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Theodore Wilson Thompson: Southern Illinois Pioneer

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THEODORE WILSON THOMPSON: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS PIONEER

by

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B.S., Western Illinois University, 2000

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science in Education Degree.

Department of Health Education and Recreation
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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THESIS APPROVAL

THEODORE WILSON THOMPSON: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS PIONEER

By

Elisha L. Szyjka

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education
in the field of Health Education and Recreation

Approved by:

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October 20, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

ELISHA L. SZYKJA, for the Master of Science in Education degree in HEALTH EDUCATION AND RECREATION, presented on OCTOBER 20, 2009, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: THEODORE WILSON THOMPSON: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS PIONEER

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Regina Glover

Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois contains graffiti created by passersby and local residents. Many deem modern graffiti in parks as a depreciative behavior. However, the inscription created by Theodore Wilson Thompson in 1862 along the Giant City Nature Trail has implications for interpretive use by park staff. This is due to the inscription being etched prior to the park's establishment and Theodore's pioneering contributions to Makanda and Carbondale, Illinois. Therefore, Theodore Thompson was the focus of this study due to his inscription and the lack of park research conducted on his life history. In 1852, as a young boy, he moved to the Makanda vicinity with his family. Theodore and his brother Albert carved their names in sandstone during the Civil War, in an area that would later become part of Giant City State Park. After owning a large fruit farm as an adult and increasing the size of the town of Makanda, Theodore moved to Carbondale where he purchased 600 acres adjoining what would become Southern Illinois University. Thompson Woods and Thompson Lake (Campus Lake) were established by Theodore and were later added to the campus of Southern Illinois University. Through the documentation and research of other names etched throughout the park, it will be possible for park staff to not only create interpretive media to help visitors better connect with the resource, but also help preserve the history of the area before it became a park.

DEDICATION

Eleanor Ann Derry was my grandmother, my friend, and above all else, an inspiration to me. Her passing made me realize how important the past can be in defining the future. I dedicate this work in remembrance of her.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all, I would like to thank God for navigating me on this journey. I would also like to thank my husband, Sebastian, for his insight, suggestions and his ability to wait patiently while I combed through files at the historical society. I appreciate the encouragement extended to me by my mother, Dana, my father, Walter, my brother, Charles, and my sister, Danitha, which helped me to complete this project. On the academic side, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Regina Glover for her guidance and assistance in helping me to stay focused and complete this work. She is truly dedicated to her students and their success, and I deeply appreciate her commitment to helping me finish this work. I need to extend a special thank you to Dr. Whitney Ward who, through an independent study course, helped start this project by suggesting I do something more meaningful than read a book. Dr. Kathleen Welshimer took time to share my enthusiasm for Theodore's history and served on my committee. I am thankful for her suggestions, which made this project more complete. I would also like to thank Jenny Skufca for sharing in my excitement concerning the Thompsons and for giving me the option to conduct research on Theodore and Albert. The volunteers at the Jackson County Historical Society generously assisted me in locating numerous materials for this project and I appreciate their efforts. I also want to recognize the librarians at the Map Library and those who work within the Special Collections Research Center at Southern Illinois University's Morris Library. Their help allowed me to locate numerous images for this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The State of Illinois began purchasing land in southern Illinois in 1927 with the vision of establishing a new park to be named Giant City State Park. At its inception, the park contained 1,100 acres and has since expanded to its present size of 4,000 acres. Situated in Makanda, Illinois, on the border of Jackson and Union Counties, the park provides visitors with a wealth of recreational opportunities. On any given day, visitors can be found hiking, nature-watching, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, climbing or partaking in the interpretive programs offered through the visitor center. These services are utilized by 1.2 million users who visit the park each year (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2009, para. 4).

The history of the park reveals that in the early part of the 1800s the first white settlers immigrated to this portion of southern Illinois. These early pioneers came mostly from the nearby southern states of Tennessee and Kentucky. The early settlers, as well as those who would move to the area much later, utilized the mild climate and excellent soils for growing fruit trees. Around the time of the Civil War, the rocky outcrops and rock shelters within the park were being used by both Confederate and Union soldiers as places of refuge. It was along these bluffs that individuals carved their names in the soft sandstone. Today, the Giant City Nature Trail in Giant City State Park is host to many of these historic inscriptions (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2009, para. 4).

The location of early inscriptions contained within Giant City State Park is not exclusive to a single rock face on the Giant City Nature Trail; various names and dates can be found etched on random rocks and along steep bluffs throughout the park.

However, the Giant City Nature Trail was the location chosen for this study due to it containing the inscriptions of pioneer brothers Theodore W. and Albert S. Thompson. On February 22, 1862, Theodore and Albert engraved their names high on a sandstone wall, much like those who had carved before. Their inscriptions are located in what is now known as the Giant City Streets portion of the Giant City Nature Trail. The earliest inscription containing a date along the Giant City Streets area appears on the same surface as Theodore and Albert's inscription and is dated 1840.

There are several different terms associated with early pioneer names carved in various types of rock. Some western states refer to these Euro-American names and drawings as cowboy glyphs, whereas other geographic areas refer to them as simply glyphs. Additional terms have also been widely used in describing this occurrence. The most commonly used terms are inscriptions, etchings, carvings and engravings. However, some would call the names engraved throughout Giant City State Park, graffiti. This term has been the most frequently used lexis to describe names carved in stone. Graffito, the singular form of graffiti, simply means "an inscription or drawing made on some public surface (as a rock or wall)" (Graffito, 2009, para. 1). Reisner (1971) adds to this definition when he stated:

Man is a natural communicator. A thought occurs to someone suddenly, or something is experienced during the day, and there is a compulsion to express it, if not to another person, then to whatever is close at hand: paper, wall, rock, tree, door. Graffiti, then, are little insights, little peepholes into the minds of individuals who are spokesmen not only for themselves but for others like them.

