

# Newsletter

## December 2024



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### The Underground Railroad Video Filming Is "In the Can"

After multiple delays this summer, Metamora Historic met the production crew from Mt. Zion to film the story of the Underground Railroad in Metamora.

Metamora native Levi Obery who is based in California and does work for such companies as Disney generously agreed to produce the video and was the guiding star in the work. The raw footage is now in Levi's workshop for editing. Details of the release will be forthcoming.

The video aims to tell the story of Metamora's significant but largely unknown history with the UGRR. It acquaints the viewer with the severe financial and physical risks our brave neighbors took to help Freedom Seekers—runaway slaves—northward to freedom. The viewer will learn what Metamora was like during that period, who the "players" were, how the UGRR operated, and the routes to freedom.

The picture on the left shows MAHP president Laure Adams discussing the conductors buried in Morsetown and Oakwood cemeteries as well as the "face" of Melissa Goings.

Stay tuned... we think you will be surprised – and informed – about this amazing part of Metamora's history.



### What Happened to the Box in the Tablet Base?

Immediately after this little service the crowds pressed about and viewed the tablet and its setting of concrete. The following inscription appears on the tablet:

SPOKE HERE  
 Douglas-Lincoln  
 October 2nd 1858, October 9th 1858  
 Dedicated by Old Settlers' and Historic  
 Association of Woodford County,  
 August 27th 1908.



As a matter of historic record, within the concrete base will be placed a sealed zinc box containing a record of the dedication and a number of copies of the Metamora Herald giving the stories of the preparations for the celebration and the account of the big day itself. This will be done several days after the celebration.

The monument was designed by J.C Irving, who has been working indefatigably all along for the success of the coming celebration. In conjunction with the Herald, he has carried the matter through upon private resources. The same combination, with the approval of the Old Settlers' and Historic Society, provided a souvenir watch fob for the celebration which was sold at \$1 to defray the expenses of the tablet.

*El Paso Journal September 5, 1908*

### The Rest of the Story

The Metamora Herald reported that beautiful weather, good bands, great speeches greeted about six thousand visitors on this commemorative day. It was noted that the dates on the tablet were incorrect. The dates should have read Spoke Here—Douglas September 30 and Lincoln October 4, 1858. The tablet was torn down in July, 1931 and was placed in the masonry of the new cobblestone bandstand being erected at the time. The tablet today can be seen to the right of the steps going up into the bandstand. The sheet iron box containing records and story of the celebration were found to be a mass of wet paper pulp. The box had rusted through.



Metamora WWI veterans, 1929 - Front L-R: Glenwood C. Tanton, Max Reichhuber, Ivan Moberly, Hilarus Grebner, Frank Fandel and Joel A. Ranney. Middle: Lee Stivers, Joe Sommers, Raymond J. Schertz, Robert J. Schneider, James Stivers, John Theobald, Harvey Stamper, William Noe, Desire Marchand, Richard Regele, Leroy Little, Harold Rich, Ralph Kerker Sr. and Rev. Lang. Back: Commander Wm. J. Engel, Hyacinth Marchand, Louis Alvin Willman, Adjutant Henry Steider, John F. Voelker and Rudy Altig. Photo by Irma Waldsmith.

WWI Vets and barbershop



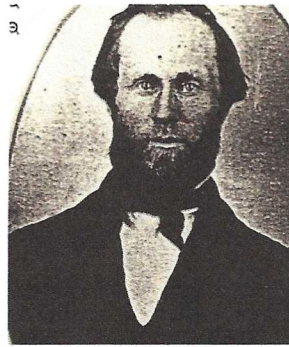
Snyder's Barber Shop - Partridge Street or Davenport Street?



