

## William H. Troth of Vandalia:

### his life, his family, and the perpetual oak tree

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William H. Troth, the eldest child of Nathan and Else (Mason) Troth, was an amazing individual, to say the least. His wife Jane Wiley must have been equally amazing. Their lives were woven together through hard work and devotion to their family. The yellowed newspaper account of his life reads as follows.

"Until his health failed Mr. Troth was one of the most influential men in the county and few men if any in the county have held as many places of public trust. For 25 or more years he did all the work of surveyor in the county, was trustee of his township, a member of the county council, and for four years auditor of the county... He was one of the organizers of the Exchange Bank and its first cashier. After his resignation as cashier he served upon the Board of Directors of that institution until his health failed. He was the father of fifteen children, fourteen boys and one girl. Eleven of his children survive him. To every one of his children he gave a good education and to many of them a college course; and to raise 15 children and give them the advantage of a good education and do this on a Lafayette township farm is in itself no small achievement..." (*Evening World*, Spencer, Indiana)

William was born in Paint Township, Highland County, Ohio on 9 December 1833. In 1848, when he was 15, his father moved from Ohio to Indiana settling on the part of the present home farm known as the Old Troth Farm. William's father, Nathan died in 1859 when William was 26 years old. Two years later William H. married Jane Wiley (31 Oct. 1861) when he was almost 28 years old.

William H. and Jane built their home on land adjacent to his father's farm, probably about the year of their marriage. The old home is still standing.

Imagine a family of 13 sons (according to the family Bible of Robert A. Troth, there were only 14 children, 13 boys and 1 girl), a son every other year - well almost! Sons were born in 1862, 1864, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1876, 1878, 1880, 1882, 1883, 1886, and finally twins, a boy and a girl in 1888 when Jane was nearly 46 years of age!. One would think her body would have been completely worn out by that time, but she lived to be almost 76 years old. The youngest son, Byron, had a twin sister, Beulah, who lived just 15 months. 1889 was a bad year for the family as Curt, the second son, died just a few days before little Beulah. Curt was nearly 25 years old. Little Rossie, 9<sup>th</sup> son, died in 1882. All other children grew to manhood and took their turn teaching in the Troth Schoolhouse, No. 3, a one room frame building near the farm. And remembering my father's stories, I guess the Biddle's family of girls and the Troth's family of boys were the bulk of the school population - plus a few from the Wark family. The older boys must have done a good job preparing their younger brothers for further schooling and professions in chemistry, education, pharmacy, merchandising, watch making and farming.

It is too bad the stories have not been preserved. Snatches of tall tales come to mind. Mother Jane knew just how to prepare and serve the squirrels the boys brought in, and once someone put somebody's buggy way up on top of the barn. Putting a privy high on a barn was another favorite trick! On April Fools Day someone's horses were fenced in with an 8' high fence, about 12' by 12' or some ridiculous size. I can hear Uncle Harry chuckle while telling about the time his brother, Dennis, was hunting him with a vengeance for something he had done to him. Uncle Harry was hiding in the bramble patch and Uncle Dennis was standing just above on a fence, looking much farther away for his brother who was just below lying on the brambles, afraid to even take a breath! I never did hear the end of that story. And there was once a time when Cousin Charley came to visit and slept in an upstairs bedroom which had an attic above with a trap door in the ceiling. One of the boys had climbed into the attic before Charley went to bed, and when Charley was



William H. and Jane (Wiley) Troth 1896

just about asleep he began moaning and groaning up in the attic, frightening poor Charley out of about 10 years' growth. He leaped out of bed and ran downstairs in a hysterical state. And then the story about chopping holes in the ice and dunking the school teacher because he didn't give them Christmas candy.

I've heard my father tell many times about the oak tree that grew from an acorn brought from Ohio, which came from a tree that grew from an acorn brought from New Jersey, which grew from an acorn that came from an oak tree in England. Well, we had a "child" from the Vandalia oaks in our back yard in Centralia, Washington and it became a very handsome tree which bore no acorns because without a mate nearby it could not be pollinated. In 1976 while visiting the old home place I looked with pride at the "GRT" initials carved on the side of the old barn by my father when a boy, and filled my pockets with wormy acorns from the old oak trees by the spring. In a few days the worms were eating through the plastic sack. The acorns were planted, nevertheless, and I wondered if I'd have a crop of worms, or trees, or nothing at all. Six small trees grew! One tree survives.

