



# The Real People

Behind the Names

On the Stained Glass Windows  
Of the Farmer City United  
Methodist Church

## THE REAL PEOPLE BEHIND THE NAMES

### ON THE WINDOWS OF THE FARMER CITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The names of 24 persons are on the stained glass windows in the Farmer City United Methodist Church. They've been there since 1898, when the church was built. During the intervening century those names doubtless have been viewed with varying degrees of interest, curiosity, and apathy - or were totally ignored. It is to be expected that interest has diminished as 100 years rolled by. One might well ask, "When did I last observe any of those 24 names?" And did I visualize a person or did I see just a name? This work is an attempt, figuratively, to put faces on those names.

Looking for persons bearing the names has been a challenging project. Finding them involved searching in cemetery records, county histories, and microfilm of the Farmer City Journal, the Sun, and the Public Reaper, the latter two being publications long since extinct. Unfortunately, there were critical periods of time not covered by microfilm of the local papers. Valuable information came via a local genealogist who had researched several of our subjects. Most of the individuals studied here were deceased before the church was built, but several could have read their own names on the windows. It was an ironic twist of fate that placed the obituary of one of our subjects on the front page of the Farmer City Journal of January 13, 1899, immediately below the printed program for the upcoming dedication of the new church building on January 15.

Eight of the 24 individuals in our study were Sunday School teachers whose classes were designated as B, C, D, F, Q, R,T, and Bible. The obituary of one of the teachers stated: "Her class had *presented* one of the windows of the new church." It may be assumed that other classes shouldered the cost of the windows *presented* in honor of their teachers. [Italics by editor]. Three names were placed as memorials in windows possibly paid for by relatives. The breakdown of building costs for the new church cited the cost for windows - almost all stained glass - at \$500.00



## Real People

At the end of this article, names are listed alphabetically on a chart with identification of the windows by room and wall where the names are located. Dates of births and deaths, if they could be found, are also listed. Four Smiths, three Kissacks and three Murpheys account for nearly half of our subjects. Persons for whom biographical material was found are treated individually in this study.

Of our 24 subjects, at least three had taught school. In fact, it was claimed that one taught in the first school in Mount Pleasant, later to be named Farmer City. Several engaged in farming at some point in their working careers. One took up farming after opening and operating the first hotel in Mount Pleasant. One converted from farming to the jewelry trade, then died at age 29, just 15 days after contracting spinal meningitis. Another surprised the people of the area by building a house out on the prairie and then by opening up the first prairie farm between our city and LeRoy. And yet another moved to Florida to operate an orange grove. One who became a large land owner in the Farmer City area was born on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea and came to this country "penniless."

At least four of our subjects came from the East in covered wagons. That was the vehicle for one set of parents with seven children - plus a nanny - when they migrated from Virginia.

Being orphaned was the misfortune of two of our people, one at age eight, the other at two. Three, possibly more, suffered the loss of minor children. One became blind late in life. The father of one subject drowned when he fell while attempting to board a steamer on the Illinois River. In 1921, the Farmer City Journal reported that one of our subjects, having relocated to Los Angeles, had recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary. His obituary was printed in the next issue of the Journal.

Two persons named on an east window (the log cabin window) in the sanctuary were grandparents of a man named on a west window. Two were brothers who married sisters. Three were children of a wealthy Virginia planter who had served in the Virginia

## Real People

State Navy during the Revolutionary War. A one-time slave owner, he freed his slaves. The Civil War inflicted its cruelty on one of our families by claiming the lives of two sons and wounding a third.

While researching for this work it quickly became obvious that the writers of biographies and obituaries a century ago were unreservedly generous in their use of superlatives. Biographers for county history books showed no constraints in describing the praiseworthy nature of their subjects. Obituaries were replete with lofty phrases detailing the certain passage of the deceased to the celestial realm. Also noteworthy was that posing for pictures was a serious matter, if not a grim one; nary a tooth was exposed in the pictures found in county histories.

[The next portion of this paper is biographical material that was found in reference to our subjects.]

### **MAUDE EWBANK**

The Farmer City Methodist Church membership book for 1894-1904 contains these entries for Maude Ewbank: Received by letter, May 16, 1894; Baptized and received into full membership as an adult, February 20, 1898.