**J. C. IRVING.**

J. C. Irving is the only person in Metamora today who knew Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Irving was only a boy then, but his father would often take him with him, when he dropped over to the Metamora House to have a chat with the brilliant young lawyer, who, a few years later, was to take his place among the immortals. Mr. Irving remembers Mr. Lincoln distinctly, and frequently Mr. Lincoln would talk with him about things which would naturally interest a boy of that age. Mr. Irving has many mementoes of the Great Emancipator. One of these is a large walnut bedstead. This was the bed which Mr. Lincoln always occupied when he was in attendance at court in Metamora. When the Metamora House was demolished some years ago, Mr. Irving purchased the old bed and it is now in use in his home.

**Unexpected Contact from Morse Grandchildren...**



*Orrin Cheedle*

What a great surprise it was to unexpectedly hear from two of Parker Morse's grandchildren – Luann Erickson and Daniel Jones. As you may recall, Captain Parker Morse was the foremost abolitionist in the UGRR around Metamora. After he had sold the family farm to Caspar Voelker in 1895, we lost track of the family... until now! And what a story they have. Both grandchildren (not sure how many "greats") live in Colorado. Their grandfather was Deacon Parker Morse (the Captain's son). Deacon's daughter, Martha, married Orrin Cheedle (born 1823), who were Luann's and Daniel's ancestors. It was his second marriage after his first wife died.

**About the Cheedles**

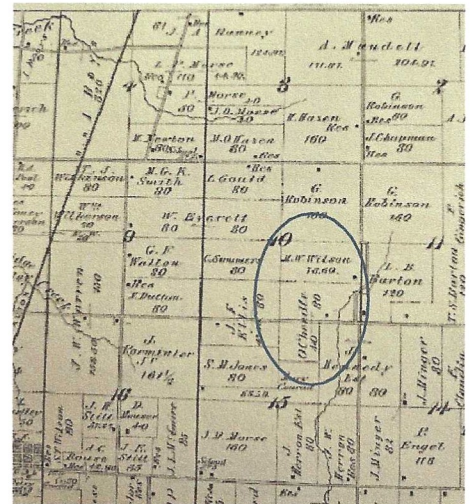
Records show the Cheedle name also spelled as Oran Cheedal. "Cheedle" is on his tombstone in Morsetown Cemetery. He was a farmer (see 1873 plat below.) Their farm was inherited from Deacon Parker.

**LINCOLN CONNECTION:** Orrin's first wife was Eliza Lincoln (born 1828), who is believed to be a distant cousin of Abe. Orrin and Eliza were married in 1847 at Stockbridge, VT. Eliza died in childbirth at age 21 in 1848 and is buried at Morsetown, as is Orrin. Orrin later married Martha Morse (born 1835), daughter of Deacon Parker Morse.

**School Teacher** - The Lowpoint school house was built in 1848, long before the village of Low Point was dreamed of, and the first school was taught in it by Orson (sic) Cheedle.

**ANOTHER LINCOLN CONNECTION:** According to family history, Orin is said to have ridden the victory train to DC with the Lincoln party. Another ancestor, Henry Sinco, lived in the same one-room cabin with Abe in New Salem. There is a record of Abe casting his ballot for Henry as constable.

Eliza's brother, Joel Lincoln, is also buried in Morsetown. Their mother was Joel Ranney's sister.



Died in childbirth – Eliza and Orrin's Son



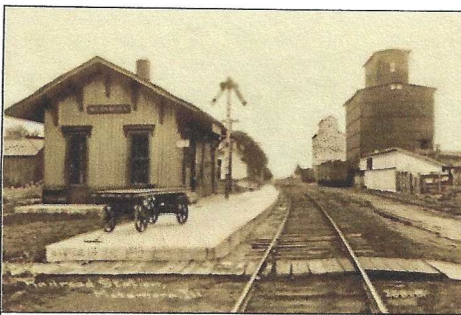
Eliza Lincoln Cheedle – 1st Wife



Joel Lincoln, Eliza's Brother; JA Ranney's Nefew



Infant Daughter of Orrin and Martha Morse (Cheedle)