(p.1)

Thoreau (1904) did not feel the same about leaving a mark made of stone and wrote:

Nations are possessed with an insane ambition to perpetuate the memory of themselves by the amount of hammered stone they leave. What if equal pains were taken to smooth and polish their manners? One piece of good sense would be more memorable than a monument as high as the moon. I love better to see stones in place. (p.65)

This second view concurs more with modern thought and park policies concerning visitor graffiti. Nevertheless, no matter which feeling one has regarding inscriptions or stone monuments, Albert and Theodore have provided a chance to glance back at their life history by adding their inscriptions to a sandstone wall that now lies within the park.

Views differ on the significance of graffiti, especially when it comes to the notion that not all graffiti is created equal. By today's standards, an individual's graffiti is often deemed a form of vandalism that only serves to deface park property. Visitors to Giant City State Park in recent history have tended to use spray-paint, keys or permanent marker to place their inscriptions over those of early pioneers. Worrell (2009), in writing about the importance of arborglyphs, which consist of inscriptions carved in trees, differentiates between the earlier and contemporary glyphs. He stated that, "arborglyphs—historic and modern—are an expression of man's relationship to the environment. Contemporary glyphs reflect a discomfort with long periods in nature. Such carvings are typically poorly planned, quickly rendered, and brutally hacked into the tree" (Worrell, p.19). Worrell expounds upon his initial view of new carvings by countering with his ideas concerning older engravings stating, ". . . carvers of old often worked their entire lives outdoors, maintained a familiarity with natural materials, and exhibited great skill

with knives and other tools, and therefore, such carvers planned carefully, labored patiently, and used proper form” (p. 19). This is true of rock inscriptions at Giant City State Park; older carvings appear to be etched more precisely and ornately (see Figure 1.1), whereas carvings that were created in modern times seem to have been quickly scratched or written onto the rock surface with little care or accuracy (see Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.1. Image of historic, carefully etched graffiti containing the name J. L. Parker on the rock face containing Theodore Thompson’s inscription at Giant City State Park.



Figure 1.2. Image of modern, hastily etched graffiti on the rock face containing Theodore Thompson’s inscription in Giant City State Park.

The perceived beliefs of the carvers, the techniques utilized to create inscriptions, and the period in which inscriptions were created, begs the question, Why are graffiti from the 1800s seen as historical and modern graffiti seen as vandalism? Ideologies have changed; today people have internet blogs and online gathering places in which they can create modern graffiti by leaving short messages for others to read. Graffiti is often deemed historically important to park interpreters when it pre-dates the 1900s. This is generally due to its fragile nature and the insights it gives concerning the cultural and social history of the United States. It is, therefore, worth documenting for future interpretive programs and research. Schlom (2003) adds to this idea when she stated:

The distinction lies in the reason National Parks were established and what the majority of park visitors travel many miles to see. Rock art, cowboy inscriptions, and the names of Colorado River explorers have archeological significance or historic value. These markings help visitors feel connected to the people of the past and provide fascinating clues into the lifestyles, values and beliefs of those who lived here long ago. (p.2)

Peden (2001) would agree with Schlom on the idea of looking into clues gained from graffiti. Peden was working to decipher ancient graffiti in Egypt when he concluded that, “in this regard one might argue that these unostentatious inscriptions are a far more accurate reflection of the character of the society that produced them than much more polished artistic or literary works” (p. xxi). Peden is demonstrating that by studying graffiti, we know more about the everyday lives of all levels of past civilizations than we could learn from reading about them in published works. It is often easy to look up information about famous people in history, but the average person is more difficult to

document; trace back in history. “This is why interpretive sites that present history from multiple perspectives are so important[;] why interpretation itself is so important. Interpreters have the power to make sure that history is not just told by the victors, but by all people” (Caputo, 2009, p. 9).

“So, if we ask what type of individual writes graffiti, the answer lies in the nature of the message, the place where it is written, and the spirit of the times” (Reisner, 1971, p. 4). Many inscriptions were already in place prior to Albert and Theodore etching their names. It was also not regarded as vandalism at that time to etch one’s name. By researching the Thompsons and documenting their history, future park interpreters at Giant City will be able to provide visitors with a glimpse into the period that the inscriptions were created. Even though they had been prominent individuals during their lifetime, had they not carved their names into the sandstone wall, Theodore and Albert could have disappeared from local history altogether. The graffiti the brothers created established a bond between their existence, local history, park history and park interpretation. Few, if any, may have delved into their past had they not created their own graffiti. Through the documentation of their history, future visitors are able to witness what the park landscape and its inhabitants were like long before it became state property.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to collect historical data on Theodore Wilson Thompson, and by doing so connect his past to the history of Giant City State Park, the surrounding area, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Giant City State Park personnel established the need to assemble historic information on Theodore Wilson

Thompson and his brother Albert S. Thompson, who had carved their names high on a sandstone rock along the Giant City Nature Trail. This study serves the park because of an apparent lack of research that pertained to documenting the names etched on the sandstone bluffs. This documentation of names was considered essential not only because of the multitude of names engraved at the site, but also for future research to be conducted by park staff concerning the inscriptions. The lack of park records regarding the engraved names, and the subsequent loss of engravings due to weathering and vandalism, made this study a priority.

The Park Interpreter at Giant City State Park was aware of various aspects surrounding the Thompson family and their imprint on local history, but was looking to complete the story of the two brothers by finding out more about their contributions. In addition to documenting the names on the rock wall containing Albert and Theodore's inscriptions, any information concerning Theodore and his fruit farm, which had been located on park property, was to be collected. It became apparent at the onset that Theodore Thompson had led a very active life and contributed much to the local history of Makanda and Carbondale, Illinois. Due to the lack of records concerning Albert S. Thompson, Theodore W. Thompson became the focus of this research.

Significance of Study

The historical research conducted for this study is to be utilized by future park staff in order to create and implement interpretive programs and/or interpretive displays concerning the history of the Thompson family's deep ties to Carbondale and Makanda, Illinois. The establishment of interpretive programs for visitors, which focuses on the history of the park, helps them create a connection with the location they are visiting.

