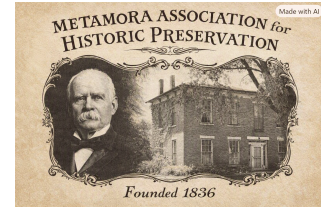


METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

October 2026

www.historicmetamora.org



More great docs from scanning the village books...!

- The first doc is from the [Court Docket](#) that shows Joseph Morse paying \$300 bail in 1844. This is information we did not have before.
- The second is George Kern's trial being moved to Tazewell County. (Lincoln represented Mr. Kern and dragged the trial out until 1850, by which time the runaway had disappeared and the prosecutor didn't have the docs that proved the runaway was a slave.) Abe Lincoln represented Mr. Kern and the charges were dropped.)
- The third image is Mr. Kern's co-defendant, Randolph Scott's appeal to have his trial moved to Tazewell County. Note the security of \$400. (The Tazewell courthouse was still in Tremont in 1850.)
- The fourth doc is George's son, James, being charged as part of George's case. The fifth image is Melissa Goings' son a year after Melissa's trial.

	The People vs Germiah Rodge	Indict for Bigamy - Contd. Capias. Bail \$300.
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Causes for trial woodford

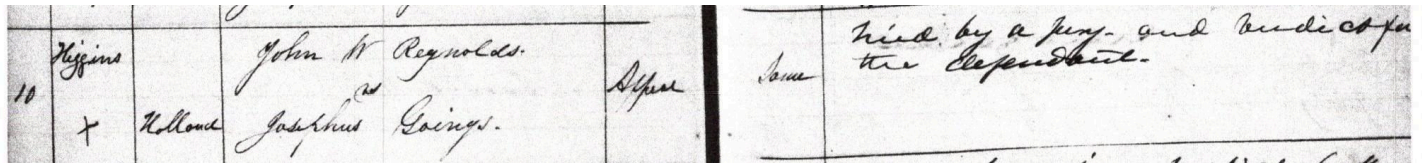
No	Def	Att	Names of Parties	Action
10	X	X	The People vs George Kern	hobbs Kane

Circuit Court April Term 1846

Def	Att	Order of Court
Capias		Mov. to quash in dict. denied
2		Plea not guilty. Venue changed to Tazewell Co., on motion of deft. Deft. recognized with Randolph Scott. Security in \$400.

6	X	The People vs James Kern	no same	Capias Et Group	Motion to quash Indict. denied. Plea not guilty. Venue changed to Tazewell Co., on application of deft. Deft. recognized with Randolph Scott. Security in \$400.
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7	X	The People vs Randolph Scott	same	as hearing Capias \$ Mo. to quash Indict. denied. Plea not guilty. Venue changed to Tazewell Co., on motion of deft. Deft. recognized with George Kern as security. \$400.
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Delinquent Tax List. Looking at 1897 records, they show many taxpayers - many were pillars of the community - were delinquent. We don't know why so many citizens were late, but, compared to today, the taxes were very low. For example, Joseph Bachman was behind on taxes on his 19.5 acres: State taxes - 77¢; County - 98¢; Town - 16¢; and Road 56¢ - TOTAL \$2.47. His equalized value was \$140. Most folks today would be more than happy to receive a tax bill like that!!

The Underground Railroad in Metamora. Mark your calendar! WTVP will broadcast the documentary on October 5 at 8:00. Also, they will air it again in February during Black History Month. Details to follow.

FROM THE OLD FILES... Here are several assorted stories from our files...

“Lawyer Cyrus Niles Dies. Old Time Practitioner Dies in the Woodford County Poor House. At the age of 90 years, Cyrus Niles, an old time lawyer in Metamora and for 50 years was a familiar character about the town, died Saturday morning at the county poor house 2 miles southeast of here, where he had been an inmate for 10 years past. No one seems to know the full history of the old lawyer. It is believed that he came to Metamora from New England very close to 1850. In the early days he had a few distant relatives here, notably one of the Whitmire family. But so far as known, there are no living relatives now. He was born in New Hampshire on the 24th day of November, 89 years ago. In his early days here, lawyer Niles taught country schools for a time, afterwards engaging in the practice of law. He was at one time associated with John Clark, another pioneer lawyer. It is said that he was well versed in law in his younger days, but his inclination was towards the petty side and he failed to rise in the profession as did the lawyers of his day in Metamora. He managed to eke out an existence until he became decrepit with age and, much against his will, was sent to the poor house. His little office was on the west side of the Square, which also served as his living quarters, became vermin infested and a menace to the public health. One night about 10 years ago, the old lawyer was removed to the county house and his office was fired. For some years prior to that time, he had become an object of ribald and the target of pranks by the youngsters or the town. But even this coupled with growing senility failed to daunt his haughty New England spirit and he maintained to the end a certain dignity that was bred into him.” *Metamora Herald, May 30, 1913*

