

History of Owasco, Carroll Co., IN

-by [Orpha \(Troxel\) Goslee](#)

[written in 1968; edited here for length]

[Meaning of name "Owasco" follows this history.]

The History of Owasco, Clay Township Carroll County, Indiana

FORWARD

For a long time it had been my desire to write a history of the little town of Owasco, which is so dear to my heart in my younger days. I hesitated to do this, thinking perhaps no one else would be interested, but numerous friends and schoolmates have urged me to do so, and I will endeavor to do the best I can with the material available.

This history will not be one hundred per cent accurate for all the older people and many of their descendants have long gone from this earth. I am sorry now that I did not concern myself more about historical records that should be kept for future generations.

At the time when I could have asked elderly folks about the origin of their town, I was not interested in history. It was just a subject, and I thought rather a dry one that had to be studied in order to make passing grades. But through the years, I am constantly reminded that we are making history every day and that it should be preserved for posterity.

In the gathering of this material, I have used the records found in the Recorder's Office at Delphi and from files kept by Mrs. Faye Wise, a well known county historian. I have also gathered material by asking older folks who are left, and I have material from my own memory and from what my father and my uncle told me, both of whom were born within a mile of Owasco in the 1800s.

My thanks go to all who have so willingly helped me.

Orpha (Troxel) Goslee
Author of narrative

OWASCO

As far as is known, Owasco came into being in the year 1884 after the building of the Monon Railroad in 1883. Why this little town did not grow to the size intended for it, we do not know, for the original plot shows that it was carefully laid out for future generations.

Also it was in the heart of a prosperous farming community, and several of the first families went to considerable lengths to start the town as is shown by the records I found in the Recorder's Office in Delphi. It reads as follows: The Town of Owasco in Carroll County, Indiana, is situated in the Southwest corner of the Southeast quarter and the Southeast corner of the Southwest quarter of Section No. 3 in Twp. No. 23 North range 2 West and except the lots adjacent to the railroad is laid off at right angles to the line dividing section 3 & 10, lots numbered 1, 2, & 3 in block one are fractional, the dimensions of each being shown on said lot. Lots No. 4 and 5 in block 2 are also fractional, the dimensions of each being shown on the plot.

The lots numbered 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 are each 60 by 120 feet. Main Street north of the section line is 30 feet. Front and

2nd Sts. are each 60 ft. wide. Center St. is 60 ft. wide; North Alley is 20 ft. wide; Air Line Alley is 16 ft. wide; Water and South Alleys are each 12 ft. wide. Out lot No. 1 extends back to the creek and contains 9/100 acres. Front Street and Water Alley each extend North to low water mark on Wildcat Creek.

The undersigned proprietors of the annexed plot hereby declare the same to be correct and be recorded in the office of the County Recorder: Shelby Moore

Mary S. Moore

John M. Beard

Rachel Beard

William Lewis

Clare Lewis

State of Indiana, Carroll Co. S.S.

Before Solomon P. Winter, a Justice of the Peace in and for said county, Shelby G. Moore and Mary S. Moore, his wife; John M. Beard and Rachel, his wife; William Lewis and Clara, his wife, on the 17th day of December 1884 acknowledged the execution of foregoing plot, for the purpose specified. Signed, Solomon P. Winter, Justice of the Peace, and recorded Dec. 18, 1884 at 2:30 o'clock P.M. George W. Beals, Recording Clerk of the Court

The first lot purchased in what was the beginning of Owasco was by Catherine M. Roth, lots 4 and 5 in the original plot. The price paid by her was \$120.00.

THE MONON RAILROAD

Since the railroad seems to have been the incentive for starting the town we will begin with it.

As has been found in some records, it was said to have been built in 1883, but Elder Jacob H. Skiles, aged 92 years, declares it was built in 1881 and that he remembers the first train that ran over it. We can, however, safely say it was built somewhere between the years 1881 and 1883. Also we find the trains coming in from the South and going as far North as the R.R. bridge.

From there the record is not very clear. Some folks still living today, seem to remember the bridge being built in the year 1891 or 1892. One older resident recalls his father telling him that trains came over the railroad as far north as where the bridge was later built to take on water. It is known that there was a water tank and a pumping station just beyond where the road crossed the railroad northwest of town. The water was pumped from the creek, and it is said that some of the old wooden pipes, reinforced by iron bands and treated to prevent rot, are still visible.

