

CHARLES H WHITNEY, FROM HISTORY OF LYONS CO., MN

CHARLES H. WHITNEY (1869). A man who occupied a most important place in the early history of Lyon county is Charles H. Whitney, now a resident of Cookeville, Tennessee. More than any other man was he responsible for the advertising of this frontier region in the seventies and the immigration that settled upon its broad prairies. He is an optimist, and many a resident of Lyon county of this day owes his presence to the wonderful word-pictures painted by Mr. Whitney. With several others he was the founder of Marshall and in most every important event of the early times he figured. He has a fund of pioneer reminiscences and the author of this volume is indebted to him for many of the items contained herein.

Charles H. Whitney was born at Bridgton, Cumberland county, Maine, January 16, 1838. His father, George W. Whitney, was a Free Will Baptist minister and during the boyhood days of our subject the family resided in several different places where Rev. Whitney served his church as pastor. Charles lived in his native town until four years old, in Gray, Maine, three years, in Bethel, Maine, two or three years, and then in Rochester, New Hampshire.

While residing at Rochester, when eleven years of age, Charles H. Whitney started to earn his own living. His first employment was in a woolen mill, where he worked fourteen months. He then went to Salmon Falls, New Hampshire, and was employed in a cotton factory two years, beginning work in the weaving room, but later becoming office boy. He next located in East Abington (now Brockton), Massachusetts, and for several years was employed in a shoe factory which later became the W. L. Douglas factory. He became foreman of the stitching room when sixteen years of age and continued his work in the factory until he was eighteen and one-half years old.

During this time, by strict economy, young Whitney had saved money, which he expended in completing his education. He took a course in the North Parsonsfield, Maine, Academy, a Free Will Baptist school, and was graduated in December, 1856. He decided to locate in the West, and to earn money to pay his transportation he secured a position as clerk in a store.

On March 25, 1857, Charles H. Whitney arrived in Waupun, Wisconsin, where his brother, J. W. Whitney, a building contractor, resided. Our subject took work with his brother and learned the business in all its branches, which was of great help to him later in his new home on the prairies of Lyon county. He lived in Waupun six years. During his residence there, on October 28, 1860, Mr. Whitney was united in marriage to Mary A. Wirt, a daughter of Elder Noah Wirt, of the Christian church, and Fannie (Mapes) Wirt. Mrs. Whitney was born at Willoughby, Ohio, July 22, 1843, and died at Cookeville, Tennessee, February 11, 1911. As a result of this union five children were born, as follows: George C., born at Waupun July 25, 1861, died November 1, 1862; Zula M., born at Oronoco, Minnesota, December 27, 1866, married John H. Schneider at Marshall June 16, 1886; Mille A., born at Oronoco May 7, 1888, married Fred H. White, of

Marshall, Minnesota, at Cookeville, Tennessee. December 31, 1888; Fannie W., the first white child born in Marshall, born November 24, 1870, married James T. Snodgrass at McMinnville, Tennessee, September 16, 1891; Gertrude, a musician and artist of considerable note, born at Marshall April 21, 1875.

In April, 1863, Mr. Whitney became a resident of Minnesota, locating at Oronoco, Olmsted county. He resided there six years, during five of which he served as town clerk. During the war he had entire charge at Oronoco of filling the quota of troops. After the war he engaged in contracting and building, operated a furniture manufactory, and bought a farm. In May, 1869, Mr. Whitney left with a party of ten men, in covered wagons, on a prospecting trip to find a suitable location in Western Minnesota for new homes. They traveled three weeks, visited St. Cloud, Benson and Hutchinson, but not liking the country about any of those towns they turned southward and passed through St. Peter. There the party met "Uncle" Abner Tibbetts, register of the United States Land Office, who advised them to visit that part of Redwood county which is now Lyon county. They did so, making the trip by way of Redwood Falls, and arrived at the little settlement of Lynd on June 9, 1869. The operations of this party upon their arrival in Lyon county have been told in detail in the historical part of this volume, so it will not be necessary to repeat here. Suffice it to say that all members of the party were delighted with the country and all located, Mr. Whitney selecting as his claim the southeast quarter of section 4, Lake Marshall township, upon which was later laid out a part of the village of Marshall.