**Metamora Train Station (Year Unknown)**

**Help Us Identify This Couple and Where They are**



**Facts not Generally Known - 1914**

- Metamora has 30 businesses business houses many of them elegant ones.
- Two physicians and a dentist make a good living in Metamora.
- An old Amish church is 1.5 miles east of the village.
- Metamora is the seat of the Catholic Orphan Asylum.
- There are 2 elevators, each with a capacity of 20,000 bu.
- The Metamora band of 13 pieces enjoys merited prosperity in spite of their unlucky number.
- Honorable John L McGuire and Honorable Oscar Painter, each a former representative, reside in Metamora.
- Several handsome new brick blocks have recently been erected at Metamora and business is increasing in all lines.
- Excellent summer band plays every evening in the summer.
- Metamora is settled all about with a most thrifty class of Germans who are making and saving money. There are also several French families. All speak English & German.
- The *Metamora Herald* is a good newspaper and is the successor of the old *Metamora Sentinel*.
- Mr. Cass Irving is one of the oldest residents and is also one of the foremost collectors of Indian relics and geological specimens in the state.
- The Chicago and Alton run excursions from Metamora, Washburn, Cazenovia, and Low Point to Peoria each Saturday for half rates. The local merchants object very much, as often as many as 75 passengers will go from Metamora to Peoria on Saturdays to trade.

- The old-time county jail, which was occupied by prisoners for the past 50 years, has been sold and is now used as a private residence. The old Courthouse is now owned by the village and bears a sign "Opera House". It was sold by the county to the village for \$1.
- Mrs. Spiers, who kept the hotel for 45 years, has recently quit and no longer keeps travelers. She has entertained Lincoln, Douglas, Ingersoll, and most of the old-time celebrities. She now is aged and nearly ready to depart and be at rest. She is quite bright and can talk entertainingly of the old days of taverns before the time of the railroad, by the hour.
- The Metamora Bank, with Mr. Peter Schertz as cashier and Mr. Ed Knoblauch as the assistant is one of the best-known institutions in Woodford County. The post office is connected with the bank by a door. The assistant cashier is also the assistant postmaster.
- The most uncommon thing, a union church, is located at Metamora and is doing good work. As the majority of the residents of Metamora and surrounding country are Roman Catholics, the Protestant churches are rather weak. There were six of them, but as the Catholic population increased, it was more and more difficult to keep up so many different places of worship, so all united and now the Methodist conference furnishes a minister who preaches non-denominational sermons. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Christians, and United Brethren worship together and dwell in peace. There is also a Lutheran church.

*From the Pantagraph 6/19/1914*

**OUR HOME REBELS.**

**What a Prominent Rebel Has to Say of the Draft.**

[From the *Henry, Ill., Courier, Extra.*]

The following is a copy, word for word, letter for letter, spelling and all, written by the Secretary of the last Putnam County Democratic Convention to the present Democratic City Clerk, of the City of Henry, and ex-School Commissioner of Marshall county, both McGlellan men, both "unswerving in the future as in the past," both heartily extending their SYMPATHY to the soldiers of our army. It speaks for itself. It needs no commentary. We dare any one to deny it was written:

"MAGNOLIA, Sept. 20, 1864.

W. W. HEATH.

Dr. Sir.

I see the draft was announced to go off in the 4th, 8th, 10th and 12th Dist. yesterday. There was a Brother to see me from Woodford last night—they are going to resist draft in Counties below. They wished me to notify Lodge at your Place that a meeting of the order will be held at Metamora Friday next. Please see some of the Bretheren and write me what you think concerning this action, &c. I shal go to Metamora.

T. ALEXANDER."

In the meantime Mr. Nesmith perfected another register, known as "Nesmith's Champion Grain Register," also a very ingenious contrivance, which he had manufactured in Metamora, in a shop on the lots where J. C. Irving's house now stands.

Mr. Nesmith's brother having died His shop was at the southwest corner of W Partridge and N Niles

Woodford County Journal 12/9/1909

**Contact Us**

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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