the Rock River in Rockford.

Using the Bristol Farmhouse at the road's Geneva point of origin was logical since it was approximately the spot where James Watson Webb had crossed the Fox in from east to west during his daring across-the-state dead-of-winter ride of 1822 to warn the troops at Rock Island of an impending Indian surprise attack. That old path west from Chicago went through the gap between the Head of Big Woods just north of Batavia and the foot of Little Woods just north of Geneva.



Tell me again how I get to
Geneva. Published at Tanner's
Geographical Establishment, 1845.

One of the first Acts of the new Kane County Commissioners in July 1836 was to order up a plan for a road "from Geneva to the Cook County line, at or near the head of the Big Woods, to intersect a road leading from said line to Chicago; James Herrington, Wallace Hotchkiss, and Alexander Wheeler, viewers."³⁴ This County action meshed nicely with the State's 1838 Bristol Farmhouse Road plan except that a bridge over the Fox River to connect the Bristol Farmhouse Road to the west with the Head of Big Woods Road to the east was not constructed until 1974, 138 years later.

Another coincidence that united the two roads was that two early Geneva fanning mill makers toiled across the river from each other. Oliver Bristol manufactured his at the Bristol Farmhouse and Elijah Lee at his abode

³⁰ Dr. Anson Root deserves especial notice as one who assisted in building up Elgin, having purchased one-fourth of the original James T. Gifford claim and settled with his family, before 1839. His log home occupied a position near the later residence of J. A. Carpenter. Root's death occurred in Elgin in February 1866. Peirce, p377.

³¹ Gibbons, p294. Lemuel Morse and Ellen Ann Park, 29 March 1838. Ellen was the daughter of Eleaser Park.

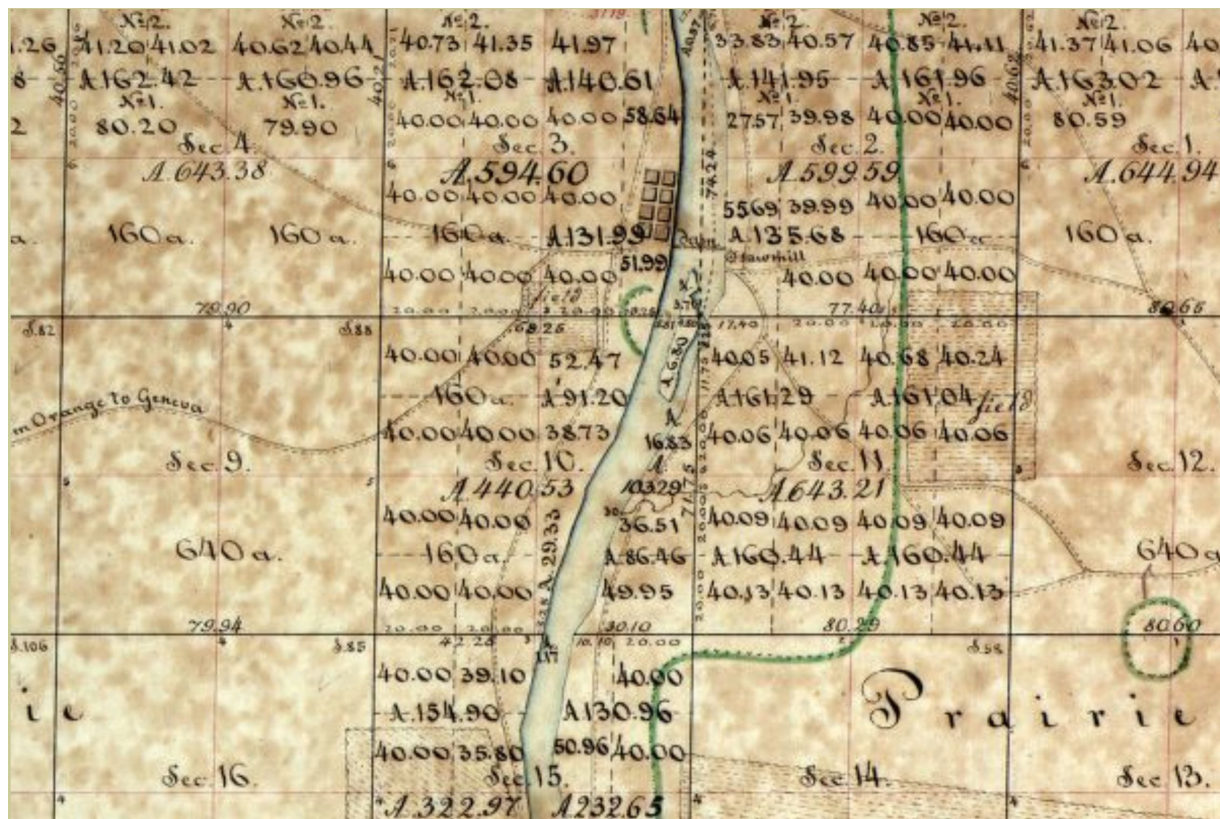
³² Initially, Ambrose preached in the home of Hezekiah Gifford in Elgin. The latter was one of the brothers of Louisa Gifford Dyer, who with her husband C.V. Dyer gave Geneva its name. Peirce, p268.