After selecting his land Mr. Whitney broke a little land and on June 15, with the rest of the party, set out on the return home. At St. Peter they made filings on their claims. Mr. Whitney spent the next winter in his old Wisconsin home and interested several others in the new country, who accompanied him on the return in 1870. He arrived in Lyon county again on June 1, 1870, and erected a sod shanty on his claim, the first dwelling put up on section 4, of the Marshall site. It was located about twenty rods east of the Third Street bridge on the quarter section line. In the fall our subject secured the establishment of the Marshall postoffice and he became the first postmaster.

Mr. Whitney engaged in farming and booming the country. He located four-fifths of all the settlers who arrived prior to 1875. In the summer of 1872, in partnership with others, he platted the village of Marshall and it was largely through his influence that the Marshall station of the new Winona & St. Peter was located where it is, in preference to a point at the crossing of Three-Mile creek. In the fall of 1872, before the railroad had reached the new station, Mr. Whitney erected a hotel building, one of the first buildings in the town, hauling the lumber from the end of the completed track. At the first meal in the hostelry 250 people were fed. The location of the pioneer hotel building was on the site of the present Atlantic Hotel. Mr. Whitney erected the first brick kiln in Marshall and was prominent in many of the pioneer business enterprises.

He engaged extensively in land selling from the time of his arrival, and in 1876 he became the field agent and general outside representative for the railroad company, being thus employed ten years. In 1877 he established the Homeseekers Guide to the West, a

monthly emigration paper of 5000 circulation.

Mr. Whitney originated the scheme of exhibiting the products of Lyon county and of the lands embraced within the railroad's land grant at the state fairs. The first exhibit was made in 1876, and first premiums were secured on all exhibits. Following is a list of premiums awarded Lyon county at early day Minnesota state fairs for largest and best displays of grains and vegetables: 1879, first for grains and second for vegetables; 1880, first for both exhibits; 1881, first for grains and second for vegetables and a silver medal for five best varieties of spring wheat; 1882, first for each exhibit and silver medal for spring wheat exhibit. On March 8, 1881, the county was awarded first premium by the Minnesota State Butter and Cheese Association for the best fifty pounds of dairy butter, and in 1882 at the Wisconsin state fair Lyon county was awarded a diploma and given special mention for the largest, best and most artistically displayed exhibit of grains, vegetables, fruits, grasses, woods and soils made by one exhibitor.

In 1886 Mr. Whitney secured for the railroad company the right-of-way for the Willmar & Sioux Falls Railroad Company from Marshall to the north line of the county. On May 1, 1886, Mr. Whitney went to St. Paul to become circulation manager of The Farmer, an agricultural paper. In six months he raised the circulation, of the paper to 30,000. After one year at that work his health failed, and in September, 1887, Mr. Whitney moved South, becoming a resident of Cookeville, Tennessee, where he has ever since resided.

During his long residence in Lyon county Mr. Whitney held a number of offices of trust. Besides being Marshall's first postmaster., he served for a time as judge of probate and was deputy county treasurer two terms, serving under Jacob Rouse and James Williams. He was justice of the peace of Lake Marshall township and held other township offices and was one of the first to hold the office of Marshall village recorder. From the time of the organization of the Marshall school district until it became an independent district he was chairman of the Board of Education.

*See Cookeville City Cemetery Obts. (Virtual Cemetery) at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

Col. Charles Henry Whitney Obt.

b. 16 January 1838, Bridgton, Cumberland Co., ME – d. 25 December 1912, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN, md on the 28th of October 1860, Waupun, WI to **Mary Alicia “Alice” (Wirt) Whitney**, b. 22 July 1843, Willoughby, OH – d. 11 February 1911, Cookeville, TN, d/o **Elder Noah Wirt & Frances Fannie Mapes**. Col. Charles Henry Whitney, s/o **George W. Whitney** (1792-1878) & **Angelina Phinney**. (Church of Christ member. Mason, Knights of Phythias, Postmaster of Cookeville 1907-1910, known as Col. Whitney. Real Estate Contractor). Children: Miss Gertrude Whitney, Mrs. Fred H. (Millie) White, Mrs. John Schneider of Marshall, MN & Mrs. J. T. Snodgrass.
'In the secret of his presence'

Gertrude Whitney

b. 21 April 1875, TN – d. 26 August 1943, d/o **Col. Charles H. Whitney & Mary Alicia “Alice” Wirt**. (Single, she was a writer, poetess, and artist). (A close friend, Miss Elizabeth Goodwin and herself adopted two sons, named them Paul and Dan Whitney-Goodwin). (Gertrude, a musician and artist of considerable note).