The pump man in my parents' time was Ben Palmer. There might have been others, but this I cannot verify. Some years later this service was discontinued and trains took on water at Ockley.

The railroad did a thriving business for many years through Owasco. A depot was built; passenger trains stopped; mail was sent in and out, and much shipping in and out was done.

Stock pens were built east of the tracks and near the crossing which made it handy to ship stock both in and out. Carloads of coal, implements, and even a carload of apples were sent in during my remembering years. Later the stock pens were removed, and shipping then consisted of logs which were hauled in from the surrounding territory and sent out.

Later, after the mail route was discontinued, no more mail bags were to be seen on the mail post. Passenger trains zipped by without stopping, but the "ole Plug" still continued to stop twice a day for a long time. Finally, even it ceased to run, and eventually the depot was torn down.

Today (1968) only a few trains run through Owasco, and none of them stop. All shipping has ceased.

STORES AND POST OFFICE

Having the railroad going through and the town plotted, a store was needed and a post office was felt necessary.

According to the records of Mrs. Faye Wise, the first post master was William Lewis in 1883- 1884, followed by Mary Stettler and Frank Butz in 1887; Alvin Delong in 1888; Samuel Clauser in 1893; John Anderson in 1894, and Jacob Cripe in 1896. After Jacob's departure from Owasco, his brother Perry Cripe took over and for many years was both post master and store keeper. Both of these men ran a huckster route over the country side.

Following the moving away of the Perry Cripe family, we find quite a few others in the store and the post office, some of whom were -- as I recall -- Lewis Cooper, Virgil Stinebaugh and Herby Ward, Martin Ridder, Parker and Lane, Herman Wente, William Wiggs, and Edward Roth. Each of these men had the post office in his store.

However, in 1903 a mail route out of Owasco was established, and the mail was carried by Isaac Cripe. It operated until 1917 when it was discontinued, and Mr. Cripe moved to Rossville. He carried the mail from there until his death just a few months short of his scheduled retirement.

To this day (1968), the mail is still brought in from Rossville.

During the time of William Wiggs' store, the post office ceased to exist. The last man to have a store was E. C. Roth who closed out sometime during the depression years in the 1930s

During the years I went to school, from 1901 to 1909, that store seemed to me to be an enchanted place where you could buy anything from a stick of candy or a piece of bologna to a few yards of calico.

Besides the thriving business the railroad and the general store did, there were several engaged in the saw-milling industry. J. J. Cripe had the first saw-mill; later, Sherman Deeds. It is on record that Jacob Schweiger owned the first flour and grist mill just east of town. However, he never completed the mill, and it never operated.

It is also on record that many years prior to the town's establishment, Anthony Dehner built a dam near the railroad bridge and sawed logs. Two blacksmith shops existed in my time; one was operated by a John Smith (not the Johnny Smith most of us know, but an itinerate preacher in the white church). Later, Ben Krissley also had a shop. I recall Oliver Roth as being the man to call if your well was in trouble.

CHURCHES

THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

Owasco had been in existence some ten or twelve years before feeling the need for a church.

This might have been because two churches were within walking distance: three-fourths of a mile east of town was the German Baptist Church (closed in 1900), and one mile southwest of town was St. John's Lutheran and Reformed Church (closed in 1943). Also within horse and buggy driving distance were the churches in Rossville and Pymont.

In about the year 1894 or 1896, a little white church was built on the north side of town on land donated by Isiah Geeting. It was dedicated according to Mrs. Orpha Hufford, who remembers being present, by a Rev. Mygrant.

It started as a United Brethren Church, but as time went along and as more radically evangelistic ministers served it, the church developed into a Pilgrim Holiness Church. The first pastor was the Rev. Mygrant. The second pastor and probably the best known was the Rev. Johnston who was from Huntington. He married Mae Hughes, daughter of Bill Hughes and sister of Orth Hughes.

All history should include some human interest incidents. Well, now, this church held a revival every year. It would

last three or four weeks. Crowds came, perhaps not so much to hear God's word preached as to watch the behavior of those who got "happy." I clearly recall being present one night when one of their lady members became "inspired" and tossed a paper-back song book over her shoulder and narrowly missed striking her cousin in the face.