This, in turn, helps them form a bond, whether it is mental or emotional, with what they are viewing. This relationship helps visitors understand the significance of the park resource that is highlighted by the use of interpretive media. Caputo's (2009) ideas aligned with this view:

You don't have to be in the capital city or even on a site managed by a land management agency to find a place that helps us understand how our culture was forged. Sometimes it's not even a physical place, but rather a person dressed or speaking a certain way. What ultimately matters is the stories about the place—not just the facts, but perspectives about why things happened a certain way and who the people were who made those things happen. (p.9)

It is important to inspire visitors by utilizing interpretive stories, as well as to understand their needs. By providing appropriate interpretive media, it is hoped that visitors will acquire an appreciation for what they have seen or experienced. The result would be that visitors take this newly formed appreciation with them when visiting other places.

Budruk and Manning (2003) found that “while adverse effects of litter and graffiti on the quality of visitor experiences have been documented, little is currently known about the point at which their presence begins to be negatively evaluated by visitors” (p. 25). This is why the role of the interpreter and research such as this are so important. If interpretive media are not created to help visitors see the need to preserve the inscriptions, further vandalism may discourage repeat visits to this trail. Thus, the creation of interpretive media may help limit vandalism by informing visitors of the possible impacts their behaviors might have on the historic inscriptions, while providing ways in which they can help preserve them.

Due to the countless number of inscriptions along the Giant City Nature Trail, there would not have been sufficient time to research each name during the course of this study. Therefore, it was decided that information would only be collected on the individuals of interest to the Park Interpreter at Giant City State Park. The amount of information concerning Theodore Thompson that was located for this study was both substantial and important enough to the founding history of Makanda and Carbondale, Illinois to warrant writing further about his life. The lack of a single and complete compilation regarding the life history of Theodore Thompson emphasized the need for this study to come to fruition.

The objective behind this study was to locate previously written information from various sources and locations that pertained to Theodore Thompson, with the intention of creating a more definitive picture of his past. Brundage (1989) explained his view on how to go about creating such a picture:

A concept central to an appreciation of history as process is revisionism. This means an unending search by historians for fresh sources, approaches, methodological concepts, and interpretations. On the basis of these changing materials and methods, historians are able to offer an ever-new past to the present.

(p. 3)

Coinciding with Brundage's view was the reality that much of the historic information regarding Theodore Thompson was not linked together to form a clear understanding of his past. The research conducted for this study sought to collect this information in order to create a more thorough history than what was already scattered through files, books and records. This study is an assemblage of the available historic information concerning

Theodore Thompson, which highlights his early life in Ohio to his time spent in southern Illinois.

Methods and Limitations

Historical research involves gathering information from various sources in order to portray a clearer picture of the subject being studied. Hacker's (2005) view coincides with this idea:

Research in history involves developing an understanding of the past through the examination and interpretation of evidence The historian's job is to find evidence, analyze its content and biases, corroborate it with other evidence, and use the evidence to develop an interpretation of past events that has some importance for the present. (para. 1)

The historical research for this study sought to locate information regarding Theodore Thompson's contributions and accomplishments during his life in both Ohio and southern Illinois. Overall, the historical and biographical information found for this study focused on Theodore Thompson's pioneering influence in the southern Illinois region.

Historical content for this biography was located using numerous searches and sources. Primary, secondary and electronic sources were utilized in order to assemble a clear picture of Theodore Thompson's life. More specifically, records and writings on Theodore and his family were located using birth and death records, family histories, genealogical information, census and land records, internet searches, library databases and books, library special collections, county historical society records, county records, plat maps, atlases and newspapers.

The Jackson County Historical Society in Murphysboro, Illinois, which houses files pertaining to the Thompson family were used in this study. These files provided a wealth of information regarding Theodore Thompson. Many newspaper clippings, Thompson family genealogical records, unpublished writings and Theodore's personal biography were located in these files and were collectively evaluated in order to piece together his past contributions and accomplishments. The Society also houses a photograph of Theodore that was utilized for this study. Genealogical records for the Thompson family were also located online through the use of a number of family history searches.

Morris Library, on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, was used extensively for much of the research conducted for this study. The library annex as well as the main library on campus provided vast amounts of historical information. The photo of Theodore Thompson's barn and the aerial view of his Carbondale property were located using the Special Collections Research Center. Numerous books pertaining to Carbondale and Makanda history, State of Illinois census records, death records and cemetery records were retrieved from the library. The microfilm collection at Morris Library containing newspapers from the 1800s, including *Barton's Free Press* and the *Carbondale Herald*, were also used. The image of Theodore Thompson's fruit farm came from these newspaper collections. The Map Library located within Morris Library provided access to atlases and early maps of Carbondale and Makanda.

Land sale and acquisition records were collected using the Bureau of Land Management's General Land Office Records from the Bureau's online database for land patents. The State of Illinois' Public Domain Land Tract Sales online database was

utilized. Other land records were located through searching the deed record books housed at the Jackson County Clerk's Office at the Jackson County Court House in Murphysboro, Illinois. Marriage, birth and death records were crosschecked at the Jackson County Court House when records could be located.

Limitations to the research conducted on Theodore Thompson pertain to the lack of family records in the form of places, dates, names and genealogical information. Whenever possible, Thompson family information was compared with as many documents as possible. However, not all birth and death records could be located due to the lack of records kept in the early to mid 1800s. Information regarding family history written in published books did not always align with personal accounts written by Thompson family members. Therefore, in these cases, information from Thompson family sources was considered a more logical representation than that of the published book.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY LIFE IN OHIO AND SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

This chapter contains information in regards to the early portion of Theodore Thompson's life. His ancestral history, time growing up in Ohio and the family's journey to, and settlement in, southern Illinois will be discussed. This chapter portrays Theodore's character and the qualities he inherited from his father and mother.

