

Hiram Gabriel Finally Settles Down

Hiram Gabriel continued to have an interesting life after his arrival back in Green County. He married Amelia Johnson, daughter of Reuben Johnson, on March 12, 1853. He then gave his attention to farming in Section 34 of York Township, where he raised much wheat, the leading crop in this section of the state at the time. He erected a new house in 1855 and continued to farm until the outbreak of the Civil War. The 1860 census showed the couple with their 4-year old son, Erwin, two Norwegian immigrants to help farm, and a 17-year-old female who was born in New York living in the home. The 1861 plat book showed that he owned about 500 acres in six different sections of York township.

Hiram enlisted in the Civil War as a musician in 1864 and served until the end of the war. He returned home where he again raised wheat, as well as successfully raising and feeding steers. The 1870 census showed the couple with two children, Erwin, 14, and Jennie, 9. They also had a 21-year-old Norwegian immigrant helping on the farm. By 1877 the Green County History showed that Gabriel owned 643 acres of property and was one of the largest stock dealers in York township.

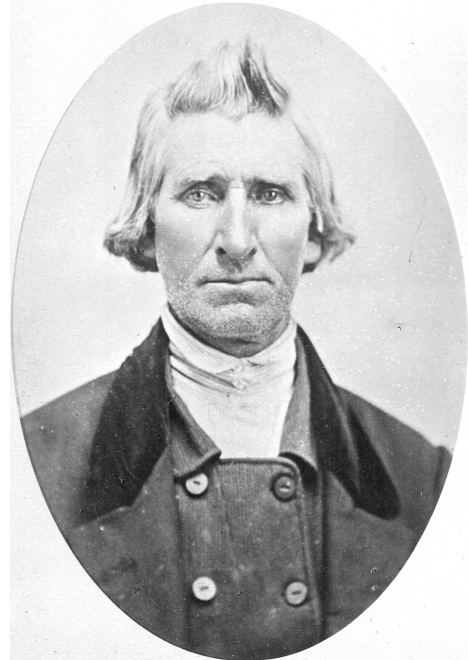
Mr. Gabriel, like many other wealthy farmers of that era, made it a habit to loan money by which he aided hundreds of the early settlers in the area to get a start. "It is said that during his long life he never attached his name to more than three notes, preferring to have the interest coming to him instead of paying it out."

Gabriel became interested in dairying early, being one of the organizers who aided in the building of an American factory at Postville (Stewart) in 1874. This factory was the first American cheese factory in the county with the product being hauled 18 miles to Monroe. The March 11, 1874 Monroe Sentinel verifies that the Cheese Manufacturing Company of Postville was a stock company with \$2,500 of stock being subscribed. The factory was to be 30 by 50 feet, with "calculations for a wing, in course of time." H. Gabriel was listed as the secretary of the board. The factory was very successful; they shipped 35,000 pounds of good cheese one week in July of the following year.

As with so many of the other early settlers, he was also involved in the community. He took a part in church work, attending the Postville Baptist Church where he was the leader of the choir for years. He was township clerk for four years and held the office of chairman of York for a number of years.

He was elected a member of the assembly from this district in 1882 where he served two terms. At the conclusion of his term, he would walk the 35 miles to his home from Madison instead of taking a train to Janesville and then to Monroe where he would have to walk the 18 miles to his farm. He was able to make the trip from Madison in a single day. This was a way for him to save time as people said that he was a man who never wasted a minute of his time. It was also said that he never worked before daylight or after sunset as most settlers did. Therefore, he very seldom needed a lantern.

The 1884 Green County history stated that Mr. Gabriel owned 800 acres as well as the hotel property formerly owned by Gilbert Post. Hiram was also interested in fruit culture and started one of the finest orchards in this section of the state. He remained on the farm until 1895



This photo of Hiram Gabriel's uncle, John Stewart, was taken by H. G. White. Stewart was the first white settler in York township in 1838. Gabriel traveled here from Ohio first in 1844, but didn't settle here the first time until 1846.

when they moved two miles away to Postville. By 1900 their widowed daughter, Jennie Campbell, and her son, Cecil, 9, were living with the couple.

An article in the Monroe Evening Times on September 16, 1912 reported that Hiram, 87, from Postville, "one of the oldest living pioneers of Green County, was here for the fair last week. Mr. Gabriel went to California during the gold craze, crossing in a 'prairie schooner' and is one of the most interesting personages in this section. He is a well preserved man for his years."

Hiram remained in Postville until 1915 when he moved to Evansville to live with Erwin. By the time of the interview in 1917, he was living in Madison.

During his younger days, Mr. Gabriel was an expert in cutting grain with the primitive cradle, credited with cutting five acres in a single day. He was also the owner of the first grain binder in York Township. The machine was a cumbersome affair which required five horses to haul it.

Unfortunately, Hiram did not live an entire year after the 1917 interview. He died on February 5, 1918 at 534 West Johnson in Madison. He did not make it to the century mark that he "gave promise of reaching." He was buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Madison, but his body was later moved to Maple Hill Cemetery in Evansville.

The 1917 article stated, "During his lifetime he has seen the changes from the flail to the steam thresher, and in means of locomotion from the cumbersome ox team of the pioneer to the automobile and the flying machine of the present day. In fact few people have had a wider experience, endured more of the hardships of pioneer life and accomplished more. Mr. Gabriel has always been of a quiet and unassuming disposition and temperate in all things."

The 1920 census shows Amelia was the head-of-household in a rented home at 224 State Street in Madison and her daughter, Jennie Masee, was living with her. Amelia, passed away in May 1921 "at the home of her daughter" in Madison where she had lived for six years. She was buried next to Hiram in Evansville.