The Scarbrough family of Farmer City provided the copy of her obituary which is reprinted here. It is under the heading *Mrs. Maude Bean*, her name by marriage.

"Mrs. Maude E. Bean, 88, formerly of Farmer City, died at 5:30 a.m., Saturday (Nov. 27, 1965) in the Greenbrier Nursing Home, Champaign. She had been in ill health for four years. Funeral arrangements are being completed in the Stensel Funeral Home, Farmer City.

"She was born on Feb. 23, 1877 in Farmer City, daughter of Martin and Ellen Smith Ewbank. She married Percy Bean on Oct. 18, 1899, in Farmer City. She was a member of the Methodist Church. Mrs. Bean leaves two sons, Fred, Milwaukee, Wis.; John R. (Jack), Phoenix, Ariz.; two daughters, Lois Menefee, West LaFayette, Ind.; and Mary Lou Cline, Champaign."

## Real People

Another clipping was the obituary for a third son, Robert A. Bean, killed in action April 2, 1945, in the invasion of Okinawa. Dean Scarbrough remembers the body arriving in Farmer City by train, with a military escort, and being buried with military rites. Robert Bean's name is carved in the World War II monument in the Farmer City circle park.

### **JOHN KISSACK -- LUTHER KISSACK - OLIVE KISSACK**

The Isle of Man in the Irish Sea was the birthplace of John Kissack on February 14, 1844. His death occurred in Brokaw Hospital, Normal, IL, on April 24, 1928. The account of his life printed here is from the obituary published in the Farmer City Journal of April 26, 1928.

"John Kissack, one of the best known and highly respected citizens of Santa Anna Township, was a man of generous impulses. He had given to churches and missionary societies probably more than any one man in the country. He never forgot the hospitable ways of the pioneer and the stranger, even a beggar, never failed to receive food and shelter if he sought it at his hands.

"Mr. Kissack had borne adversity bravely and enjoyed prosperity quietly. Coming to this country penniless he, by hard work and honest methods, accumulated a large fortune. He had filled the various relations of life, as son, husband, father, brother, friend, and filled them well. Who could have done more?

"Mr. Kissack was united in marriage in 1879 to Miss Clarissa M. Maxfield, and to this union were born three children. Ellen Olivia, who died at the age of three months, Luther M., who died at the age of seven years, and Robert, who lived with his father at the edge of town. Mrs. Kissack died in 1917. [Ed. Note: The "edge of town" location refers to the Gene Houser farm which was purchased from Robert Kissack]

"At the age of 22 years he (John Kissack) determined to come to America to seek his fortune. He borrowed part of the money to pay his passage across the Atlantic, and landed in Portland, ME. He decided, after staying in the East for some time, to go west and grow up with the country. So, in 1867 he came to Illinois and was employed in a



## Real People

warehouse in Tazewell County. He worked at many different trades, and was always willing to do anything where he could make an honest dollar. In 1870 he purchased eighty acres of land in McLean County ...and from time to time since then has purchased land in various places.

"Mr. Kissack was a faithful member of the Methodist Church. He held several offices in the church, such as steward, trustee, class leader, superintendent of the Sunday School, and Bible Class teacher."

### JOHN A. LINDSEY

The 1901 membership book of the Farmer City Methodist Church noted that John A. Lindsey was "Received Sep. 8, 1874, by letter, from Chicago. Rev. J. Foxworthy, Pastor." The Farmer City Journal of Sep. 8, 1905, provided this biographical account: "John A. Lindsey is the superintendent of the Sunday School and also belongs to the Board of Stewards [of the Methodist Church].. He was born in Ohio and received his education in the public school and spent some time in the Ohio Wesleyan University. He was for years a school teacher. He is a devoted superintendent of the Sunday School and the school has grown under his administration until today it is almost double what it was when he took charge of it. Mr. Lindsey loves the church and the work of the church; he is always found at the prayer meetings and the business meetings of the church and is one of those men who would be missed if taken away."