Theodore Wilson Thompson (see Figure 2.1) was the first child born to Joshua Thompson Jr. and Maria (Milner) Thompson in the town of Harrisville, Ohio, on 18 April 1841. In order to understand Theodore's path later in life, it is worth noting his family's ancestral record. Theodore's earliest known paternal forbearer was his great-great-great-great grandfather, John Thompson, who emigrated from Scotland to Fermanagh County, Kingdom of Ireland. His maternal relations were German and his mother's ancestors were the Milners and Neiswangers (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.; "T.W. Thompson Biographical Sketch," 1887, para. 1).

The Thompson family's movement to the United States can be traced back to John Thompson's son and Theodore's great-great-great grandfather, Jacob Thompson, who immigrated to Fayette County, Pennsylvania from Fermanagh County, Kingdom of Ireland. William Thompson, Jacob's son and Theodore's great-great grandfather, was born in 1747 and lived in Pennsylvania within the Redstone Settlement of Westmoreland County; he passed in 1806. William's son, Joshua Sr., was Theodore's grandfather and was born August 10, 1773, in the Redstone Settlement in Pennsylvania. William Thompson, Joshua's father, passed away in 1838. By 1807, Joshua Sr. had married Sarah Mosse and on November 7 of that year, they departed for the Short Creek Settlement in

Ohio. They arrived at their destination the end of November 1807. They had at least one child, Theodore's father, Joshua Jr., who was born on June 11, 1812. No records could be located to distinguish if any other children were born to Joshua Sr. On November 17, 1827 Joshua Sr. moved his family again, taking them to the Wolf Creek Settlement in Ohio where they arrived on November 25, 1827 ("T.W. Thompson Biographical Sketch," 1887, para. 1). Often times, movements by Quaker families in the 1700s and 1800s were perpetuated by their livelihoods as farmers and their search for more suitable land.



*Figure 2.1. Theodore Wilson Thompson. Adapted From *History of Early Carbondale, Illinois, 1852-1905* (p. 299), by Wright, J. W. D., Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press. Copyright 1977 by the Jackson County Historical Society. Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix A)*

Joshua Thompson Jr. (Joshua) grew up in Ohio and when he was 26 years old, married Maria Milner, who was born on July 30, 1815 in Washington, Guernsey County, Ohio (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). Their first child, Theodore Wilson Thompson, was the subject of this study. Theodore, later in his life, described in detail his parents and their first home in Ohio:

Joshua Thompson [Jr.] and Maria Milner were united in marriage October 25, 1838 by Rev. Benny J. Mitchell at the residence of David N. Milner, Mount Pleasant, Jefferson County, Ohio. Father was 6 feet 2-1/2 inches in height, weight 180 pounds, the same height as his father [Joshua Thompson Sr.]. Mother was not quite 5 feet, 130 pounds. He bought a front lot and six acres back of said lot in the town of Harrisville in Harrison County, Ohio, to make himself a home. He only had between 6 and 7 hundred dollars. He built a story and a half with a basement. The basement contained four rooms. One he used for a shop, had a large fireplace in it. One for wood and coal. One for apples, potatoes, etc. The first story contained sitting room and parlor with folding doors, bedroom, kitchen, hall, and back porch. Second story contained two rooms, a flat roof upon which the occupants could sit in the evenings. My mother used a large fireplace to cook on with large cranes and a tin reflector to bake bread in. Afterwards got a wood cook stove. I will here state that Father did most of the work himself in building his residence. He quarried the rock for building the basement, made a burned brick kiln to build his house. (M. Thompson, n.d., p. 1)

Theodore later described the physical location of the family home in Harrisville:

The lot contained about two acres back of the house, and across the alley we had about six acres, part in apple orchard and balance in pasture. The house fronted on Main Street, and where the roads forked was a kind of public square where the flagpole stood. On the opposite side was the main hotel. (Thompson, ca.1902, p. 5)

One room in the basement of the home was created especially for Maria; the space incorporated a cold room in which she could store perishable items (Thompson, ca.1902, p. 5). The Thompsons were prosperous enough to afford such a comfortable home with numerous luxuries for that period. Meanwhile, many families were building log cabins or crude structures as they migrated inland for superior land and a fresh start.

Almost three years after marrying, on April 18, 1841, Joshua and Maria had their first child, Theodore Wilson Thompson. They were living at their home in Harrisville when he was born (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). The Thompson home and its surrounding property provided Theodore plenty of room to play and explore. He later gave an account of his initial childhood memories:

My earliest remembrance was when Father carried me in his arms to church and then they gave me castor oil for the croup. When I was about three or four years old Father took me on a visit to Grandfather Milner's and I got lost in my grandmother's botanical garden containing shrubs, flowers, etc. The distance was about 40 or 50 miles. We got home late in the evening, and I remember seeing my mother's candle light in the house when we arrived. It was a long and tiresome buggy ride. (Thompson, ca.1902, p.1)

This passage from Theodore's short autobiography offered a glimpse into his childhood and demonstrated how caring his father was in looking after him when he was ill. It also laid bare the hardships of time-consuming overland travel, in distances that would be easily covered with a car, as Theodore did not take the journey to his grandfather's house until he was three or four.

