

Juniata History

Juniata, named for a river in Pennsylvania famed in song, was the first town in Adams county, settled early in 1871 under the auspices of the Burlington railroad. The first settlers were members of the Michigan Colony, Adna H. Bowen, Samuel L. Brass, Titus and R.D. Babcock, and Isaac and John Stark, all of whom came from Pontiac, Michigan. They settled on Section 12, building their houses in a cluster in the center of the section. The town was surveyed and platted in November, 1871, by Anselmo B. Smith, a railroad surveyor. South streets forms the south line of town, followed by First through Tenth streets, running parallel to it, the South and North Depot streets, and Eleventh through Thirteenth streets. The avenues are the north-south streets, and from the west line of the survey are Republican, Platte, Blue, Juniata, Adams, Bowen and Brass. Settlement was rapid, and by December 12, 1871, the first election was held in Adams county, at Titus Babcock's house. The 29 eligible voters cast 28 votes for Juniata as the county seat.

On April 17th, 1872, E. E. Brown, representing the St. Joseph and Denver railroad, appeared before the county commissioners at Juniata asking them to provide \$75,000 in county bonds for the assistance of his railroad to complete twenty-five miles of line in Adams county by January, 1873. At the special election on May 27th, the bonds failed to pass; a number of the leaders in Juniata argued that the St. Joseph and Denver would come into the county without the bonds and that it would of course cross the Burlington at Juniata. The new road did come into the county but it crossed the Burlington not at Juniata but eastward, and the town of Hastings sprang into being. On May 24th, 1873, the Hastings Journal printed its first issue, advocating that the county seat be removed to Hastings.

The Hastings sympathizers went into action again in the late summer, A.D. Yocum filing a petition on August 17th, 1874, asking again for a vote on the matter of the location of the county seat. The commissioners had not acted by September 7th, and more names were added to the petition, and the next day the commissioners said that there was doubt as to the validity of the names on the petition, there being more names there than there were residents of the county! There was no more activity in 1874, although in the county elections of 1874, Yocum succeeded S.L. Brass as a county commissioner, the new man a Hastings partisan and the outgoing one a Juniata one.

On March 5th, J.L. Parrott filed a petition, and the board ordered an election the first Tuesday in April, 1875. The canvassers later declared that Hastings, with 551 votes out of the 904 cast, had won the election, but Juniata supporters filed charges challenging the legality of the election, the Supreme Court ordered a recount, and this time it appeared that Juniata had more than two-fifths of the votes.

For a year there was comparative peace, although the issue was one which engendered considerable emotion. On April 9th, 1877, another election was held. The following account in Past and Present of Adams County describes the occasion: " April 9th, 1877, was a day of great excitement throughout Adams county. The conflict raged with great fury at both Hastings and Juniata, perhaps reaching the greater turbulence at the latter point. A considerable number of Hastings people

were at Juniata throughout the day. Mr. Cramer was delegated by the Hastings contingent to watch the polls and challenge the votes he thought to be illegal. For Juniata a similar service was performed at the polls at Hastings by A.H. Bowen, assisted by a number of others. Towards noon a large crowd gathered in Juniata and the rising babel of voices grew ominous. Mr. Cramer felt something was brewing and he surmised that an effort would be made to rush the polls for the casting of illegal votes.

Conspicuous among those arguing loudly upon the streets during the morning was a fiery Irishman by the name of Tom Murphy. He was eager for a fist fight in behalf of Hastings. Opposed to Murphy was Sam Saulisbury of Juniata. Saulisbury was more or less a professional boxer, and how Murphy and Saulisbury managed to refrain from combat during the first few hours of voting is inexplicable.

It was just before noon that matters assumed a serious aspect. A force of Juniata men approached the polls in a body. At the head of the column marched Saulisbury, the boxer, but near him marched Tim Laird, the generalissimo of the affair at hand. Other Juniata men that had been standing close to Mr. Cramer near the polls now crowded closer and closer as their reinforcements approached. Closer and closer they crowded until at length Mr. Cramer could only stay at his post by bracing himself against the pressure.

Meanwhile, Hastings men formed to oppose the advancing line. One feature of the Hastings lines was the Committee of Toms: Tom Farrel, Tom Kernan, Tom Pardue, Tom Murphy and one other. The Hastings line was there to protect the polls, because word had gone out that Juniata was planning to cast a number of illegal votes. The lines met and the fight was on. At last Murphy and Saulisbury closed in combat, but their encounter failed to hold attention because of a general charge all along the Hastings line. Heads and bodies were made sore that day. Tom Farrell used to relate that while in the midst of battle, he found before him an old, white-headed Juniata man. Tom Farrell had drawn back his fist to strike the foreman, but the white hairs of his opponent gave him pause "This won't do, county seat or no county seat," thought Tom. But the white-haired man thought, too, but differently. With a quick movement he suddenly produced and swung a club and Tom Farrell fell, stunned, to the ground.

In a minute more the crowd behind Mr. Cramer surged forward with a yell and the Hastings challenger was forced to retreat and the polls were in the hands of Juniata.

Mr. Cramer saw that the Hastings partisans were not numerous enough to enable them to keep any further watch over the voting. The scene resembled a riot. Some Hastings men were drawing away wounded. Tom Murphy's hat was off and he was just stooping to recover it. A man approached, apparently with the intention of kicking Murphy on the head. But the Irishman was not to be caught. He sprang like a panther and with a well-directed blow laid his assailant full length upon the ground.

Mr. Cramer now sought his horse and mounted, rode to Hastings on the gallop to apprise the citizens of the state of things. Arriving, he found that Hastings already had the information. Oswald Oliver had telegraphed from Juniata. A moment later Tom Dodd arrived, also upon a foaming horse, and by these messages, Hastings was

thoroughly wrought. The first care of the men of Hastings was to drive Mr. Bowen and the Juniata watchers of the polls away from their post and out of town.

Then a force assembled and every vehicle was pressed into service to furnish transportation to Juniata. The county seat army carried toward the western village a motley equipment of weapons - whips, clubs, scythes, whatever could be first found. The Hastings men came in such numbers that they were able to overwhelm Juniata, and Mr. Cramer was reinstated at his post as challenger. That evening another disturbance threatened to develop to dangerous proportions, for Hastings insisted that Mr. Cramer and Tom Lee should sit within the enclosure and watch the election officials count the ballots, and in this they were finally successful.

The ballot was a small piece of paper, bearing the words 'For Relocating the County Seat of Adams County,' and the names of the contending towns. The ballots had been prepared on rolls perforated, so that each one could be readily torn off. Mr. Cramer and Mr. Lee objected frequently to the counting of certain ballots. One notable instance was where a number of ballots had been cast into the box without taking the trouble to separate them. This probably happened in the excitement about the noon hour. The report of Referee Calkins, however, later indicated that Juniata was not alone in this overzealousness."

The election results indicated that Hastings tallied 844 votes, Juniata, 535 - a victory for Hastings, but the Juniata partisans went to court, filing injunctions charging fraud in the election. Judge William Gaslin appointed a referee, C.E. Calkins of Kearney, to hear the charges, and investigations went on from July 6th, 1877, to December 3rd, when the referee filed his report. Judge Gaslin took the papers to Kearney to study them more carefully, and on the night of February 26th, 1878, his office was destroyed by fire, including the report of the referee. "It is the recollection, however, of some of those who took part of the controversy that the lead of Hastings over Juniata was increased by the report," said Lewis in 1916, "and that it was found that ballots were cast illegally in both places, but that a greater number were so cast in Juniata than in Hastings." The judge ordered new depositions to be taken and records from the court reporter's notes to be supplied.

On September 27th, 1878, Judge Gaslin made his decision that Hastings had been the victor in the election.

In 1915, a Mrs. A.V. Cole wrote, "The rapid growth (of Hastings) took from Juniata the county seat.....So with wrath in our hearts and tears in our eyes, we watched it disappear toward the east and poor Juniata was no more the metropolis of Adams County.