Also I was present one night when a very embarrassing situation occurred. It was a very cold night; there were two stoves, and both were going full blast. The church was nearly full, and in came two young men, one very much the worse for drinking. They sat immediately behind one of the stoves, and soon the heat became too much for the drunk and he became very ill, vomiting on the floor before his companion hurried him outside. Needless to say, we all listened to the Gospel that night in the most smelly atmosphere.

Sometimes we were made to wonder if those long protracted meetings did too much good, for nearly every time those meetings went beyond two weeks, trouble and differences would arise and sometimes end in strife.

But not all was lost. I do remember a rather impressive incident.

One year, an old couple from Indianapolis came to be the Evangelists. They were temporarily housed in a dwelling which I passed everyday as I walked to school. Evidently they were paid very little or perhaps nothing for their efforts, receiving probably donations from members. One morning as I was on my way to school, I heard them earnestly praying, but I could not tell for what. I thought nothing about it until I was told the story later.

These old people had run out of provisions and had no money and were praying to God for help. Well, it just so happened that a certain farmer, noted for his closed-fistedness, had become interested in the services and had been attending the revival. No one ever expected much help from this man, but God works in various ways. The very day this old couple prayed so hard for help, God heard and put it into the heart of this man to bring them a load of supplies. So who are we to say those meetings did not do much good; only God knows the answer.

The services were discontinued soon after 1910.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

The people of the Baptist faith opened up the brick school house, which was not used for a school after the new one was built in 1896.

No one remembers exactly in what year this church was started, but it must have been in the early 1900s. For a number of years, a thriving little church kept going and growing so much so that when the Holiness quit having services in the White Church, the Baptist took it over and for several years were served by a veteran minister by the name of McCorkle. He came from Monon on the "Old Plug" on Sunday mornings and returned home after early evening services via the "Plug." He was probably the last minister to serve, for services were discontinued about 1919 or 1920.

The first minister to preach to the Baptist in Owasco was the Rev. W. P. Tedford. Another preacher at the church was the Rev. Kleckner, a well-known Baptist minister of the time.

After preaching was discontinued in the little Whit Church, I am told Sunday School was still conducted for several years, but in the early 1920s everything ceased, and the building was sold and later torn down. Since then, Owasco has had no church services.

SCHOOLS

The first school was in the community long before the town came into being.

My father often mentions the old school house he attended. This school house stood just across the road that crossed the railroad at the place where it joins state road 421. It was called Bulla School and was built in 1834

In 1857 a frame school house was erected in the corner in the turn of the road where the old brick building is now. This was called the Moore School.

In 1879 it was replaced by the brick building just mentioned, and was the first one to be called the Owasco School. It is still standing and is in good repair, now being used as a tool shed.

The school my generation attended was built in 1896, in the northeast corner of town.

Unfortunately, this building was destroyed by fire nearly in 1920. It was replaced that same year by a nice, well-equipped modern building used for many years. After Clay Twp., joined with the Ross Twp., Clinton Co. School Corporation in 1960, it was used only a few weeks each autumn for the children of migrant workers in the community. Finally in 1968, it was torn down, and all Clay Twp., pupils are transported to the Rossville Consolidated School.

For ten years from August 23, 1931, to August 1941, a yearly reunion was held in the William Fetterhoff grove east of town. Many were the happy memories that were recalled on those occasions. A big dinner, a good program, and sports for the youngsters were enjoyed. At first attendance was gratifying with some coming considerable distance to honor Owasco School, but as the years went by the crowd dwindled and interest lagged. In 1941, during the Second World War, the yearly reunion ceased to be.

Oh! Those happy days. Where have they gone?

At the end of this history will be the names of the teachers who taught during the years, beginning with 1869 and going until the school closed in 1960.

OWASCO ITEMS AT RANDOM

While Owasco has not grown like it should have, it still had its exciting doings and time.

I recall many things that went on, and so could my readers, I am sure. I remember some 4th of July celebrations which were thrilling for me as a kid. I also remember several times when revivals were held in the summer time in tent-meetings. I can remember the a combination sale or two, besides all the gatherings and Halloween parties that were held at the school house.

In 1885, the population was 56. Today in 1968 it is 46 or 47.