Young Theodore gained a brother when his mother gave birth to Albert S. Thompson on May 1, 1843, in Harrisville. Albert S. Thompson was the second of five children who would be born to Joshua and Maria while they lived in Ohio (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). Their sixth and last child was born after the family moved to Illinois. Like many children, Theodore and Albert had a pet. Their parents provided them with a large Maltese cat, which supplied Albert and Theodore with ample hours of boyhood entertainment (Thompson, ca.1902, p. 5). Theodore recollected the family cat's interaction with his baby brother Albert:

Mother would give Brother Albert milk in a tin cup when he was about 18 months old, and while eating, the cat would want to eat too. Brother would give the cat a spoonful and then take a spoonful himself. The cat would want to eat out of the cup. Brother would hit the cat on the head with the spoon to make it stand back and wait. It was great fun for me to watch them eat together. (Thompson, ca.1902, p. 5)

The boys were tended to by their mother, Maria, who besides taking care of the children, ". . . was a great hand to raise garden and grow fruit" (M. Thompson, n.d., p. 1). Theodore's father, Joshua, was an expert stonemason and put his skills to use around Harrisville (M. Thompson, n.d., p.1). Joshua was also very industrious, and this virtue

was not lost on Theodore. Joshua's motto for life was, "'a machine should wear out, not rust out'" (as cited in Agnew, ca. 1885, p.1). Between upkeep of the family orchard, pastures and his full time occupation as a stonemason, Joshua was kept busy while providing for his family. At their young age, Theodore and Albert were not much help around the house, although they were learning the importance and rewards of hard work from witnessing their parents' daily actions. They were spectators to their father's deep convictions as Theodore later recounted that "father used to argue politics with Mat Messer and 'Old Man' Wade" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.1). They also observed their father's generosity during the frequent stays at the Thompson home of his sisters in law Bell, 'Liza, and his brother in law John M. Milner (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.1).

In January of 1845, while the family was living in Harrisville, 4-year-old Theodore gained another brother, George. However, George Thompson's life was short lived. In May of 1845, a little less than four months from the day he was born, he passed away from whooping cough. Theodore also contracted the whooping cough. However, his did not result in a grave illness (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 5).

Almost two years after George's death, the Thompson family celebrated the birth of their fourth child, Morton Milner Thompson, on February 14, 1847 (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). The family was growing and in the latter half of 1848, Joshua decided it was time to move the family to the county seat of St. Clairsville, Belmont County, Ohio. The move was expedited by Joshua being contracted to erect a number of buildings in St. Clairsville. The shift also allowed Maria to live closer to many members of her extended family. Joshua began his own business in St. Clairsville with Robert Evans as his collaborator (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 5). Theodore

afterward reminisced about his father's work in St. Clairsville stating, "They carried on a tombstone and monument establishment. He worked in marble almost exclusively, and Father was a contractor and builder of brick houses and at times would help set monuments" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.1). Joshua's trade was in high demand and his new business allowed him to continue providing a very comfortable life for his family.

After the move in 1848, Theodore was seven years old. It was at this time that Joshua began having difficulties with his lungs. The hardest period was the time span from 1848 to 1849 in which his cough increased significantly. During that period, his ailment was known as consumption. Joshua's condition stemmed from his profession as a stonemason and his continued inhalation of fine powers from the stone with which he worked (Agnew, ca. 1885, p.1; M. Thompson, n.d., p.1; Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 5).

In the early spring of 1849 Joshua joined a company that included 49 other individuals that would travel west by wagon train to California. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 created a fever among many to head west to try their hand at gaining riches. This trip was to be undertaken to cure Joshua of consumption and to gain prosperity in the form of gold. However, Joshua's expedition almost ended before it began when everyone backed out (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 5). The deserters did so on the account they ". . . were afraid of catching the cholera on the river or of being killed by the Indians or frozen in the mountains, and preferred to die at home" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 5).

Joshua did not change his plans after this major setback, as he was always strong in his convictions. Instead, he called upon his young brother in law, John M. Milner, to take up the journey with him. He obliged, and the two men outfitted themselves with

enough supplies and a wagon that was suitable for all types of terrain and water. They set off at the end of April 1849, from Wheeling, Ohio (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 6; M. Thompson, n.d., p.1). Theodore, along with his brothers Albert and Morton and their mother, Maria, remained behind. Maria was pregnant with their fifth child when Joshua departed for California. Of the house in which they lived in St. Clairsville, while Joshua was away, Theodore stated:

We were located on West Main Street some three blocks from the Court House. I was eight years old and had the stove wood to saw and the cow to feed and to take to pasture in the summer. Uncle Isaac Neiswanger [Maria Thompson's brother] furnished the pasture. He lived at the west end of Main Street, known as Locust Villa. I had to pass uncles Abraham and Jacob Neiswanger [Maria Thompson's brothers], also Ex-Gov. Shannon's residence. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 6)

The close proximity of Maria's relatives provided her some comfort while her husband was away. Theodore, being the eldest child, was responsible for his fair share of household chores as his mother was expecting in early fall. Although Theodore was kept busy around the house his mother made time for the children to do things in town while their father was away. On one occasion in 1850, Theodore went with his family to see Charles Sherwood Stratton, who was a rising star among P.T. Barnum's circus acts, and was widely known by his stage name of General Tom Thumb (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7).

Meanwhile, Joshua and John made their way to California first by boat and stopped in the towns of St. Louis and St. Joseph, Missouri. On the way, Joshua contracted cholera but was cured when John supplied him a strong potion. Theodore later retold the story stating, "Father took the cholera above St. Louis. Uncle said he put Father in his

berth, covered him up with the clothes of both berths and went to the boat bar and got a glass full of fourth proof brandy. He made it thick with cian [sic] pepper. It was a dose to cure or to kill” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 6). After Joshua was feeling better, they embarked on the overland portion of their journey by hiring a driver, named Bob, for the wagon and selected horses for themselves. They met up with several other travelers and formed a larger group of approximately 60 wagons. It was at this time that Joshua would gain his nickname, Colonel, for the reason that he was elected by the others to take charge of the group and their movements. This nickname stayed with him until his death (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 6).

The group journeyed across the plains by way of the popular Platt and Green River routes for three months before finally reaching California. Upon their arrival, John and Joshua began settling in at their mining operation near a place called Hangtown, which was originally named Dry Diggins, and is now Placerville, California. They built a cabin for themselves out of slabs they had split of red oak (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 6; M. Thompson, n.d., p. 2).