When Mr. Lindsey was "taken away," the Farmer City Journal of March 23, 1922, stated that, "As a businessman, citizen and church worker he occupied a leading position and was respected by all." An obituary printed the following week added more details of his life. He was born in Armstrongs Mills, Ohio, attended schools in Delaware, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, PA, and taught schools in Armstrongs Mills, OH, and in the area of Mansfield, IL. After farming for a short time in Dakota [Ed. Note: Not identified as North or South Dakota], Lindsey "soon fell seriously ill with typhoid fever and on recovering came back

## Real People

and was especially concerned for the spiritual welfare of his friends, associates and mankind in general."

### **MARY MARSHALL**

"On Monday morning (January 9, 1899) at 10 o'clock at the home of her sister, Mrs. Adam Waller, occurred the death of Mary Marshall, aged 41 years, 3 months and 20 days. She had been ailing for two years...

"Deceased was born in Marion County, OH, her parents being Mr. and Mrs. William Marshall. At the age of two years she was left an orphan and since that time she has made her home alternately with her sister, Mrs. Waller, in this city, and the old home in Ohio with a relative... She was a member of the M.E. Church, the Epworth League and W.C.T.U., and taught class F of the M.E. Sunday School. In all kinds of weather, while her health permitted, she was at her place in church and Sabbath-School and never tired in doing good. Her class had presented one of the windows to the new church, but their teacher was not permitted to see it."

Her obituary, the source of the above quoted information, was printed on page one of the Farmer City Journal. Immediately above it was the program for the upcoming dedication of the new church on January 15.

### **EDWIN C. MURPHEY**

"Edwin C. Murphey was the oldest of five children, two sons and three daughters, born to Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Murphey, a well known and highly respected couple of North Prairie. [Ed. Note: Edwin was, therefore, a grandson of Hiram and Grace Murphey, a couple who also are subjects of this study.] His birth occurred near this city July 14, 1866, and his death took place at Rochester, Indiana, April 11, 1896, after an illness of fifteen days of cerebral spinal meningitis.

"After his graduation in the High School of this city and community, he was engaged in agricultural pursuits until one year ago he became a partner in Overstreet &

## Real People

Co's Jewelry. After severing his relations in this business he engaged in the same line in Rochester (Indiana) about two months prior to his death.

“About twelve years ago he was converted and united with the M.E. Church of this city, where he has ever since been an acceptable and worthy member, as was ably shown by the eulogistic sermon preached by his pastor at this funeral. He was a liberal contributor to the church in all its departments, and was always interested in the Sunday School and Epworth League, never shrinking from duty unless it brought him into undesirable publicity.

“He expected in the near future to claim a noble young lady for his bride, and her presence and kind administration to him during the last few days of his intense suffering was not only a joy and pleasure to him, but a comfort to his bereaved parents.”

(From the obituary in the Farmer City Journal of April 17, 1896)

### **McKINLEY MURPHEYS SMITHS**

The east window in the sanctuary (the log cabin window) contains an interesting roster comprising: Agnes McKinley, Hiram Murphey, Grace Murphey, John Smith, Mary D. Smith, Henry Smith, Deborah Smith - a family group. It was the good fortune of this chronicler that Pat Ruckman provided a packet of biographical material which was the product of her research on this group.

Grace Murphey, Deborah Smith, and Mary D. Smith were sisters. The father of these was a wealthy Virginia planter who had served in the Virginia State Navy during the Revolutionary War. He owned many slaves which he arranged to be freed upon his death, except one, and he “enjoined upon his children to care for her.”

John and Henry Smith were brothers who married Mitchell sisters. A daughter of Agnes McKinley married a son of Henry Smith.

Three sons of Hiram and Grace Murphey served in the Union Army during the Civil War. One died of illness during the war, one died of battle wounds, and a third suffered a severe bullet wound in the hip but survived to fill out a long life span..



## Real People

Newspaper accounts indicate that senior Murpheys and Smiths were commonly called "Uncle" and "Aunt" by the people of the community. Apparently a term of affection.

Descendants of Hiram and Grace Murphey living in the Farmer City area in 1998 are Joseph S. (Joe) Murphey and Robert L. (Bob) Ruckman.