Children of William Y. and Jane (Wiley) Troth:

1. Nathan Wiley Troth (b. 4 Sep 1862 Vandalia, Owen Co. - d. 4 Jul 1947) mrd. (1) 1 Apr 1886 Sarah Jane Fender (b. 26 Sep 1865 - d. 3 Aug 1892), daughter of Calvin and Susan (Criss) Fender. Nathan mrd. (2) Susan's sister Amanda Alice Fender (b. 25 Nov 1869 - d. 16 Aug 1943).
2. Curtis Thompson Troth (18 Aug 1864 Vandalia - 25 Jun 1889). He is said to have died at college on food poisoning.
3. Robert Amos Troth (b. 14 Feb 1867 Vandalia - d. 21 Jan 1953 Orange Co. IN) mrd. Minerva Maude Sproat (d. 10 May 1961).
4. William Voorhees Troth (b. 20 Mar 1869 Vandalia - d. 29 or 30 Oct 1925 Pulaska PA) mrd. (1) 22 Aug 1894 Ruth Steen; mrd. (2) Helen Bassett Hipkind (d. 1970s Orange Co. IN).
5. Alonzo Pearl Troth (b. 19 Sep 1871 Spencer - d. 19 May 1945 Spokane WA) mrd. Louise Mable Kiichli (b. 4 Dec 1870 Duluth MN).
6. Homer Bird Troth (b. 21 Oct 1873 Spencer - d. 20 May 1941 Paoli IN) mrd. Curtie B. Ward.
7. Harry Clay Troth (b. 26 Feb 1876 Spencer - d. 30 Oct 1933 Lewis Co. WA), unmarried.
8. Dennis Clayton Troth (b. 13 Apr 1878 Spencer - d. 19 Jul 1934 Durham NC on campus of Duke University) mrd. 13 Aug 1905 Della Tomey (b. 19 Aug 1881 - d. 17 Apr 1977; had remarried Farris).
9. Rossie Hendricks Troth (b. 18 Feb 1880 Vandalia - d. 12 Apr 1882).
10. Ray Lincoln Troth (b. 18 Feb 1882 Vandalia - d. 25 Apr 1919 Orleans IN).
11. Grover Roy Troth (b. 13 Nov 1883 Vandalia - d. 20 Mar 1964 Lewis Co. WA) mrd. 28 Sep 1919 Snohomish Co. WA George Evelyne Rush (b. 1 Aug 1898 - d. 22 Jan 1975 Hood River OR; had remarried Arthur Green), daughter of Clyde Rush and Ida C. Brown).
12. Lee Steen Troth (b. 21 Nov 1886 Vandalia - d. 1 Sep 1960 Tucson AZ) unmarried.
13. Byron Bryan Troth (b. 29 May 1888 Vandalia - d. 30 Sep or 1 Oct 1930 Meridian MS) unmarried.
14. Beulah Bernice Troth (twin to Byron - d. 2 Jul 1889).

The following obituary (*Evening World*) describes the loving care youngest son Byron gave to his mother in her later years. After William's death she and Byron had moved to Spencer.

"Mrs. Jane Troth, 76 years old, widow of William H. Troth, and one of the pioneer women of the county, died at her home here following a long illness. Three years ago she suffered a paralytic stroke and since that time has failed gradually, and for nearly two years past has been entirely helpless. Her youngest son, Byron, has remained with her constantly and cared for her with the solicitude of a woman. Besides his care of her he has done the housework and his splendid care of the home has been the marvel of the women folks who visited during her illness."

Jane was born in New Cumberland, Carroll County, Ohio on 28 July 1842 and came to Owen County in 1849. Her family settled near Jordan Village. She was the second child of William Wiley and Mary Carnahan.

[The writer retired in 1985 from the Department of Music Faculty, CWU, having taught Music Education courses for