Their new home was a blessing and a curse. As the name implies, Hangtown was not a tranquil location. According to local history:

The miners quickly became short-tempered with the rising crime rate and the lack of readily-available law enforcement, so they took the law into their own hands. Criminals were punished in short order, whether it be flogging or hanging, based on snap decisions made by impromptu courts with hastily-formed juries. If you voiced your reasonable objections in favor of a more lengthy but fair trial for the

accused, you'd risk swinging along side of him, or them. (ComSpark, 2003, "Gold Rush Chronicles: Old Hangtown," para. 3)

The blessing of this location existed in that gold could literally be found everywhere.

The first year [1848], \$1 million worth of gold came out of Cedar Ravine, running south from Main Street on Cedar Ravine Road, and another million from Log Cabin Ravine, running north from Main Street and now called Bedford Avenue. One panful [*sic*] of white clay taken from Hangtown Creek contained 75 ounces of gold dust. (ComSpark, 2003, "Gold Rush Chronicles: Old Hangtown," para. 9)

Joshua confirmed the ease with which one could locate gold when he wrote home to Maria and stated, "If Theodore was here he could pick up from ten to twenty dollars a day along the creeks and branches" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). In Hangtown, between 12 and 35 dollars would be paid to a miner for an ounce of gold (ComSpark, 2003, "Gold Rush Chronicles: Fast Facts," para. 2).

On August 30, just as Joshua had entered California, Mary Alvira Thompson was born into the Thompson family in St. Clairsville, Ohio (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). Theodore now had a baby sister to help tend to while his father was trying to achieve wealth for the family. Meanwhile, Maria made sure her children had an education by homeschooling them and having them attend the district schools (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). They also attended church while their father was away. Theodore later recounted, "Mother often took me to Quaker church, but I attended the Methodist Sunday School north of the Court House" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7).

Nineteen months after leaving in search of gold, Joshua decided to take John and return home to his family. They had spent sufficient time in California to make a modest

sum, and the time spent away from his stonemason work had cured Joshua of consumption. Upon their departure, they purchased space on a sailing ship and then moved to overland travel through Mexico, and eventually made their way up the Mississippi and then took the Ohio River. They made their way to back to Wheeling, Ohio, where they departed for the last leg of their journey to St. Clairsville by stagecoach. Joshua and John arrived home at the end of November 1850, whereupon Joshua was introduced to his one-year-old daughter Mary. By this time, Theodore was nine years old (Agnew, ca. 1885, p.1; Thompson, ca. 1902, p.7).

On the long trek back from California, Joshua met a man from Peoria, Illinois, Daniel McConnell and the two became fast friends. In the summer of 1851, after taking time off upon his return, Joshua started back to his stonemason business. Daniel, by this time, had moved from Peoria, Illinois to a place called Water Valley in Union County, Illinois. Daniel wrote Joshua about his new residency in southern Illinois, and Joshua became very interested in seeing the place that his friend spoke of with such high regard. Theodore reminisced that, “Father came down to see him [Daniel McConnell] and the country early in the winter of 1851. Being well pleased, he returned and made arrangements to move to Southern Illinois” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.7). Joshua was also enticed to move by the expansion plans set in place by the Illinois Central Railroad, which was looking to complete its line through southern Illinois (Agnew, ca. 1885, p. 1; Thompson, ca. 1902, p.7; M. Thompson, n.d., p. 2).

In the years leading up to the Thompson’s move to Illinois, the family had relocated several times within the town of St. Clairsville. Theodore afterward recalled:

We occupied part of a house with Evans. Then we moved to a house on South Market Street near the Masonic Hall. Then we went to a house on East Main Street, south side, where we remained till we went to Illinois. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7)

By the spring of 1852, the Thompson family was preparing to depart from their St. Clairsville residence on East Main Street. Theodore was almost 11 years old and having moved several times in his young life, provided his mother some much needed assistance in packing. Maria was again with child and would give birth soon to the family's sixth and last child.

Travel to Illinois commenced in February of 1852 from St. Clairsville to Wheeling, Ohio, following the route Joshua had taken west, and concluded at Willard's Landing in southern Illinois (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). The journey was stalled in Wheeling however, while the family was left ". . . waiting for the new steamboat, called the Golden Era, built for the upper Mississippi or Galena trade on the Mississippi River" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). A few days passed before the steamer arrived and the Thompson family could embark on their voyage.

On March 3, 1852, after weeks of water travel on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the steamer arrived at Willard's Landing (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). Willard's Landing was situated on the banks of the Illinois side of the Mississippi river just west of the town of Jonesboro, Illinois. Moccasin Springs, Missouri was directly opposite Willard's Landing on the Missouri side of the river (see Figure 2.2). Over the years, Willard's Landing was also known as Greens Ferry or Big Barn (Midwest Gazetteer, 2004, para. 33).