³³ Alfred Churchill collaborated with Eben Danford in the early fabrication of a mower reaper. Twenty-one Genevans and Batavians signed a petition endorsing the machine in 1841. *Geneva Republican* 3 Feb 1894.

³⁴ Durant, P. A., et al. *Commemorative Biographical and Historical Record of Kane County, Illinois: Containing Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens...*, Chicago, Beers, Legget. 1888. p850. Wilson Street in Batavia marks the actual northern edge or "Head" of Big Woods. In 1835 Daddy Isaac Wilson bought Payne's claim and log cabin (situated on Mahoney's Creek 400 feet north of Wilson Street.

just west from where modern Fabyan Parkway meets Kirk Road.^{35,36}

Dr. Miller was not the only Miller engaged in road planning. His older brother Harmon had been recruited in July 1836. Another Road authorized by Kane County at the same time was to run “From Geneva westwardly, near the south end of Charter’s Grove, to cross the South branch of Kishwaukee, near Wilson’s Ford, passing William A. Millers and Levi Lee’s, thence to the county line at the termination of Haight’s Road; Harmon Miller, Matthew McCormick, and Levi Lee, viewers.”³⁷ Remembering that Kane County in July of 1836 included DeKalb County, the road described above roughly follows modern Burlington Road. The road should have been called the Miller-Haight Road.



First surveyors’ map of part of what is now Geneva Township. The green line (in the original) denotes the groves. Geneva was part of the “Sandusky Precinct.” The Road from “Orange to Geneva” is the road from the Orange Precinct that encompasses the central part of now DeKalb County and western Kane. The road to the N.W. is the road the Hights and Harmon and William Miller had taken when they left Geneva. See Map Appendix A, which is an ArcGIS layered map of the 1830’s surveys and a modern road map.

William and Harmon Miller, in 1836, lived close to each other in the northern part of what became DeKalb County in 1837. Harmon first settled there in 1835, and William

³⁵ The Adin Mann map of 1860 identifies the Bristol Farmhouse and fanning mill factory on the modern Campana Building property on the west side of modern Route 31 at the N.W. corner with the 1838 road to Dixon’s Ferry.

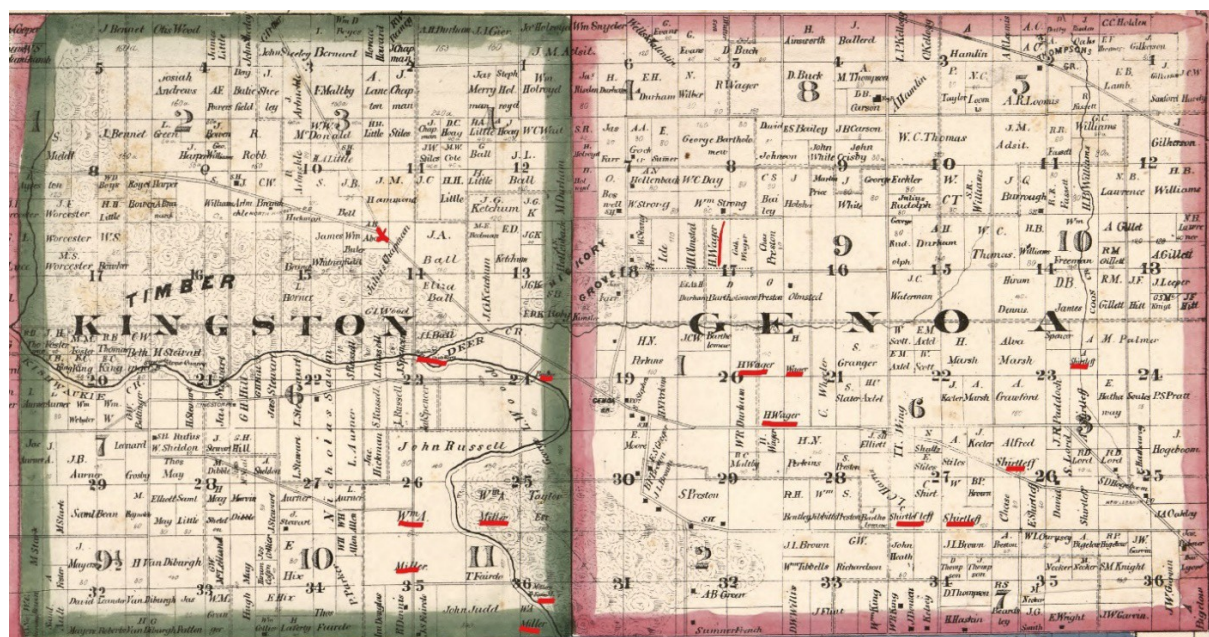
³⁶ The Elijah Lee house and farm became part of the Kane County Poor Farm in 1872. Kett, Kane, p Geneva Township. Kirk Road is named for the Kirk family of whom Joseph was the patriarch. Joseph Kirk lived in the Miller-Gully house at 122 East State Street in his dotage, and other members of the Kirk family lived nearby.