### **AGNES (BROWN) McKINLEY**

A few scraps of information regarding Agnes McKinley were gleaned from a biography of John Henry Smith printed in *Portrait-Biographical Album of DeWitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois*, shelved in the Farmer City Library. She was a native of New York, came to Illinois with her parents and grew to maturity in this section. She and James II McKinley were married in what is now Farmer City and lived in or near there until 1882, when they moved to Lancaster, Lake County Florida, and became owners of an orange grove. They were said to be prominent in their new home as they were in the old, were active in the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and were living at the time the *Biographical Album* was written. Copyright dates of the *Album* were 1885 and 1891. The *Album* reported a tragedy which befell Agnes McKinley's father, John Brown. He "set out to visit New York, and while boarding an Illinois River steamer, fell and was drowned."

### **HIRAM MURPHEY**

"Hiram Murphey was born April 15, 1797, in Frederick County, Virginia, and died August 20, 1881, at his home near Farmer City. He was converted and joined the M.E. Church in the fall of 1828. He was married to Grace F. Mitchell, October 13, 1831, and moved to Illinois in the fall of 1853. He was the father of nine children - six sons and three daughters.

"A few weeks since, while visiting his eldest daughter, the conversation turned upon the departed loved, when he remarked he would like to be with them, but was

## Real People

willing to wait until the Lord called him. Truly could it be said of him that he 'came to his grave in a full age like a shock of corn cometh in its season.'

"Having spent some 28 years in this community, he was well known in his daily life as father, citizen and Christian. Of him it could be truly said, 'though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' In the kindly spirit, the simple trust, and the cheerful word, he showed in his closing days what the grace of God can do for the human soul in making it beautiful, even while the tabernacle of clay may be falling into ruins all around it. But the time came at last when 'the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken,' and his ransomed spirit plumed its flight toward the God who gave, while the weary and worn body was left behind to return to the earth as it was. So He giveth his beloved sleep." (From the obituary in the Farmer City Reaper)

Before moving from Virginia, Hiram Murphey was a harness maker and saddler. In the Farmer City area "he devoted his attention to general agricultural pursuits."

### GRACE MURPHEY

"Mrs. Grace Murphey, or Aunt Murphey as she is familiarly known, wife of Hiram Murphey, died at her residence two miles northeast of this city on the morning of Dec. 17, 1880. Mrs. Murphey is one among four sisters who were among the oldest and most honored early settlers of this end of the county. The first one of these highly esteemed sisters who dropped from the busy throng of life was Aunt Mary Smith, who died two years ago last July, and within a month after husband, Uncle John Smith died.

"Aunt Murphey has yielded to the next summons from the dreaded messenger, and now two are gone and two remain: Aunt Deborah Smith, wife of Uncle Henry Smith, and Mrs. Levi Rathbun. The maiden name of this most beloved quartet of ladies, who have done so much to lay the foundation of society and give it strength of moral tone, was Mitchell, sisters of William Mitchell, one of our first sheriffs of DeWitt County whose history is well known to the early settlers of the County.

## Real People

“The funeral services, conducted by Rev. Hewes, took place from the M.E. Church on Sunday, the 19th, in the forenoon, before an unusually large crowd of mourning friends and bereaved relatives.”

Although the above obituary in the Farmer City Public Reaper tells nothing concerning the birth of the deceased, that information was found on a family group sheet prepared by Pat Ruckman. Date of birth was 20 May 1806; place was Winchester, Frederick County, Virginia.

### **JOHN AND MARY (MITCHELL) SMITH**

“Among the old and prominent settlers of DeWitt County was John Smith, lately deceased. He was born in Hardy County, Virginia, February 23, 1805. He came to DeWitt County in the fall of 1835, and stopped in Mount Pleasant, now Farmer City. When the town rose to the dignity of a village he was elected Justice of the Peace, and decided the disputes arising among the early settlers with impartial justice. He opened a hotel, the first one in the village, and for many years kept the only house of entertainment there. His was the favorite stopping place for many years for the travelers going and coming from Bloomington, Peoria, and western points. In after years he gave his exclusive attention to farming, in which he continued until his death, which occurred June 8, 1878. [Ed. note: It is believed that one source, which cannot be identified at the time of this writing, indicated that our subject was the first postmaster in Mount Pleasant.]