“Saw Zeppelin.Flying over Metamora. Metamora's tale of an early morning sky visitor. Uncle John Zimmerman, only person who saw the strange craft which he describes as a huge affair. Although no reports have been received by the Herald of anyone else having seen it, Uncle John Zimmerman says a huge aircraft passed over Metamora at 6:00 last Friday morning. Mr. Zimmerman ran to Joseph Villager's blacksmith shop to call the latter's attention to the airship, but Mr. Villager, although at work at that hour, happened to be away from the shop momentarily. Mr. Zimmerman therefore had the thrilling spectacle all to himself, as there was probably no other person out of doors at that hour. He says the airship was the Zeppelin type, about 300 feet long, and that it was flying high, going from northeast to southwest. Such a flight it would seem, would be noted in other cities and towns around and press mention would have been made. However, Mr. Zimmerman tells the story as an absolute fact.” *Metamora Herald March 5, 1915*

Metamora Man the Biltmore Harness Maker. William Mitchell came to the U.S. at age 14 from Scotland. Around 1850 he conducted a harness-making business in Metamora. After returning from the Civil War (17th Volunteer Infantry), he again engaged in the harness business which he continued until 1887. Around this time, the family moved to Asheville, N.C. where Mr. Mitchell was in charge of the harness shop at Biltmore, which was the home of the Vanderbilts. You'll probably recall that the Briggs brothers also did considerable work there. Mr. Mitchell was married to Harriet Briggs in 1867. She was the daughter of F.F. Briggs. *Metamora Herald, July 21, 1916*

F.F. Briggs. (1825-1908) F.F. Briggs (pictured at right) was a funeral director and carpenter, whose business was located on the east side in the first block of N. Niles. A prominent citizen in Metamora after he returned from the Civil War (1st Lieutenant, 108th Illinois Infantry), Mr. Briggs' daughter, Harriet (1840-1900), married William Mitchell in 1867. It was not unusual at that time to combine the funeral and carpentry business. Mr. Briggs came to Metamora in 1851 and had vivid memories of Lincoln, who was charged with defending a murder suspect from Minonk. The perk was convicted, but Lincoln returned to help free him after only a few years in prison. F.F. and Harriet are buried at Oakwood. (The Lincoln story is from the *Metamora Herald*, February 10, 1905 Sidenote: the Briggs who worked on Vanderbilt's Biltmore mansion in the mid-nineties were brothers Erwin and William Briggs.)



“Bottling Works Expanded. Joseph Earl of Metamora has recently introduced into his bottling works improved machinery, by which he will be enabled to increase his output of “pop” to double the amount.” His operation sat on the east side of N. Tazewell Street, just off Rt 116. *Pantagraph*, February 27, 1884.

New Brick Machine. “The Wilty (sic) Bros. have recently added a brick machine to their tile factory at Metamora, and are turning out a fine article.” *Pantagraph*, May 19, 1884. Ken Willman had told us several years ago that there used to be a tile yard along Progress Street, but he didn't know its exact location. After a little snooping on Newspapers.com and an old plat map, it was discovered that Mr. Witz (correct spelling) owned 3 acres along West Progress. It started just west of the tree line next to the old Zobrist apartments on Progress. Here is a much-reduced, marked up old plat map that shows the 3-acre Wiltz property circled in yellow. Hard to read when reduced like this, but the original scan clearly shows “P. Wiltz.”



New Windows. The second set of new windows installation is now complete and they look great! The old windows served well for many, many years, but it was time to replace the old leaky windows. The new windows are a perfect match for the old ones and should dramatically help control ever-increasing energy costs.

Contact Us Questions, ideas – Love to hear from you Laure Adams, President, 369-2353 or jrfarmer@mtco.com; Adam Bockler, Vice President, adam.bockler@gmail.com, Jenny Micheletti, Secretary, 657-3197, jennybee811@gmail.com; Jack Weddle, Treasurer, 645-0963, jackaweddle@gmail.com; Board members: Lee Summer, 367-4059, 635-0259, lsummer@mtco.com; Rick Lotz, 648-2010, lots@mtco.com; Ken Schmillen, 309-369-0538 schmika63@gmail.com