³⁷ *Commemorative*, p850.

came in 1836. Harmon traveled the same path in 1835 that Daniel Shaw Haight had followed, also in 1835, after he sold out his Geneva claim on the Fox River to James Herrington and took up a new one on the Rock River in what became first Haightsville and later Rockford.



Ironically, both the Bristol Farmhouse and the William Miller Farmhouse still are standing although each has been moved to a new site very close to its original one. The William Miller farmhouse was moved one log at a time.³⁸ The picture at the left is from May 2009, when during the process of tearing down the old clapboard Nelson farmhouse on Pleasant Road, a log structure was found hidden under the clapboards of one wing.³⁹



From Lamb's Map of DeKalb County 1860 Showing Wm. Miller claim and sawmill. Miller neighbors in Genoa Township included the Wager and "Shurtleff" families who provided Geneva with Mrs. Raymond G. Scott and Mrs. Forrest Crissey.

³⁸ The William Miller log house was moved twice. First, from the west bank of the Kishwaukee Creek near the sawmill to near the middle of Section 26 and then recently back to within 1800 feet of the Creek in Section 25 on John Russell's 1860 farm near Russell Woods Forest Preserve.

³⁹ Schrader, B. "The Continuing Miller Log Cabin Saga." Dekalb County Life, October 2009.

<https://www.dekalbcountylife.com/10-6-09.htm> [10/20/2019 16:03:24]

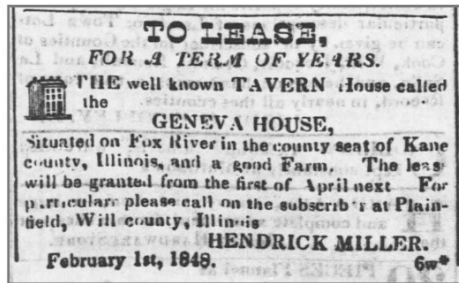


The William A. Miller log home in Kingston Township, DeKalb County, rebuilt log-by-log within 2 miles of its original site near the Miller Sawmill on Kishwaukee Creek in the S.E. corner Section 36. The structure was moved west to Section 26 some time long before it was moved to its present site in Section 25. The original site of the sawmill is now within the Knute Olson, Jr., Forest Preserve. William Miller emigrated from Penn Yan near the Genesee Valley of New York in about 1835, first to Geneva, Kane County, and then to northern DeKalb County near Genoa-Kingston. Two-story log homes were commonplace in the Genesee Valley but rare in Northern Illinois.



A restored 19th Century farmstead at the Genesee County Village and Museum 1410 Flint Hill Road; Mumford, NY 14511 <https://www.gcv.org/>

In September 1841, Hendrick Miller, then 64 years old, left Geneva. With his wife Harriet and their two-year-old child Helen, Hendrick moved to 480 acres southeast of Plainfield in the southern part of section 23 of Plainfield Township and the northern part of section 26.⁴⁰ The neighbor to the north was J. Fouse, and further to the northwest in section 15 was the Dillman farm. Hendrick bought his land at a sheriff's sale for \$1,100.⁴¹ The Lincoln Highway (Route 30) passed through the property that contained houses and barns, but then the highway bore the more practical descriptive name "Joliet Road." The same Lincoln Highway passes through Geneva via Third Street on its way west via Kessler Road and then through DeKalb County.