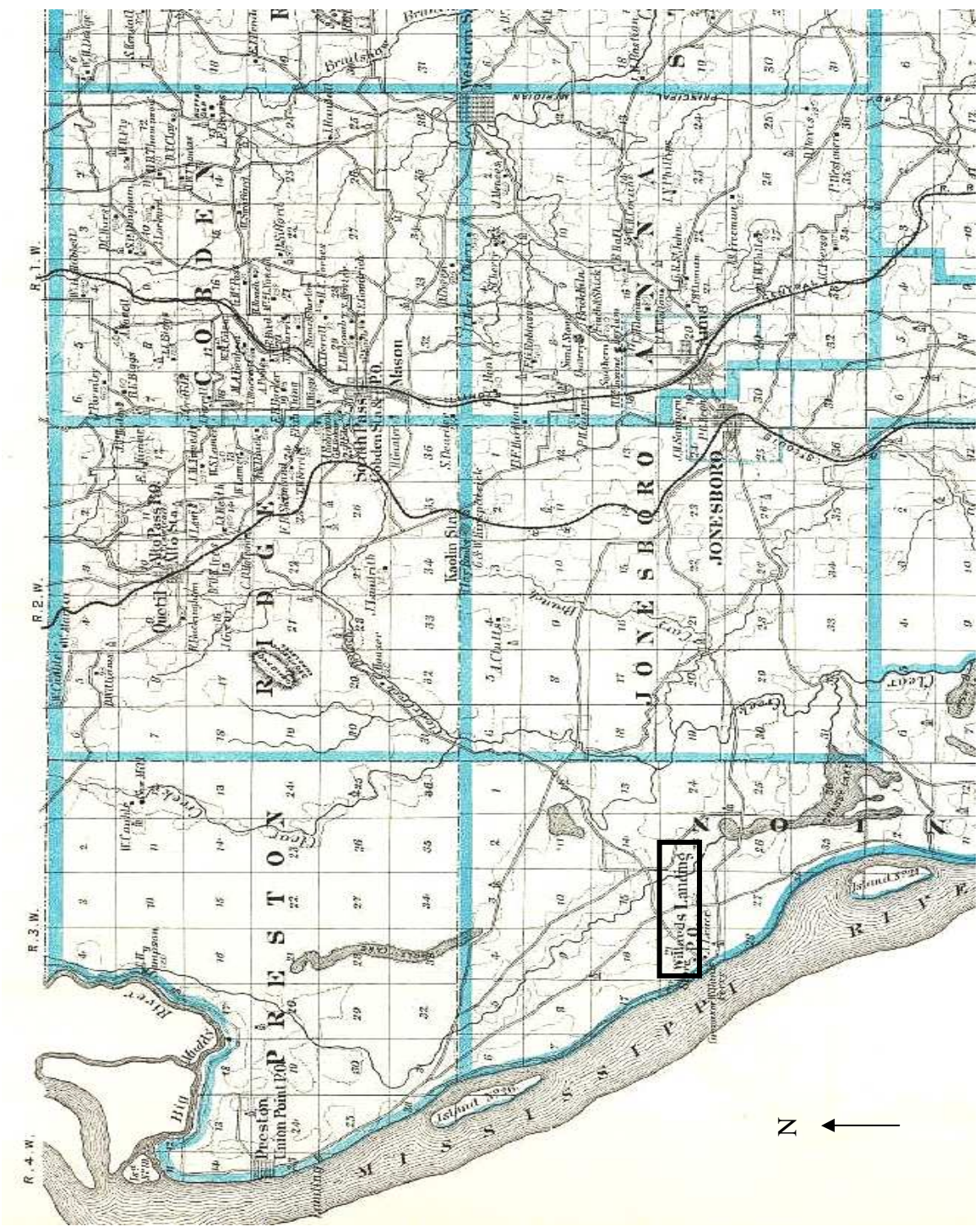


Figure 2.2. Union County, Illinois with Willard’s Landing at the bottom right of the image along the Mississippi River (Willard’s Landing is highlighted with a black box). Adapted from “Map of Union County,” by Union Atlas Company, 1876, *Atlas of the State of Illinois to which are added various general maps, history, statistics and illustrations*, p. 143. Chicago, Illinois: Warner & Beers. Copyright 2005 by David Rumsey Collection. Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix B)

Roads were few in southern Illinois in 1852 as the state was only beginning to be opened up for farming by settlements of early pioneers (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). One account of the area stated:

Directly west of Ware was the road that took early travelers to Willard's Landing, where there was a storehouse and some homes to greet the boats bringing merchandise from Pennsylvania for Davie and Willard's Jonesboro stores. (The eastern boats came down the Ohio River to Cairo and then up the Mississippi.) (Glasco, 2009, para. 14)

This was the route that the Thompsons took from Willard's Landing to Ware and then on to Jonesboro. Although the road was well established, it was still very rough going.

As an adult, Theodore was reminiscent of the family's movements after disembarking with their belongings from the steamer. He recalled:

We arrived at Willard's Landing, Union County, March 3d [*sic*], 1852, and took dinner on the bank of the river in an old steamboat cabin used for a house. After dinner a man by the name of Lewis moved us up to Jonesboro. The little old hotel had a fireplace that burned wood. This looked very odd and dreary, we having been accustomed to a bright grate fire of coal. A little brick court house then occupied the center of the square. Willard, Dishon and Nail were the principal merchants at that date. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7)

On his travel inland, Theodore experienced the heavily wooded tablelands that would become his new home. The landscape of southern Illinois was foreign to him, as he had become accustomed to an easier life in town and well-groomed farmland. The family traveled from Jonesboro to Water Valley in Section 23 of Union County. This was the

location of Daniel McConnell's home and the residence in which they would be staying until they could build their own.

While Maria stayed with the children at the McConnell home, Joshua secured land for the family to settle on in Jackson County, Illinois (see Figure 2.3). Theodore later recalled the land his father obtained stating, "The tract of land we first lived upon was the SW SW 34 10 1W, known as the Stark tract Father purchased the E ½ SE 33 10 1 W adjoining" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). Joshua had selected the site for the family home based on plans by the Illinois Central Railroad. Theodore reminisced about the move to his new home site:

In a few days we moved out to McConnell's [in Water Valley] and stayed there a week or so till Father could get a cabin or double log house fixed up to move into.

I think it was the 27th day of March [1852] when we got to housekeeping.

(Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7)

Two months after the Thompsons settled in to their rural lifestyle, Maria gave birth to her last child, Rolla Bank Thompson, on May 22, 1852 (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.). By this time the rest of the children were growing up: Theodore was 11, Albert 9, Morton 5, and Mary just shy of 3.

