

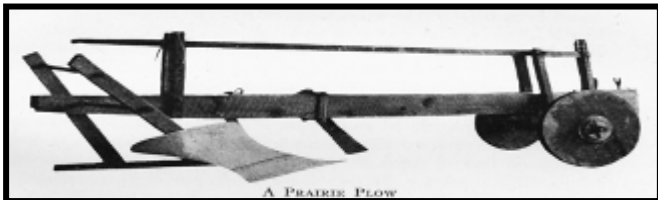
TUSCOLA TOWNSHIP

The first settlers to come to Tuscola Township, beginning in 1836, kept close to the timbers for its protection. The prairie was considered a bleak, barren waste, unfit for habitation or cultivation, the magnificent richness of the soil not being appreciated by men accustomed to hilly woodlands. The timber was convenient for fuel, building and fencing, and men clung to it, for it was thought unwise to expose one's self to the full sweep of the winter storms and dangerous prairie fires.



One of Tuscola's earliest settlers told of standing at one of the highest points. "You couldn't see a tree anywhere between the Embarrass and Kaskaskia rivers". In the distances both east and west, were dark fringes along the two rivers that flow southward through the county. The prairie grass grew as tall as a man's head and the swampy marshland beneath it was a cause of fear to the early settlers. It was believed that vapors arising from the soil were the cause of the ague or the "shakes" as malaria was called.

The few who settled in the midst of the prairies broke up the land with three or four yoke of oxen and built fences of rails or sod. When the prairie fires came, spreading with terrific rapidity and driving all the wild game before them, the farmer hastened to plow several furrows around his home and barns in order to save them.



The first entries of land we find are about as follows: Sigler H. Lester, December 5, 1836; John Hammer, 1837; Jacob Moore, June 22, 1837; Samuel Lester, 1837; Thomas Lewis, June 19, 1838; William Brian, 1849. Most of the land entries made in 1852-53. Up to that time, it appears there was a check upon buying of land pending the location

of the Illinois Central Railroad and its selection of the lands granted it by the government. Among the active and prominent settlers, as farmers and cattlemen, were O. C. and M. F. Hackett, Owen J. Jones and Joseph W. Smith in the south part, and in the north, B. F. Boggs, Benham Nelson, George Phinney and Caleb Garrett.

The first meeting after township organization was held at Tuscola in 1868. W. H. Lamb, Esq. called the meeting to order. S. D. Stevenson was elected Moderator, and C. F. Lamb, Clerk. A committee of five was appointed to divide the township into road districts. It was made up of G. P. Phinney, A. McNeill, J. McGuinness, James Jester, and Josiah McKee. The place of this meeting is not given, but it was arranged that the next meeting should be held at J. B. Hart's store, northeast corner of Central Avenue and Parke Street. Here Mr. O. C. Hackett was elected the first Supervisor; C. H. Griffith was elected Assessor; S. Paddleford was made Collector. J. M. Ephlin was the first Constable. W. H. Wood was the first Justice of the Peace. The first Commissioners of Highways were, Benham Nelson, Noah Ammen, and W. Brian.