Joliet Signal (Joliet, Illinois) 8 Feb 1848, p3

The versatile Hendrick Miller had been an innkeeper in Schaghticoke, NY, but he leased the Miller "Geneva House" at First and State when he moved to Plainfield. After son Dr. Henry A. Miller died, Hendrick had no members of his extended family left in Geneva.⁴² Geneva, after the financial panic of 1837, had become a contentious place with disputes over debts and land titles commonplace and bitter. James Herrington was convicted of assault and battery committed on 3 August 1838 on one of his erstwhile partners, Mark Daniels.⁴³ Daniels had been accused of forgery and was "fired" as

⁴⁰ A son Daniel, apparently Helen's twin, died in Geneva in 1839 and is buried there. Another son, Henry, was born in Plainfield Township in 1842 or '43, apparently soon after the death of his half-brother and namesake Dr. Henry A. Miller.

⁴¹ "Nomination for Individual Landmark Listing in Register of Historic Places: The William S. Keen Family Residence" Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission, 2019. p27.

⁴² Hendrick's son Horace bought the property in Plainfield about the same time as did Hendrick, and both of them were taxpayers in 1848. *Souvenir of settlement and progress of Will County, Ill.* p143. However, Horace Miller (married to Maria Olivia Stoakes) filed for bankruptcy in 1848 in Crawford County, Wisconsin. His partner was "Griffin & Co." in Penn Yan. (*Prairie Du Chien Patriot*, *Prairie Du Chien*, Wisconsin 7 February 7, 1849, p3.) Horace Miller died in *Prairie du Chien* in 1850. His daughter Maria was born in New York in 1839 (*Prairie du Chien Courier* of 8 Aug 1861), so the Horace Miller family did not stay long in Geneva after they arrived in 1839 or 1840, but they were counted in the 1840 Geneva census.

⁴³ *People v J Herrington, Assault and Battery on Mark Daniels* October 1838, case # 4160, 8 Nov 1838. Herrington was convicted and fined \$5 plus costs by Justice of the Peace N. Dearborn. Herrington posted an appeal bond but died on 25 March 1839 before the appeal was heard. Crawford, James' estranged brother, died in December 1839 back in Pennsylvania after his brief residence in Geneva ended with a dispute with James. Crawford's widow Rachel returned to Geneva by the 1840 census. Rachel died in Meadville, PA on 11 March 1870. *Pennsylvania, Meadville First Presbyterian Church Register 1839-1882*, Vol VI, p124. The Herrington heirs formed an association in 1891 *The Real Estate and Building Journal*, Vol 33, Issue 1, 28 March 1891. p436. Details are given here to demonstrate how contentious land disputes, including accusations of forgery, were – they could last a half-century.

"Claim by Herrington Heirs

Everything sensational lately seems to hail from Pennsylvania, whether it be floods, snake stories, or claimants to long-lost fortunes. The latest story is that the Herrington heirs have formed an association to prosecute their claims to 160 acres of ground, forming the Northwest quarter of section 22 lying between state and the lake and 12 Street and 16th streets. *Their claim is based on the statement that James Harrington, Jr., who died lately and was a well-known politician forged his father's name to a quitclaim deed dated December 3, 1834.* The records of the title guarantee company who have been looking the property up frequently in the course of their business show however that the land was entered by James Harrington Junior himself on October 14, 1834, so that whether the name on the quitclaim deed was forged or not the legal title was vested in James Harrington Junior. The heirs have been parties to legal proceedings concerning the property before this time and never before raise the question of the forged deed. It is not thought that the case will come to trial, perhaps like a similar case on the northwest side, in which the claimant collected two dollars a lot from a few of the owners. It is merely a big bluff. At any rate, the claimant's do not seem to have much respect for their dead relatives good fame in making such a charge against him so many years after the commission even supposed that their statements are correct."

power of attorney by both James Strode and Richard J. Hamilton, two substantial non-resident investors in Geneva.⁴⁴

Lewis Miller, one of the all-time leading American farm implement innovators and manufacturers, lived with the Millers in Plainfield. At the same time, young Lewis attended Plainfield Academy (forerunner of North Central College) and cut his manufacturing teeth in Plainfield at the Dillman Foundry in 1849-50. Lewis met Mary V. Alexander that year, the daughter of a Hendrick Miller Plainfield neighbor, Hugh Alexander. Hugh, a Scot, raised sheep, while Hendrick was partial to horses, cows, and pigs.