“On the 8th of January, 1828, he married Mary D. Mitchell, who was born in Frederick County, VA, July 10, 1801. She died July 31, 1878, leaving no offspring. In her earlier years she taught at the first school in Mount Pleasant. Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith were members of the M.E. Church. In life they had numerous friends, and were much esteemed and respected for their good qualities of both head and heart. In this life they were noted for their many acts of pure benevolence, and both were charitable to a fault.



## Real People

“William W. Murphey was raised by them, and to a certain extent was adopted by Mrs. Smith, who was his aunt. [Ed. Note: She was one of four daughters of Thomas Mitchell, a Virginia planter.] He was born in Frederick County, VA, October 15, 1838, and is the son of Hiram and Grace (Mitchell) Murphey. In 1843 Mr. and Mrs. Smith, while on a visit to Virginia, brought W.W. Murphey with them. It was expected that Mr. Murphey’s father would soon follow, but he did not come until 1853. Mr. Murphey remained with Mr. Smith until the breaking out of the [Civil] war, when he enlisted for three years in Company F, 41st Pennsylvania Volunteers.” [Ed. Note: This contradicts another source which identified the military unit as the 41st Illinois Infantry.] Above biographical material taken from *Portrait-Biographical Album of DeWitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois*. Copyrighted by Chapman Bros., Chicago, Ill., 1885, 1891.

### **HENRY AND DEBORAH (MITCHELL) SMITH**

“In Hardy County, Virginia, Henry Smith... was born and reared, being one of a family of nine children, four of whom are still living. He grew to maturity on a farm and after reaching manhood married Miss Deborah L. Mitchell, who came of an old Virginia family and was reared in the neighborhood of Winchester. This lady was well educated and was engaged in teaching until her marriage, soon after which she and her husband set out for Ohio with a one-horse wagon, carrying all their worldly possessions with them. They spent a season in the Buckeye State, the husband working to earn money with which to continue his journey to Illinois, where he wished to establish himself.

“In the fall of 1835 Mr. and Mrs. Smith continued their journey overland, their party being increased by kinsmen. After a tedious journey they reached Bloomington, then a small village, near which they lived for some years, leasing the old Wallace farm which is now almost included in the limits of that city. In 1842 the good couple came to what is now Santa Anna Township, DeWitt County, and much to the surprise of the pioneer neighbors, built a house out on the prairie, and began to break the primitive sod. Theirs was the first prairie farm opened up between Farmer City and LeRoy.

## Real People

“Mr. Smith soon had his government land improved and the rude cabin, 16 x 16 feet, replaced by a better and more commodious dwelling. He and his wife lived to see DeWitt County improved, Farmer City built up, and such changes made as could scarcely have been imagined even by themselves as possible when they came to the State.

“Mr. Smith lived until the fall of 1882, reaching the age of seventy-two years, and his widow survived him three years, being seventy-seven years old when called hence. Mr. Smith was an Abolitionist and a Republican in politics, and was for some years a class leader in the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which he and his wife belonged for many years. (The above sketch was taken from *Portrait-Biographical Album of DeWitt and Piatt Counties Illinois*, found in the Farmer City Library. Additional facts cited below are from Obituary of Uncle Henry Smith, copied from unidentified source and found among papers supplied by Pat Ruckman.)

“Henry Smith was born January 17, 1810, in Hardy County, Virginia, was converted and joined the M.E. Church about the year 1830. He was married to Deborah Mitchell, November 4, 1834... Soon after his conversion he began holding meetings for prayer, and for many years held the office of class leader...

“‘Uncle Henry,’ as he was familiarly called by all who knew him, was blessed with an unusually sociable or friendly disposition, and always had a pleasant word for those he met.”

### **MARGARET (AUNT MAG) PAGE**

“Aunt Mag” Page Dead; End Comes at 5:30 on Tuesday Evening, proclaimed the Farmer City Journal of February 26, 1908, which then offered the following story of her life and death:

“The blind eyes of “Aunt Mag” Page were opened in glory Tuesday evening, when, at 5:30 o’clock, she loosened her frail hold on the things of this earth and passed to the other shore and her reward. She had been feeble and ailing for the past year and

## Real People

during that time was bedfast for a short while at two different times, but her final sickness was of only about a week's duration.

