

elected County Commissioners, and constituted a County Court for the transaction of county business; a system which continued in force until the adoption of a new State Constitution in 1848. The Commissioners mentioned in the foregoing act to locate the seat of justice, viz., Bowen, Essarey and Barber, met, and after a thorough investigation of all eligible points suggested, decided on the present site of Charleston. Charles Morton and Benjamin Parker owned the land, and each donated twenty acres for town purposes, as provided in the act of organization. In February, 1831, the survey was made by Thomas Sconce, first County Surveyor, and in April of the same year, the first sale of lots was made. The Commissioners gave the name of Charleston to the county seat, in honor of Charles Morton, one of the men who donated twenty acres of land to the county. Feeling under some obligations to Mr. Morton for the assistance he rendered them while engaged in locating the town, they told his wife that they had determined to call the place Mortonville, when she offered an amendment to their proposition, saying that if they desired to compliment her husband in that way, to add the last syllable of Morton to Charles, and call their town Charleston. They accepted her suggestion, and thus the capital of the county received its name.

During the year 1831, the first Court House of Coles County was erected, down on the "town branch," as the murky little stream is called. It was built of hewed logs, covered with "clapboards," floored with sawdust and provided with wood benches for seats. This served as a temple of justice until 1835, when the brick building, still in use, was erected. Originally, it was an old-style edifice, of the pattern still to be seen in many of the counties of Illinois, but has been modernized, remodeled and transformed into quite an imposing structure, with an altogether attractive appearance. It stands in the center of a handsome square, thickly planted with maple-trees, and surrounded by a substantial iron fence. In a few years more, when the trees get their growth, the public square of Charleston will be a beautiful spot, and an ornament to the city.

The first Jail was a little log cabin, in the south part of the town, which, in an early day, perhaps, served the purpose of a prison; but in this enlightened age, when crime has become a science, and criminals a band of professional experts, would prove but a frail barrier between them and liberty. The present Jail is in the Court House building.

The first Circuit Court was held at the house of Col. Flenner, three miles west of Charleston. Hon. William Wilson was the presiding Judge. This session of Court is thus described: "The Judge sat on a log, the lawyers on rotten chunks, and the parties engaged in litigation swung to the bushes." James P. Jones was Circuit Clerk, and was appointed by Judge Wilson at this session. Jones was a resident of Clark County, and his appointment to the office of Circuit Clerk excited the just indignation of the Coles County people. They felt themselves competent to fill any office in their county, and well qualified

to receive the salary pertaining to it; and to have an outsider step in and relieve them of the responsibility of trying the experiment was a blow to their pride not to be forgiven. The first records of the Circuit Court are *non sunt inventa*, and hence, few particulars of the sessions for two or three of the first years can be obtained now. The first record-book in the Circuit Clerk's office begins with the April term, 1835, Hon. Justin Harlan presiding.

As we have said, George Hanson, Andrew Caldwell and Isaac Lewis were elected the first County Commissioners. They held the first session of their Court in 1831, at the house of Charles Eastin, in the Kickapoo settlement, and appointed Nathan Ellington Clerk, who thus became the first County Clerk of Coles County. In 1832, Isaac Lewis, Andrew Clarke and James S. Martin were elected Commissioners, and, in 1834, were succeeded by Stephen Stone, Nathaniel Parker and Eben Alexander, who, in turn, were succeeded in 1836, by A. N. Fuller, Alex. Miller and James S. Martin, and they by F. L. Moore, H. J. Ashmore and James M. Ward in 1838. The records here show a change in electing the Commissioners; electing one each year, instead of three every two years, and that in 1840, John Wright succeeded Ashmore; James Gill in 1841, succeeded Moore, and William Collom succeeded Moore in 1842. In 1843, Isaac Gruell and H. J. Ashmore succeeded Wright and Gill. In 1844, John Cutler succeeded Ashmore, F. L. Moore succeeded Collom in 1845, John M. Logan succeeded Gruell in 1846, and F. G. Frue succeeded Cutler in 1847.