Lewis Miller was in Plainfield because he was part of a vast interconnected family related to the Fouse, Aultman, and Dillman clans. Lewis married Mary V. Alexander in Will County in 1852. Their daughter Mina married another inventor by the name of Thomas Edison. Edison wrote the preamble to Lewis Miller's 1925 biography published by G.P. Putnam's Sons.⁴⁵ Lewis Miller, like Edison, was apolymath.

Lewis Miller came from a German family that had emigrated from the Palatinate region of Germany, just as had the family of Hendrick Miller. But Lewis' first American ancestor, Abraham Miller, left Germany in 1776, some sixty years after the first Hendrick Miller American ancestor. Lewis was probably not related to Hendrick, and likely it was Hendrick's hospitality background that caused the two to meet.

In his dotage, Hendrick Miller moved back closer to Geneva. His son Henry had been Geneva's first resident physician. In about 1856, the Miller's bought a small stone house that had belonged to Dr. Dennison K. Town, Batavia's first physician. The home still stands at 530 Main Street, thanks to a private restoration begun in 1983 by the Wilcox family.⁴⁶

The account's author has confused the three James Herrington's. The accused forger was the James (2), who died in 1839, not his son James (3), who died in 1890. James (2) (1798-1839) in 1835 occupied his father James' (1) (1763-1842) Chicago claim described in the article. James (1) had come to Chicago hoping to be named surveyor for the newly proposed Territory of Huron (never created). James (1) became ill after he, along with Richard J. Hamilton and others joined Walker's Relief Force formed hurriedly after the Indian Creek Massacre of the Black Hawk War. James (1) returned to Pennsylvania, and James(2) occupied James (1)'s claim. The "heirs" seemed to have a legitimate beef if James (2) usurped all property rights to his father's claim. (James (1) also had a veteran's land claim in Hancock County just a couple of miles from veteran A. Lincoln's claim.)

⁴⁴ Revocation of Power of Attorney by James Strode, 23 Feb 1838. Doc #54, Geneva Property Records from Kane County Recorder Database, accessed 6 June 2019. James Street in Geneva is probably named for James Strode. He and Richard J. Hamilton were the largest Geneva investors. Hamilton Street is one block north of State. James Street is one block south. The symmetry of the placement of the "steamboat streets" Fulton and Stevens pair match the Strode/Hamilton "investor" pair, as does the streets named for the brothers-in-law James Campbell and Lucien Peyton.

⁴⁵ Hendrick, Ellwood. *Lewis Miller; a Biographical Essay*. New York, London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925. piii-v.

⁴⁶ *The Batavia Historian*, Vol 37, #2, April 1996. p4,5. The article inexplicably gives the address as 430 Main Street. Stone had been a favored material for homes in Hendrick's home of Montgomery, Orange County, NY. He may have grown up in one. Batavia was a noted quarry town, and the home is just a block away from the Batavia Academy built in 1854-5.



*Hendrick and Harriet Miller Home at 530 Main Street in Batavia.
This is where Hendrick passed away in 1857.*

The home was built sometime around 1854-5 at the same time that the Batavia Institute was under construction, also of limestone, just a block away. Dr. Dennison K. Town was one of the thirteen Batavia men who chartered the school in 1853. The Institute had an affiliation with Beloit College and flourished for a few years. The building in 1867 became a private medical facility for mentally ill women called Bellvue Place under the direction of Dr. Richard J. Patterson. Mary Todd Lincoln was a patient there for a few months in the summer of 1875.

Hendrick Miller died in Batavia in 1857 and was laid to rest in the Miller plot (#14) of Geneva's old North Cemetery. Harriet joined him there when she died in

