



*Henry Little*

GRINNELL IOWA

AN OLD SETTLER OF THIS COUNTY, LATE OF KEWANEE

**LITTLE C. J. T.** Kewanee; General Auctioneer; widely known as such; born in N. H. July 13, 1811; came to this Co. April 30, 1837; Rep; Cong; married Eliza Ann Brooks, May 13, 1834; she was born in N.H. July 27, 1813; they have had eight children, one deceased; the living are, Charles, engaged in practice of medicine in Kansas; Ellen E. (now Mrs. G. W. Perkins, of Iowa); Sarah J. (now Mrs. Dr. Todd, of Galva, Ill.); William C. a lawyer in Kansas; Eliza A. (now Mrs. Frank Reed); George B. a physician, in Burlington, Iowa; and John J. a student, living at home; Hattie, wife of Rev. J. Giffen, died Sept. 26, 1872, and left one daughter; in 1844 Mr. Little left his former business and engaged in mercantile pursuits; he always took an active interest in the education of children; he was a member of the School Board, from its first organization, while he remained in Wethersfield—about twenty-five years; Mr. and Mrs. Little united with the Congregational Church July 11, 1841; every member of their family has united with the same church

**LITTLE HENRY G.** Kewanee. The following biographical sketch was furnished for this work by an old settler of Henry County, and intimate friend of its subject:

Henry G. Little was born in Gofftown, N. H. March 31, 1813; in March, 1835, he left the rugged New England hills to seek his fortune on the fertile prairies of Illinois, and settled temporarily in Peoria. March 1, 1836, he married Fidelia M. Stoddard, a daughter of the Puritans, a descendant of the redoubtable Gen. Miles Standish, and brought his young wife from the comforts and refinements of her pleasant home in the staid old town of Newington, Conn. to endure, uncomplainingly, patiently, and cheerfully the privations and dangers of frontier life. They came to Henry County in November of the same year, and the following Spring set up their household gods in a log cabin, near the present home of C. C. Blish, Esq. of Kewanee, and commenced farming on the lands now owned by Dr. Lewis Hurd and Asa Cole. Three months later (June 19, 1837), Mr. Little, accompanied by his brother, C. J. T. Little, rode thirty miles across the trackless prairie, utterly destitute of road, bridge, or dwelling, to the house of George Brandenburg, where he took part in the organization of Henry County.

The first election in Wethersfield Precinct was held at Mr. Little's house, in August of the same year. The single room, sixteen feet by eighteen, which the dwelling contained, was at that time the residence of three families, Col. S. Blish and Mr. W. H. Blish having

just arrived from Connecticut and taken up temporary quarters with Mr. Little. There were also two men, W. H. Blish and Hazelton Page, lying sick of fever in the same room. When election day arrived, even Mr. Little himself, who always dwells with a sort of regretful pleasure upon the enjoyments of those early days, and finds it difficult to remember anything worthy of being termed "hardship," admit that they were "a little crowded." Sullivan Howard, H. G. Little, and Norman Butler acted as judges of election. Sullivan Howard and H. G. Little were elected Justices of the Peace, an office which Mr. Little held for more than fifteen years in the county.

As a farmer, Mr. Little shared to the full all the labors and inconveniences inseparable from that calling during the settlement of the county, and, in addition, was often called to occupy posts of trust and responsibility involving public interests. In 1850, he was elected Sheriff and Collector of the county, and for two years performed the duties of those offices. Though there was no jail in the county and he sometimes was obliged to keep prisoners for weeks in his own house, chaining them at night to the cooking stove, no prisoner ever escaped from his hands. Though there was neither safe nor bank in the county, not a dollar of the revenue of those years was ever lost. All taxes were paid in gold and silver, and the coin was deposited with trusted friends in various parts of the county. Mrs. Francis Loomis was for months the keeper of two shot-bags of gold, hidden in a rag-bag hanging from the rafters of a chamber, with hired men sleeping near. Mr. Little tells thrilling stories of long rides across the wild prairies with no companion but a desperate thief or murderer chained and manacled by his side, whom he was conveying to the penitentiary at Alton; or bearing the scarcely less dangerous charge of a carpet-bag of gold to be deposited with the State Treasurer at Springfield.

Having been all his life a Whig, and in earnest sympathy with the anti-slavery cause, Mr. Little naturally became identified with the Republican party from its organization, and as a Republican, represented the three counties of Mercer, Rock Island and Henry, with a population of over 50,000, in the exceedingly busy and laborious session of the Illinois Legislature of 1856-7. At this time he formed the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln, John A. Logan and others who were afterward distinguished in the state and the nation. Among the acts passed by this Legislature were those for the removal of the county-seat of Mercer Co. from Keithsburg to Aledo; for enlarging the city limits of Rock Island; and for the incorporation of the town of Kewanee.

Mr. Little was from its organization an active member of the Henry County Agricultural Society; was elected President the second year of its existence, and again in 1866. He has been an extensive land-holder in the county, entering from the government in 1850 and 1851 a large body of land, besides purchasing from other parties. For many years he dealt largely in lands, and the records show that few men have passed through their hands so large a portion of Henry County.

Kewanee owes much to the energy and public spirit of Henry G. Little. He was one of the four original proprietors of that town, as he was also of the neighboring town of Neponset. More than one pleasant residence in Kewanee and many a spreading tree bear witness to his enterprise and taste. The dwelling now owned and occupied by Dr. Hiram Nance was built by him, and was for some years his home. During his residence in the town, he was identified with all efforts for the material, educational and religious improvement of the place, giving liberally of his time, his strength and his means for the benefit of town and school and church; and the same was true of him while living in Wethersfield. The early settlers of this county would not have been true to their Puritan ancestry had they made less thorough provision for the fostering and culture of intelligence and morality, and no one labored more earnestly, or made more cheerful sacrifices for those ends than the subject of this article. The love of learning and Christian culture, whose foundations he and his collaborators laid broad and deep while yet the wilderness looked wondering on, have risen into fair and stately structures all over the land; and the graduation records of many a college and seminary bear the names of those who have entered into the labors of these early toilers.

A sketch of the life of Henry G. Little, however brief, would be incomplete without at least a reference to the genial and generous hospitality always seen in his home. Equally in the log-cabin of one room and in the spacious comfortable home of later years friends and strangers were always sure of cordial welcome, and guests were rarely wanting. For religious meetings, for benevolent organizations, for the entertainment of ministers and others whose calling or circumstances appealed to their sympathies, Mr. and Mrs. Little held always an open door. Their house was often called "the ministers' hotel," and to their ungrudging hospitality to strangers they owe many a valued friendship whose end is not yet.

All of Mr. Little's children were born in Henry County. Two of them died in infancy, and one son, Frank H., in 1863, at the age of sixteen. Of the five remaining, Louise S. married Henry S. Viels, of Oberlin, Ohio, now in business in Grinnell, Iowa; Mary Maude married Prin. Jesse Macy, of Iowa College, Grinnell; Elizabeth H. married J. P. Lyman, a

lawyer of Grinnell; Fannie R. and Henrietta G. reside with their parents. In 1867, the whole family removed to Grinnell, Iowa, where they still remain. Mr. Little has been for four successive years elected Mayor of that city. His efforts in laying out and beautifying the Grinnell cemetery, in promoting various improvements in the town, and in building his present substantial home, show that he did not lose his taste and energy in crossing the Mississippi.

Though for ten years past residents of another state, he and his wife have not lost their affection for, and interest in the scenes of their early toils and sacrifices. They return often to visit the dear old friends and stand by the graves of their children.





109 W. DIVISION, ST.

Henry G. Little Home

1853  
BUILT.

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