"Margaret, daughter of Peter and Margaret Keeney, was born near Bloomington, Indiana, Jan. 8, 1838. Her mother died when little Margaret was three weeks old and her father when she was eight years, and she made her home with her sister, Mrs. Mary Hoover. When she was 16 years old she came to Illinois with her sister and family and this vicinity became her home. During that year she was converted in a camp meeting at the old camp ground southwest of the city, joined the Methodist Church and for 54 years lived a faithful and zealous Christian [life], doing good to all about her by example and service.

"In November 1885, she was married to Ephriam Page, the ceremony being performed by Rev. Sam Martin at his home adjoining the old camp ground... A daughter was born to them but was taken at the age of 10 months. 'Uncle Eph' died Feb. 3, 1900, and within a few days 'Aunt Mag,' who had then been blind for several months, took up her residence with her niece, Mrs. Jennie Kirby, and there death came to her."

Additional biography was found in a church history in the Farmer City United Methodist Church, the history having been prepared for the city's centennial celebration in 1937.

From that history we learn that in one winter there was a revival nine weeks long. By that time Aunt Mag had lost the sight of one eye. ... "But, in spite of trifling handicaps such as her own partial blindness, the total blindness and almost helplessness of her horse, the long, cold, damp winter and spring, Aunt Mag Page never missed a service ... of the revival.

"Aunt Mag Page, in the course of time, lost the sight of the other eye. Her husband, Uncle Eph Page, was bitterly resentful toward the Lord for sending such a terrible visitation as total blindness upon so good a soul as his wife, the saintly Aunt Mag.



## Real People

As he lay dying, Aunt Mag was determined that her lover should not enter the Presence of the Most High with resentment in his heart.

"Ephie, Ephie, you must be reconciled, you must not enter into the Presence of our God with resentment and hatred in your heart. My affliction is a part of the Lord's Plan. He knows all things, does all things well. It is not for us to know.'

"And so, with tears and with prayers, Aunt Mag Page implored her lover to soften his heart. At length, a few hours before he entered the shadows which all of us, sooner or later, must penetrate, Uncle Eph Page assured his devoted wife that he was reconciled unto the will of the Almighty."

### **DAVID (D.C.) ROBISON**

A sketch regarding this subject was found in *Portrait-Biographical Album, DeWitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois*, in the Farmer City Library.

At the time the story was written, Robison was managing the B.P. Andrew & Co. Lumber Company in Farmer City and was described as "an active and wide-awake business man [who] stands well in the financial circles of DeWitt County." A native of Crittenden County, Arkansas, David "was but five years old when his father died and he was then reared by an intelligent mother...who...came to Illinois with her three children and took up abode at Carlinville.

"Much of his [David's] life has been passed in Illinois and his education was gained in the Carlinville schools. He is a practical man endowed with sound business talents and is well equipped for the responsible position that he holds with the lumber firm mentioned. Prior to coming to Farmer City he was engaged with the same company for some years at Champaign and Carlinville.

"Our subject and his wife are people of social prominence and he is a conspicuous figure in the public life of Farmer City. He has always taken an active part in all things tending to the advancement of the town and county, and has especially interested himself in educational matters. He is connected with the local School Board as School Director,

## Real People

and he helps to administer the affairs of the city as an alderman. . . He is a man of strong convictions, especially with regard to politics, and he gives his support to the Democratic party on occasions of National election, but acts more independently in home politics.”

The Farmer City Journal of October 6, 1921, related that Mr. and Mrs. D.C. Robison, then living in Los Angeles, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on September 25. The next issue of the Journal announced the death of Mr. Robison on October 11. The Journal stated that “Mr. Robison was a man of a big heart, broad vision and kindly spirit. Though he has been gone from among us so long, many friends received the news with deep sorrow.”

### NEW CHURCH CIRCLE

This organization was formed on August 19, 1895, for the purpose of “furnishing the new Methodist Church when built in this city.” Dues were set at twenty-five cents per year. At the meeting of September 5, 1898, it was voted to pay for seats in the audience room and for altar furnishings, the total for which was “about \$500.”