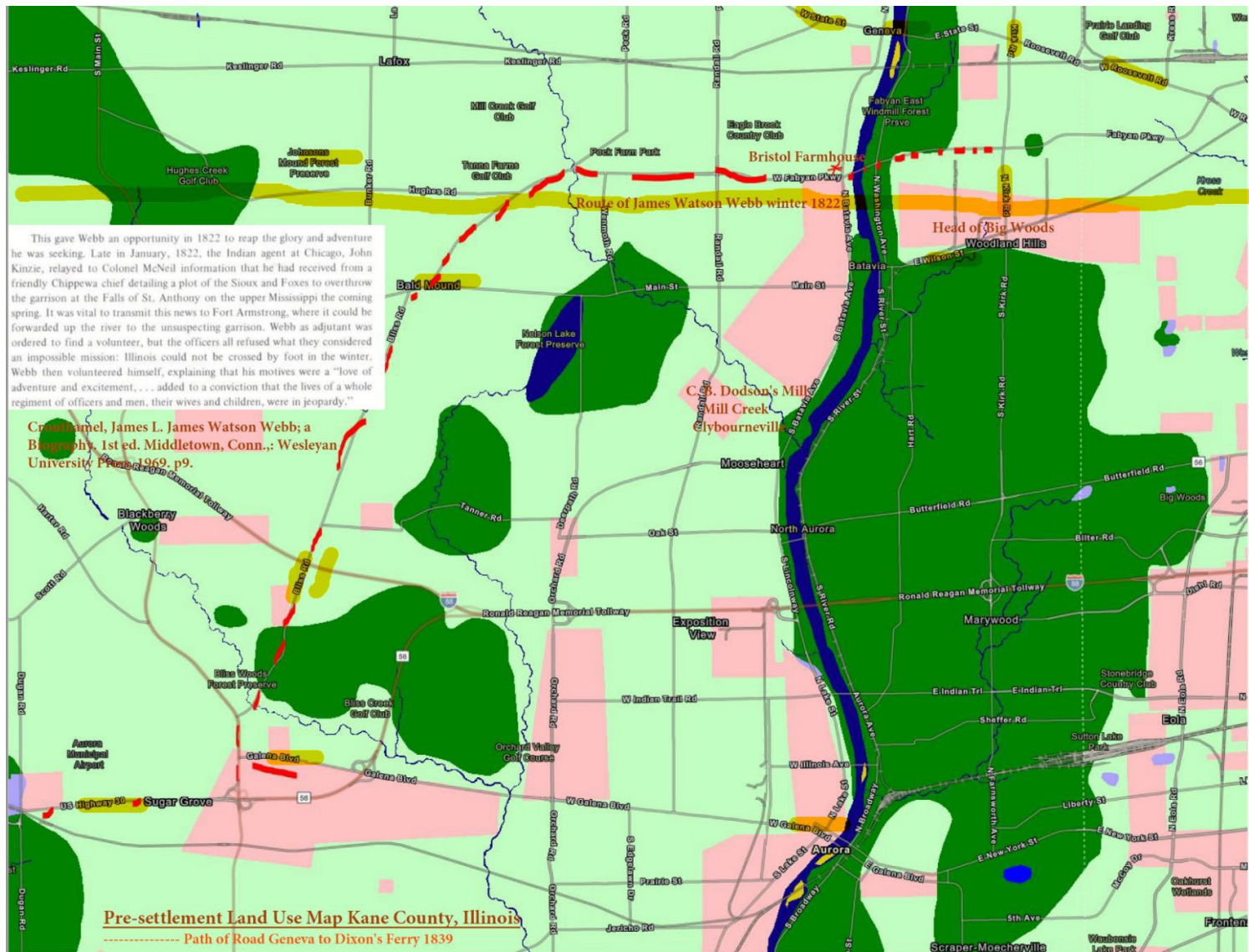
1886.

For versatility and respectability, Hendrick Miller, farmer, miller, distiller, holder of public offices, innkeeper, livestock raiser, and investor (wiser than many townsmen), ranked high among his peers. The Miller family's impact on Geneva's early people, abodes, and roads was as significant as it was varied.



Bristol Farmhouse 2020

Appendix A



This ArcGIS map shows the data collected during the first survey of the Fox Valley performed in the years 1839-41. Often referred to as a "Presettlement Map," it shows pink areas that were designated "fields" in agricultural use when surveyed. The map shows both Mahoney's Creek at the Head of Big Woods, where Christopher Payne had his claim and Mill Creek, where C.B. Dodson had a sawmill and store plus a prospective settlement called Clybourneville. Both Dodson and Payne were involved with milling. Payne built the mill dam in Naperville and later was a miller in Wisconsin. Creeks were often selected as the first mill sites since they were of a more manageable and repairable scale. River mill dam failure often resulted in bankruptcy for its builders/backers, as happened in Geneva for many, adding to the disastrous effects of the Panic of 1837.



William Miller (1810-1888) son of Hendrick and Mary Miller. This image appears in several Northern Illinois county histories without identifying the prototypical pioneer.