However, Owasco will be perpetuated by the fact that on September 5, 1930, State Road 421 (or 39 as formerly known) passed along the west edge of town, and the State Highway Commission established the "Owasco Rest Park," three-fourths of a mile south of town on land the state bought from Frank Redenbacher in 1930. A constant reminder that Owasco is on the map.

My thanks go to Orpha Fetterhoff Hufford, Elga Beard Cripe, John Moore Beard, Herbert W. Cripe, Preston Roth, Ruth Beard White, the Rev. J. W. Skiles, and others who supplied me the information.

Orpha (Troxel) Goslee

TEACHERS FROM 1869 TO 1960

1869-70 Squire Stanton

1870-71 Andrew Saylor

1871-72 Henry D. Mohler

1872-73 O. A. Kirkpatrick

1873-75 Sarah E. Cripe
1875-76 O. A. Kirkpatrick
1876-77 Charles Sines
1877-78 George B. Cripe
1878-80 Joe W. Bates
1880-81 C. McMahon
1880-82 John Golden
1882-85 Levi Summe
1885-87 Will Moore
1887-89 Levi Summe

From 1889, I could find no dates for when the teachers served. I might not have them listed in the order in which they taught.

Joseph Clauser
Mary Morton
Russell Beard
Harry Todd
Olga Beck
J.J. Hufford (taught for many years at different times)
Maud (Moore) Neher
Ella (German) Heiney
William Campbell
Loona (Nevin) Johnson
Isa Wasson
Arthur Ritchey
Ida (Cripe) Pressel
Luther Allen
Harley Ward
Pearl (Shedron) Burkhalter
Ellsworth Murphy
Della (Snyder) Baker
Orpha (Fetterhoff) Hufford (taught at different times)
Ellsworth Lowery
Virgil Stinebaugh
Cora (Cripe) Harris
Frank Hemming
Bernice (Griffith) Beard
George Loy
John Sheets
Ethel (Hufford) Reppert (taught many years)
Maud (Ritchey) Oakes
Mary (Ritchey) Luper
Rosa (Beard) Kirkman
Florence (Clawson) Porter
Lucille (Quinn) Donahoe
Carolyn (Clauser) Chopson
Myrtle (Vanatta) Gardner
Marie (Hood) Zimmerman
Carrie Zinn
Rachel Ireland
W. B. Ireland
Golden (Rule) Thomas

John Finley
Lotha Hurley
Margaret (Goss) Kent
Byron Kent
Edith (Myers) Chapman
Homer Caughill
Bethel Baird (taught for many years)
P. B. Hemming
Avis Ritchey
Norman Cors
Audrey Garrison
Hubert Rule
Robert Gordon
Joyce Pothuisjie

There may have been others, I hope I have not missed anyone. If so, it was not done intentionally.

[**NOTE:** Following the style set by the author, married women's names appear with their maiden names in parentheses. Most of these women married after they taught at Owasco School, but the author learned their married names.]

Meaning of the word "Owasco"

-by Alice Marie Beard

The word "Owasco" is an Iroquois word for "place by the floating bridge."

When John M. Beard was township trustee in Clay Township, Carroll Co., IN, in the 1870s, there was a one-room school house erected. As township trustee, he was responsible for schools. The school was named "Owasco School." It appears to be the first that the name "Owasco" was officially used. The school was in the area known as Owasco. It is reasonable to assume that the area was being referred to as Owasco before the school was named. In other words, the school was likely called whatever the area was called.

John M. Beard had arrived in Carroll Co. with his parents and siblings in 1835. His father first rented and then bought property in the area now known as Pymont. His mother's brother lived in the area now known as Owasco. These two areas were on opposite sides of the Wild Cat Creek. The creek is no little stream. At times, it's much more like a river than a creek. When John M. Beard's family would have visited his mother's brother's family, they would have had to cross the Wild Cat. The standard way of crossing a stream at the time was to keep a rope stretched across the creek at it's most passable part, with end of the rope secured to trees on opposite sides of the creek. A raft could be tied to the rope and safely moved across the water to the other side. The raft would, in effect, be a "floating bridge."

Obviously, someone who was in that area at some time HAD to have known the correct meaning of the Iroquois word "Owasco." Who and how are anyone's guess