### BUILDING COMMITTEE

Without a building committee there would have been no new church and consequently no windows with names. The five members of this all-important committee were John Kissak, John A. Lindsey, D.C. Robison, J.J. Haas, and William W. Murphey. Inasmuch as biographical notes on the first three members were recorded on previous pages of this study, only the latter two members will be considered at this point.

### J.J. HAAS

An excerpt from an undated Farmer City Journal gave this glowing account of Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Haas as party hosts: “The commodious home of Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Haas, *in the western suburbs of the city*, [Italics by editor] was the scene of a very pleasant social gathering Thursday evening. One hundred or more of their friends were present, and feasting, music, conversation and fun continued as long as the fleeting hours would permit. Mr. and Mrs. Haas proved themselves equal to the high standard that has been reached by

## Real People

Farmer City people as social entertainers, and when the time came for departing no guest left with anything but feelings of the most perfect satisfaction in regard to the evening's enjoyment."

*J.J.HAAS WILL TO PROBATE* was the heading of a front page article in the Farmer City Journal of January 4, 1923. [It was stated that Mr. Haas, formerly of Farmer City, had become a resident of Lincoln, IL].

A home and a monthly income were provided for the widow as long as she remained unmarried. The remainder of the estate was to "be held for five years before final distribution, awaiting the probable claim of one son, William, who disappeared fifteen years ago. In case this son does not appear for his share of the estate, his share, one fifth, goes to his daughter, granddaughter of the deceased."

### **WILLIAM WILSON (WAYNE) MURPHEY**

Two sources provide material on the life of this committee member and both were written while he was living. First is an account found in *Portrait-Biographical Album of DeWitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois*, copyrighted 1885 and 1891.

"William W. Murphey is a farmer in Santa Anna Township. He was born in Frederick County, VA, on October 15, 1838. His parents were Hiram and Grace (Mitchell) Murphey, who were natives of the Old Dominion. Our subject was the first of his family to come to this County, as he was brought hither when he was only five years old by his Uncle John Smith, who located in what was then called Mt. Pleasant, now Farmer City.

"He became of age and enlisted [in the Union Army] in 1861. He was a member of the Forty First Illinois Infantry... The Regiment sustained a great loss at Ft. Donelson, and among the brave that fell was a brother of W.W. Murphey. The Forty First went to the siege of Jackson, Miss., and in that engagement our subject was severely wounded through the right hip by a bullet from the enemy's rifle. After lying in the hospital for a time...he joined his Regiment...[which] was ordered to be discharged in August 1864."



## Real People

The Farmer City Journal of September 8, 1905, contributed: "W.W. Murphey is now president of the John Weedman National Bank, one of the strongest financial institutions in this part of the state. He joined the [Methodist Episcopal] church early in life and has been an influential member for years. He was largely instrumental in installing the splendid new pipe organ...He enjoys the confidence of all. He is liberal with his means and a friend to everything that is good and noble. He is regular at the morning services of the church and enjoys to see the church grow in spirituality and power. He is the president of the board of trustees."

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[Ed. note: Research for this paper turned up a description of funerals of the 1880's and 1890's. While it doesn't fit into our study, it just seemed too interesting not to share.]

### FUNERALS OF THE 1880'S AND 1890'S

"The funeral itself was an hour in length. Frequently, the minister would have the entire congregation in tears as he, as one Methodist preacher expressed it, 'pulled out the tremulous stop.' The mourners assembled in the front rows of the church, the men with crepe around their hats and about their coat sleeves, the women so completely draped in black crepe that they were unrecognizable. The choir sang the most mournful and the most touching of all hymns in the hymn book. The pastor would expound the good qualities of the deceased and the great lessons to be learned from his life. Sometimes, as wags outside the church expressed it, the Methodist preacher was able to preach some sinners right into the pearly gates of Heaven....Frequently the devout members of the church objected to, at least criticized, the bringing of certain unsaved sinners into the church to be preached into heaven. Said one old member of the old Methodist Church, 'They drag a man in feet forwards into the church for his funeral sermon who hasn't set his own feet into the church for 25 years.'

