

AS A BRIEF REMINDER OF RILEY CENTER ✓  
by Anna Cawthorne

The older settlers were at a standstill to know what to call the little place, and one of the older men, David Sanderson, spoke up and said, "Why not call it Riley after an Indian chief by the name of Chief Riley?" And he said it is in the center of the township one way; we will call it Riley Center. That is the way it got its name.

At that time there was a tribe of Indians lived on the bank of Belle River across from Pound Hill, and for many years it went by the name of the old Indian farm. There were many Indians that roamed up and down through the woods at that time, and there was a burying ground near the banks of the river. It was said that the Indians came over once a year to visit the graves. The farm is now owned by Mr. Hannick. I heard my mother say that one day a young Indian went by her house on the run trying to chase a young fawn down which they would use for food.

Mr. Sanderson, known as Pap, and his son Ed started a cheese factory which they ran for a long time. I can just remember going there with my mother and seeing the big cheeses on tables, wrapped in cheese cloth until it ripened and then it was ready for sale. She would buy a big piece, maybe a quarter, as she had to send out lunches at 10 o'clock for the men in the field who were raking and binding, then hustle and get dinner at noon. I think the price of cheese at that time was about 8 to 10 cents per pound. After Mr. Sanderson quit running the factory, several others took over; the last one I remember was Robert Kenyon. I think that a short time later the farm was sold to Colonel Haedicke.

The first storekeeper I remember was Albert Gillett, known as Dad Gillett. The store stood about where John Doty's store stands today, and out to the south were the old hay scales where people could weigh hay and livestock.

There was the old town pump which furnished water for a good many of the families and the school also. I remember them telling how the older boys would come to Riley on Saturday evening for a visit and fun--- wrestle and sometimes dance. They had plenty of music, for there were several good mouth organ players--Martin McNutt, Martin Williams, and Charlie Cawthorne.

There was an old unpainted, wood-colored house across the road from the store where an old shoemaker lived. He was Hughie Munn, but he became ill and went back to Canada. The building was rented to several shopkeepers after that. The Snell sisters started a millinery shop in it, and it went down in ashes when French's big store burned down on a bright summer night.

Riley was well blessed at one time with doctors. I have a slight remembrance of one, Dr. Rogers, who lived in the house that Edgar Shook once owned. Then came Dr. Charlie Lewis; he lived in the house now owned by Grace Storey. I was very small at that time. And a few years later, Dr. Cook came and bought the house where Ruth and George McNutt now live. He doctored for several years, then sold out to Dr. Green, who lived here about thirteen years and then moved to Richmond. Then came Dr. Traphagen, from Davisburg, who stayed for a short time, moved to North Branch, where he died. Dr. Blakely was the last doctor; he didn't stay very long.

The first minister I remember was Elder Doyle, who preached in the Baptist Church for a long time. Later he moved to Doyle where he started a store. Then they named the place Doyle Station. At that time the train ran from Port Huron to Almont. There were several other ministers that preached in the old Methodist Church. I can recall Elder Flint Cole and Rutledge; the parsonage was at Capac.

Gilletts ran a planing mill west of Laco McNutt's trailer. They made fanning mills and milk safes. Afterwards Frank Yeager had a cider mill and boiled it down to sell. He then went to Berville and went in the tile business.

My father worked three miles south of New Haven in harvest time from sunrise to sunset, cradling for fifty to seventy-five cents a day. He walked home one Saturday night, stopped in Memphis and bought some flour. He was so tired he lay down by the roadside to rest a while. He was born in Leicestershire, England, came on a sailboat--was six weeks crossing. He would go north of Perry School and get a load of stoves, take them to New Baltimore. Sometimes if he was late, he would stay down until the next day. That was the time of the cold New Year's. Mother froze her hands doing chores that morning, took the children, went to the neighbor's until he came home. She did her fingers up in cloth, they were so bad.

I was born one mile west of Riley Center on the old homestead in a log house on Master's Road. We took land up from the government. We go mail once a week when I was a girl.

The first schoolhouse I heard tell of was the little log school opposite Cal Sharrard's on Miller Road. Lollie Jordan was the teacher. One that was on the point, southwest corner of Masters Road and Belle River Road--where the old orchard is--was built out of clapboards. It was moved across the road next to Bert Orr's tavern and dance hall. Then the white school was built--corner of Masters and Riley Road. They built it up and made two stories of it.

One time there was a photograph gallery south of the old Maccabee Hall. Mr. Black was the photographer. The first man to run the blacksmith shop that I remember was William Stringer.

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*The Blacksmith Shop was north of John Doty's store of text operated by the Storey boys.*

*Jewel Raymond <sup>owns</sup> also operated the Blacksmith Shop. ~~for~~*

*at Hilda's Deener corner.  
Mrs. Edwood was Hilda's Deener grandfather who was a banker at the home.*