The Constitution of 1848 provided that the County Court should consist of a County Judge and two Associate Justices. Under this new regime, W. W. Bishop was the first County Judge, and John M. Logan and H. J. Ashmore were chosen the first Associate Justices. This branch of the Court continued, with frequent changes of officers, until the adoption of township organization, which went into effect in the spring of 1860, as will be noticed under another head. As a matter of history, and for the benefit of the reader, we append a list of the different officers from the organization of the county, the date of their election and the terms of their official service, as compiled by Capt. Adams, and published in his Centennial Address. The list was prepared with great care, is said, by those well posted, to be substantially correct, and presents a valuable record to all who are interested in such matters, or have occasion to refer to it. The list is as follows:

Sheriff.—At the February election of 1831, Ambrose Yocum was elected the first Sheriff of the county, and re-elected in 1832, but died before his term expired. William Jeffries was elected in 1834, and held two terms, when he was succeeded by Albert Compton in 1838, who continued in office until 1846. L. R. Hutchason was then elected, and served two terms, and was succeeded in 1850 by Richard Stoddert; he was succeeded by Thomas Lytle in 1852; Lytle, by John R. Jeffries in 1854, and he by H. B. Worley in 1856. Worley was succeeded by M. Jones, in 1858; he by I. H. Johnston in 1860; John H.

O'Hair succeeded Johnston in 1862, and James B. Hickox succeeded him in 1864, and, in turn, was succeeded by G. M. Mitchell in 1866, when C. C. Starkweather was elected in 1868, followed in 1870 by A. M. Brown, who was succeeded in 1872 by Owen Wiley, and Wiley by George Moore in 1874; James M. Ashmore succeeded Moore in 1876, and he was succeeded by John E. Brooks in 1878, the present incumbent.

Probate Judge.—James P. Jones was the first Probate Judge. At the time of the organization of Coles County, this office was filled by appointment of the Governor. In 1834, Jones was succeeded by John F. Smyth, and in the same year, Smyth was succeeded by S. M. Dunbar; he by William Collom in 1835; Collom by Reuben Canterbury in 1837; he by John W. Trower. Robert S. Mills succeeded Trower in 1843; W. W. Bishop succeeded him in 1847, and filled the office until 1857, when he was succeeded by Gideon Edwards, who died in office in 1864. J. P. Cooper was appointed to fill the vacancy, and, in 1865, McHenry Brooks was elected, and was succeeded in 1869 by A. M. Peterson, who was followed by W. E. Adams in 1873; and, in 1877, J. R. Cunningham, the present Judge, was elected.

County Clerk.—As before stated, Nathan Ellington was the first County Clerk, and filled the office until 1839, when he was succeeded by Loran D. Ellis, who soon after fled the country, and Ellington was appointed to fill the vacancy. Ellington was followed, in 1840, by Enos Stutsman, who resigned his office, and Samuel Huffman was appointed to fill the vacancy. In 1853, James McCrory succeeded Huffman, and held the office until 1861, when he was succeeded by Jacob I. Brown. Brown was succeeded by W. E. Adams in 1865; Adams by Richard Stoddert in 1873, and he, in 1877, by the present Clerk, W. R. Highland.

Coroner.—Robert A. Miller was the first Coroner, and, in 1836, was succeeded by Ichabod Radly, who canvassed the entire county on foot for the office. (He deserved it.) Preston R. Mount followed Radly in 1838; A. G. Mitchell followed Mount in 1842, and William Harr followed Mitchell in 1844. Stephen Stone was elected in 1846, and was succeeded by James W. Morgan in 1858, and he by S. F. Crawford in 1860; he, in 1861, by Dr. Samuel Van Meter, who was succeeded by D. P. Lee in 1862, and he by A. G. Mitchell in 1864; Mitchell by O. D. Hawkins in 1868; he by Joel W. Hall in 1870; Hall by D. H. Barnett in 1872, and he by Lewis True in 1874.

Circuit Clerk.—James P. Jones, as stated, was the first Circuit Clerk, and was succeeded by Nathan Ellington, who held the office until his death in 1855, when his son, James D. Ellington, was appointed to fill the vacancy. In 1856, George W. Teel was elected, holding the office two terms, and, in 1864, was succeeded by H. C. Wortham, and he by W. N. McDonald in 1872. He died in December following his election, and A. H. Chapman was appointed Clerk *pro tempore*, and was succeeded in June, 1873, by E. E. Clark, who was succeeded, in 1877, by the present incumbent, W. E. Robinson.

THE
HISTORY
OF
COLES COUNTY,
ILLINOIS,

CONTAINING

A History of the County—its Cities, Towns, &c.; a Directory of its
Tax-Payers; Portraits of Early Settlers and Prominent
Men; General and Local Statistics; Map of Coles
County; History of Illinois, Illustrated;
History of the Northwest, Illustrated;
Constitution of the United States,
Miscellaneous Matters,
&c., &c.

ILLUSTRATED.

CHICAGO:
WM. LE BARON, JR., & CO., 186 DEARBORN STREET.
1870.