"... wags up and down Main Street would watch carefully the men who wore crepe on their hats and see how soon, under feminine attractions, it came off. Three and five

## Real People

years were the least possible expanse of time that a man should even think of remarrying after the death of a beloved wife. If it were less time - scandalous. One man in Farmer City was married within three months after he stood in the old Methodist Church almost prostrate over the casket of his wife. 'Well, by gad, why shouldn't he get married right away?' asked one Main Street loafer. 'Why, his first wife is just as dead in three months as she'll ever be.'" From a church history written for Farmer City's 1937 centennial celebration. Author unknown.

Regrettably, no biographies, obituaries, or news items were found for **JAMES, SARAH, AND J.N. CAMPBELL; GEORGE AND MARY HAAS; MRS. JENNIE A. LAWRENCE; MRS. LOUISIA MANNOCK**. The desired information may be imbedded in local newspapers for which there is no microfilm. Birth and death dates for some individuals were found in cemetery records. If information regarding the above persons becomes available, the intent is to add it to this writing.

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And now, a note to the reader: Whereas you have persevered to this point, you have lived - while reading this paper - with the calendar turned back a century. And you have walked in the shoes of persons who had profound connections to the Farmer City Methodist Church of that era. A tangible legacy of several of those persons is the house of worship which has served succeeding congregations, including the present, so well. The response to that must be deep gratitude. You have read recitations of the virtues of our subjects, but have found no accounts of their vices. Who would want it otherwise?

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This paper was prepared by John W. Overton in 1998, as a part of the program to celebrate the centennial of the current Farmer City United Methodist Church building. It is hoped that it has given the reader a sense of acquaintance with the *real people* whose names abide on the stained glass windows of that edifice.



NAMES: LAST, FIRST		DATES: BIRTH - DEATH		ROOM	WALL	REMARKS
Campbell	James	9AUG1804--6JUN1875		Choir Loft	North	In Memory of James and Sarah Campbell, Father & Mother of J. N. Campbell
Campbell	Sarah	ABT 1813--9AUG1883		Choir Loft	North	
Campbell	J. N			Choir Loft	North	
Ewbank	Maude E.	23FEB1877--27NOV1965		Board Room	South	Class Q Teacher
Haas	George			Choir Loft	Rose	In Memory of George & Mary M. Haas,
Haas	Mary M.			Choir Loft	Rose	Parents of J.J. Haas
Haas	J.J.	Died 1922?		Choir Loft	Rose	
Kissack	John	14FEB1844--24APR1928		Pastor's Office	West	Bible Class Teacher
Kissack	Luther	1885--1892		Sanctuary	North	In Loving Memory of
Kissack	Olive	Died at age 3 months		Sanctuary	North	In Loving Memory of
Lawrence	Mrs. Jennie A.			JR-HI	South	Class D Teacher
Lindsey	John A.	11MAY1852--22MAR1922		JR-HI	Northwest	Class R Teacher
Mannock	Mrs. Louisia	1860--1935		JR-HI	South	Class B Teacher
Marshall	Mary	20SEP1857--9JAN1899		JR-HI	Southwest	Class F Teacher
McKinley	Agnes	1829 ?		Sanctuary	East	
Murphey	Edwin C.	14JUL1866--11APR1896		Sanctuary	West	
Murphey	Grace	20MAY1806--17DEC1880		Sanctuary	East	
Murphey	Hiram	15APR1797--20AUG1881		Sanctuary	East	
Page	Aunt Mag	8JAN1838--18FEB1908		South Entry	South	Class T Teacher
Robison	D. C.	12JUL1848--		SR-HI	South	Class C Teacher
Smith	Deborah	ABT 1808--ABT 1885		Sanctuary	East	
Smith	Henry	17JAN1810--FALL 1882		Sanctuary	East	
Smith	John	23FEB1805--8JUN1878		Sanctuary	East	
Smith	Mary D.	18JUL1801--31JUL1878		Sanctuary	East	
Junior League				Church Office		
Ladies Aid				Pastor's Office		
New Church Circle				Pastor's Office		

NAMES ON THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF THE FARMER CITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH