

the Pioneer Byerly Family of Owen County

by Joyce Van Dyke Skinner, great-great-granddaughter of Samuel and Margaret Byerly

PART I

Samuel Byerly, Sr., son of Christopher Byerly, came with a colony to America from Wuertemberg, Germany, stopping first in Pennsylvania then Ohio. Samuel married Margaret Allushouse in Millersburg, Holmes County, Ohio on March 27, 1840. They settled in Coshocton County, Ohio where their first four children were born: Elizabeth 1842, Barbara 1844, Catherine 1846, and Adam 1847. (Note: Adam is listed in some census as having been born in Ohio; in others his place of birth is listed as Indiana).

During the late 1840s the Byerly family with other German families migrated from Ohio and developed a settlement in Marion Township, Owen County, Indiana which they called Steubenville after Steubenville, Ohio. It was located south of Patricksburg. Later Steubenville slowly faded from existence while Patricksburg developed in to a larger trading center and community.

"The last of the great migrations occurred around 1850 in Owen County and consisted of families from adjoining Ohio counties of Coshocton, Holmes and Tuscarawas taking up lands in Jefferson, Lafayette and Marion Townships." (History of Owen County Web Site)

In Section 28 of Marion Township these settlers established their own school, church, farms and businesses. Steubenville was surveyed in 1857 and consisted of 14 lots. These small communities sprang up as a means of getting supplies to the settlers. It was many miles between cities and the rugged roads made travel difficult. One would probably have found a general store, blacksmith, livery stable, saloon, school, church and a cemetery which would have been typical of such early small settlements.

The Byerlys helped organize and build the school and the St. Paul's Reformed Lutheran Church in Steubenville in 1856 with about 20 members. The schoolhouse was used until 1858 and a log building was constructed on land owned by Mr. Hass. In 1895 a new church was constructed. Finally the church merged with the St. Peter's Reformed Church in Patricksburg in 1973 and was named St. John's Community Lutheran Church. The Steubenville Church was torn down in 1980. The German Cemetery of Steubenville is all that remains of that former community. Many members of the Byerly families are laid to rest in the Steubenville Cemetery.

Samuel Byerly purchased 40 acres on January 22, 1851 in Owen County, Marion Township where he built a two story log cabin (SE 1/4 of NE 1/4 of Section 22, Twp. 10 North, Range 5 West). In this two story log cabin the Byerlys raised their 7 girls and 6 boys.



Samuel Sr. and Margaret



About 1860 the second log home of Samuel Byerly, Sr. was constructed on what is known as Byerly Road. It was a two story log cabin house about 30 feet by 15 feet. It had four rooms with two rooms upstairs with a connection door between them and two rooms downstairs. The house was built in the most popular style of that time, a double pen and vernacular construction with double doors. In the early 1900s weather boarding was used to cover the logs and then painted white. The house was eventually rented out and was occupied by renters when it was destroyed by fire in 2002.

In 1880 Samuel Jr., who was the 9th child of his parents, built a house on the farm in the same style as his father's house. It was constructed with the houses facing each other on what is known as Byerly Road. In 1900 as the family size increased, a one-story addition was added at the back of the front section of the house. This is the same house that was occupied by the next two generations of the Byerly family.

After Samuel Jr. the next generation to occupy the farm was Henry C. and Wilma (Biddle) Byerly. They occupied the house with their four children, Glenn, Cheryl, Gary, and Fran. After Henry's death in 1983, Wilma remained on the farm for a few years until she moved to Spencer. The farm was vacant for several years until Gary and Margie Byerly with their two children, Jeremy and Meagan, decided to move to the farm and begin a

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total restoration of the entire farm house and all the buildings on the 2 acre barn lot. They added a two story third section to the house featuring a reclaimed spiral staircase from an older house in Indianapolis. With this addition the entire home is now a total of 3,000 square feet.

Gary and Margie have turned the house and buildings into an outstanding showplace. The beautifully landscaped grounds complement the exquisite interior of the farm house. The carefully chosen furnishings inside the restored 3 section home reflect the extremely talented decorating skill of Margie Byerly.

In 2004 the Byerly Family Farm, located at the crossroad of Byerly and Fiscus Road out of Patricksburg, was awarded the Hoosier Homestead Award which recognized farms that have been in the same family for over 100 years. These awards also recognize farm families whose contributions continue to preserve the state's history. The farm established in 1851 was a sesquicentennial farm of 153 years at that time.

With hard work, patience and foresight to preserve a historical landmark of the Byerly family, Gary and Margie Byerly have created a showplace for Owen County.

Sources:

1. A History of Patricksburg, Indiana, 1911 by Wm. Riley Williams, reprinted 1977

2. Owen County Indiana History 1884

3. Wilma Biddle Byerly and Deanna Collins

4. Gary and Margie Byerly

5. Owen County Library Genealogical Volunteers

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Look for Part 2 of this story in the Winter 2007 issue of this journal.

BLACK and WHITE

contributed by Jim Royer

(Under age 40? You won't understand)
You could hardly see for all the snow.
Spread the rabbit ears as far as they go.

Pull a chair up to the TV set,
Good Night, David. Good Night, Chet."
Depending on the channel you tuned,
You got Rob and Laura or Ward and June.
It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.

I Love Lucy, The Real McCoys,
Dennis the Menace, the Cleaver boys,
Rawhide, Gunsmoke, Wagon Train,
Superman, Jimmy and Lois Lane.
Father Knows Best, Patty Duke,
Rin Tin Tin and Lassie too,
Donna Reed on Thursday night...
Life looked better in black and white.

I wanna go back to black and white.
Everything always turned out right.
Simple people, simple lives...
Good guys always won the fights.
Now nothing is the way it seems,
In living color on the TV screen.
Too many murders, too many fights,
I wanna go back to black and white.

In God they trusted, alone in bed, they slept,
A promise made was a promise kept.
They never cussed or broke their vows.
They'd never make the network now.
But if I could, I'd rather be
In a TV town in '53.
It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.

I'd trade all the channels on the satellite,
If I could just turn back the clock tonight
To when everybody knew wrong from right.
Life was better in black and white.