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Did You Know...? The stones used in the bandstand in the Square came from Bob Fandel's grandfather Grandpa Fletcher's farm, north of town.

History of Black Partridge, Worth Township, Woodford County, Illinois (Also Known Later as Lourds)

By Ken Wiltz

Historian of the WILZ / WILTZ family of
Black Partridge, Worth Township, Woodford County, IL.

Black Partridge was the area 5 miles west of Metamora later known as Lords, Lourds and Lourdes in Worth Township, Woodford County, IL. Black Partridge was the name of the area before Woodford became a county. At the start the area was in the County of Tazewell, until 1841. The area was named for the Potawatami Chief Black Partridge, whose village was located north of the area and was destroyed by the US Army.

At the time the people of the area (1881) wanted a post office they sent to the powers that be in the Post Office Department to have the name of their post office be "Black Partridge". The name was refused as there was a "Partridge Point" PO north of Metamora and that might cause confusion.

The name Lords was given when one person stated during the discussion for a different name "You three guys are the Lords around here why don't we call it Lords, Illinois" and the idea stuck and their post office was so named. Mail for the Lords PO came from Metamora. This PO was established in 1881 and its first postmaster was Frank Emser (one of the Lords), but Emser was soon succeeded by Henry Theobald who served into the 1890's. The Catholic Parish of St. Mary sold their old second school building for \$50. and it was moved across the road from the church to a spot a little west of Peter Bauer's saloon. The building held a general store operated by Henry Theobald and housed the new post office. The Lords/Lourds/Lourdes Post Office ceased to exist in 1901 when Rural Mail Delivery was established in the area.

Catholic priests were the reasons for the change from Lords to Lourds and to finally Lourdes. Each thinking that there had been a mistake in the prior spelling, believing it was named after the town in France known for its miraculous cures at the grotto of the same place. Some short time after the name Lords was given a Father Eckert wrote in the church register that the name of the place was Lourds by adding the "u" to the name.

In the year 1921 a Franciscan pastor, Father Engelbert thinking those before him were spelling the name in error changed it Lourdes by adding an "e" to Lourds. Since then the area has been known as Lourdes as it became more or less official when a sign post placed on State Route 116 gave directions to "Lourdes".



Note from author: My great grandfather the brick maker of Hickory Point is listed as an early settler, but his parents brought him to Black Partridge when he was only 8 years of age. My great great grandfather also Peter WILZ should have been shown as the settler who arrived in the year 1837. He purchased in 1838 40 acres of Section 13 of what became Worth Township which he farmed.

In "Living Stones, a History of the Metamora Mennonite Church", page 27. It states "The first post office was established on February 04, 1835 in the home of James Boys at Black Partridge, three miles north of the present Metamora." This is in error. The post office 3 miles north of Metamora was called "Partridge Point", and I do not think it ever was called Black Partridge.

My information is from the "History of St. Mary's Church, Lourdes, Illinois 1840-1955" by Fr. Gabriel Linfert, O.F.M., who quoted Joseph X. Schwenk, who was born in Worth Township in 1870. This is about the way the name of Lourdes came about. This history is an unpublished work although some of it was in the booklet "The Story of Our Parish" published in 1980 by St. Mary's of Lourdes celebrating 140 years of the building of the first Catholic Church of St. Raphael's of Black Partridge in 1840 of logs by the pioneers of the parish.

Most anyone who descended from early families who lived in the area of Black Partridge can tell you that it was named that and was called that for many years from the 1830's to the 1870's. It is shown on early maps. I have yet to see a map with the name of Partridge Point. It was just a post office in the house of James Boys.

Partridge Creek tributaries ran through the property of my great great grandparents in Section 13 of Worth Township, back in 1838. This before Woodford County or townships were established. Then it was part of Tazewell County. I do believe that this property location is now part of the Fon du Lac Park District area. It was the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 13 and at the time of the death of my great grandfather in 1880 it was inventoried as having a value of \$250.00. I believe my great, great grandfather had paid \$50. for it in 1838, or \$1.25 per acre.

Ken Wiltz, Historian for the WILZ / WILTZ family.

Old Railroad History



Metamora - 1909



Metamora - 1911

MOST DISASTROUS TRAIN WRECK IN HISTORY OF C AND A BRANCH TAKES PLACE EARLY SUNDAY MORNING ABOUT 1 O'CLOCK ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1910.

Headlines in the Metamora Herald dated Friday, September 30, 1910 reads as follows: FREIGHT LEAPS TRACK: FLAMES BURN WRECKAGE

THROUGH FREIGHT MEETS ACCIDENT AT WASHBURN EARLY SUNDAY MORNING IN WHICH FIREMAN, ENGINEER AND BRAKEMAN NEARLY LOSE LIVES DOUBLE DISASTER MAKES A NIGHT OF TERROR FIRE BREAKS OUT IN WRECK AND CITIZENS WORK WITH MIGHT AND MAIN THROUGH NIGHT TO SAVE PROPERTY.....SIXTEEN CARS AND THEIR CARGOES LAID IN ASHES.....INJURED ARE CARED FOR BY HUMANE CITIZENS OF WASHBURN

SUMMARY OF THE C AND A RAILROAD TRACK DISASTER: FIREMAN NENNE, TERRIBLY SCALDED, RECOVERY UNCERTAIN, ENGINEER SMALLWOOD, BADLY SCALDED BUT WILL RECOVER, BRAKEMAN LAWLER, SCALDED, BUT CONDITION NOT SERIOUS.

WITH LOSS OF \$25, 000 LOST ON CARGO ESTIMATED TO BE AT LEAST \$50,000.

CAUSE OF THE WRECK IS ASCRIBED TO SPEEDING TRAIN DUE TO EXCESSIVE SPEED ON THE CURVE WHERE THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED. THE WRECKED CARS WERE DISTRIBUTED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE TRACK, WHILE THE ENGINE LAY ON THE RIGHT AND INNER SIDE OF THE CURVE. FROM THE TORN AND TWISTED TRACKS IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND A TRACE OF THE CAUSE.

WHAT BECAME OF TWO HOBOES THAT THE TRAINMEN REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ON THE TRAIN IS ANOTHER MYSTERY.

OUT OF THE CHAOS OF WRECKAGE, SCALDED BY THE ESCAPING STEAM, AND DELIRIOUS FROM THE AWFUL SHOCK AND THEIR TERRIBLE INJURIES, THE FIREMEN, ENGINEER AND ONE OF THE BRAKEMEN CREPT WITH THEIR LIVES TO SAFETY. IN THE WRECKAGE, THE WHISTLE ROD BECAME STUCK AND THE WHISTLE'S LONG WAIL AROUSED THE TOWNSPEOPLE EARLY SUNDAY MORNING.

FIRE, THAT BROKE OUT IN THE WRECKAGE ALMOST INSTANTLY, CLIMAXED THE HORROR OF THE SPECKACLE AND AMIDST THE SHRIEKINGS OF A CAR OF SWINE, THE EXPLOSIONS OF BARRELS OF GASOLINE, THE GLARE AND HEAT OF THE HUGE TONGUES OF FLAME THAT LEAPED HEAVENWARD AND THE EXCITED SHOUTING AND HURRY OF FRANTIC CITIZENS, THE SCENE WAS TO TERROR STRICKEN WASHBURN A HIDEOUS NIGHTMARE.

THE CAR OF HOGS, WHICH WAS IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST DAMAGED SECTION OF THE TRAIN BEFORE THE FLAMES GAINED HEADWAY WAS BROKEN OPEN AND THE ANIMALS WERE LIBERATED. THE BADLY INJURED ANIMALS WERE MERCIFULLY KILLED. THE HALF CARLOAD OF GASOLINE AND TEN CARLOADS OF SPIRITS FROM THE PEORIA DISTILLERIES FURNISHED RICH FUEL FOR THE HUNGRY FLAMES, AND THE SKY WAS IGNITED UP FOR MILES AROUND. THE LOSS ON THE BURNED SPIRITS, 1,120 BARRELS OF WHISKEY, GIN AND HIGH WINES IS BETWEEN \$4,500 AND \$7,000 PER CAR.

AT 4 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING A SPECIAL TRAIN BROUGHT SURGEONS FROM PEORIA FOR THE INJURED TRAINMEN. THEY WERE TAKEN ABOARD THE TRAIN AND HURRIED TO A PEORIA HOSPITAL.

HEAD-ON COLLISION AT LOCAL STATION

ACCORDING TO THE METAMORA HERALD ISSUE OF MARCH 19, 1918, A TRAIN COLLISION OCCURRED HERE AT THE METAMORA STATION TUESDAY AFTERNOON AT 3:48 PM WHEN A NORTHBOUND TRAIN NO. 62 EVIDENTLY OVERLOOKED TEMPORARY ORDERS THAT CAUSED A HEAD-ON COLLISION WITH SOUTHBOUND TRAIN NO. 65. THERE WAS SMASHING OF THE PILOTS AND OTHER DAMAGE TO THE FRONT OF BOTH



LOCOMOTIVES. WHILE A FEW PASSENGERS SUSTAINED MINOR CUTS AND BRUISES IN BEING THROWN FROM THEIR SEATS, ALL WERE FRIGHTENED. SEVERAL OTHERS RECEIVED SLIGHT CUTS AND BRUISES. THE MECHANISM OF EITHER WAS NOT DAMAGED AND BOTH WERE ABLE TO PROCEED WITH THEIR TRAINS.

CHICAGO AND ALTON RAILROAD HISTORY

The railroad from Wenona to Metamora was completed by August of 1870. Workmen were rapidly approaching Washington. The line from Dwight to Washington opened for service on December 11, 1870. An accommodation train ran north on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and south on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

As late as 1923, there were fifteen trains a day coming through including four mail trains and six passenger trains with sleep and dining cars running from Peoria to Chicago. A ticket to Peoria by way of Washington cost sixty-five cents. Round trip fare to Peoria was \$1.32. People often took the 6 p.m. train to Peoria returning home on the midnight train. At the peak of passenger travel \$900 to \$1000 worth of train tickets were sold in a month. Although passenger service ended in 1930, a passenger train known as the "Toonerville Trolley" ran from Washington to Dwight for several years. After that the station agent was busy with freight trains carrying cattle, grain and coal. Mr. William J. Williams was our agent for fifty-nine years. By 1968 he was overseeing four stations- Metamora, Cazenovia, Lowpoint and Washburn. On September 15, 1979, the line was abandoned.

The depot was dismantled in 1980 and remains in private storage. The tracks were removed in 1983-1984. Today, stone arch railroad bridges can still be seen along Route 89 north to Cazenovia.

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