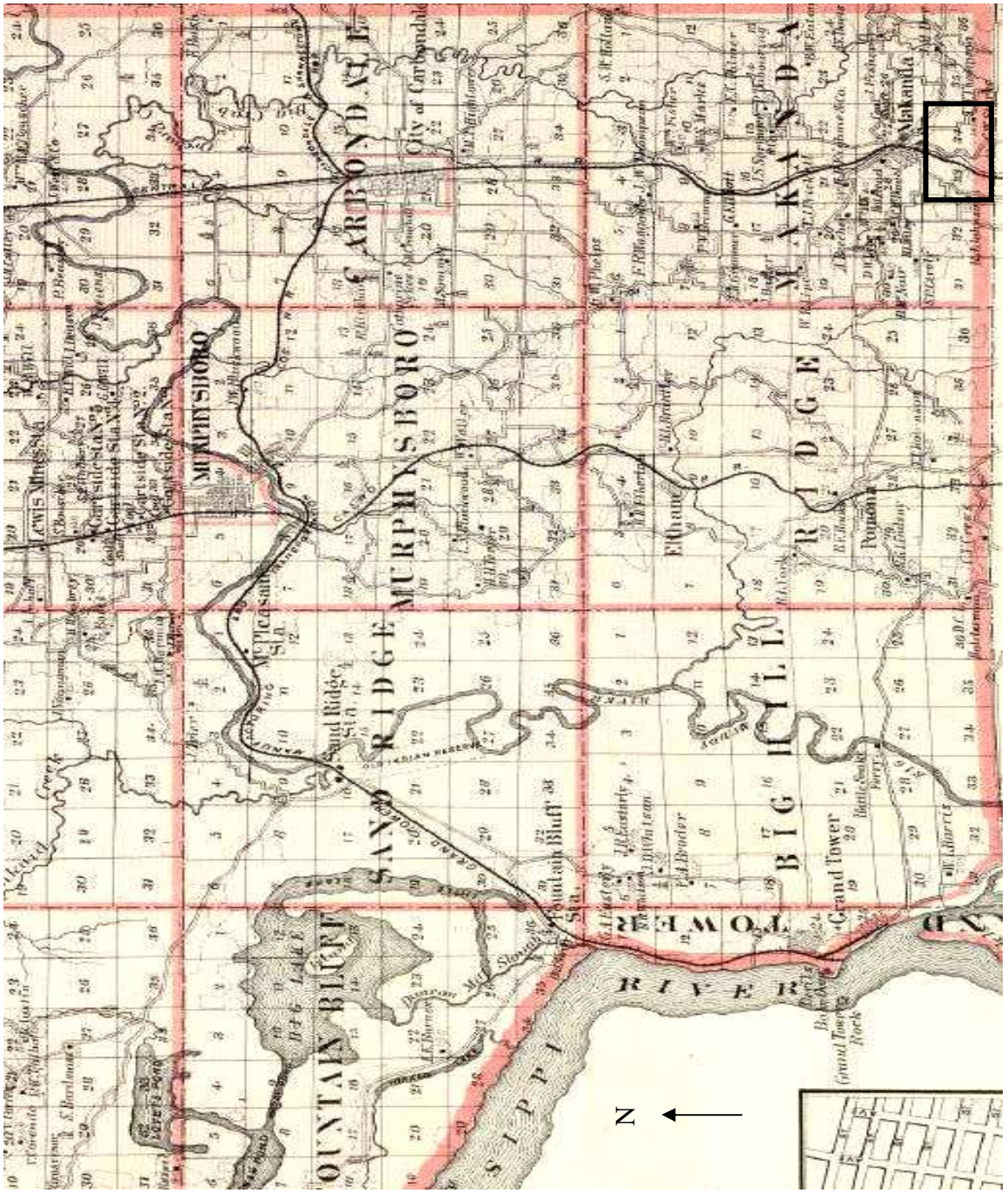


Figure 2.3. Location of Thompson family’s land purchase in Sections 33 and 34 in Makanda Township, Jackson County, Illinois (Sections 33 and 34 highlighted at the top right of the image, in Makanda Township, with a black box). Adapted from “Map of Jackson County, Grand Tower, Anna and Carbondale,” by Union Atlas Company, 1876, *Atlas of the State of Illinois to which are added various general maps, history, statistics and illustrations*, p. 142. Chicago, Illinois: Warner & Beers. Copyright 2005 by David Rumsey Collection. Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix B)

The family experienced a major change living in a log house when they had become accustomed to living in a comfortable brick home in town. Their home was simple and they, like most in the area, had few creature comforts. Theodore later took time to recall the area in which he lived soon after the family moved to southern Illinois:

The country was very new and primitive. The land was heavily timbered with a few acres or fields cleared in the most favorable spots and especially where a live spring of water was found. The people had very little in their houses. The houses were built of hewed logs. The floors were of slabs or puncheons, and the furniture consisted of a board table, a few split-bottom chairs and three-legged stools. A Dutch oven, skillet, frying pan, coffee pot, kettle and stew pot were the cooking utensils. Coffee, hog meat and corn bread were the principal articles of diet. Many houses had no windows, so the door had to be left open to give light. It was along in the later part of the sixties that the first frame houses were built outside of the towns. School houses and churches were all constructed of logs. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8)

The Thompsons were not entirely secluded as a more heavily populated area, known as North Pass, was located a short distance north of their home. North Pass, which later became town of Makanda, began to grow in the mid 1850s when the Illinois Central Railroad built its rail line through the village on its way to Cairo. The line was completed in 1855. With the coming of the railroad, North Pass gained a railroad “. . . station, two water tanks and a boarding house along Drury Creek, which still runs through the community” (Makanda Trading Company, n.d., para. 1). Theodore was 14 years old in 1855.

Additional stress was placed on the family when the railroad diverted their plans away from Joshua's property. Theodore later recalled this instance and stated, "Father had intended to build a sawmill to run by water power on Drury Creek, but the I.C.R.R. [Illinois Central Railroad] changed their survey in passing the mill site, so the mill was abandoned" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). To make matters worse, the land along Drury Creek was not suitable for making a living after plans for the mill had to be discarded. Drury Creek was also famous for over-running its banks and causing severe floods. This was by no means a suitable location to create a permanent home for the Thompson family. After the mill plans fell through, Joshua paid 200 dollars for a total of 80 acres of land in Union County, Illinois, roughly three miles southeast of where the family had been living in Jackson County (see Figure 2.4). One plot was located in the southwest southeast portion of Section 11, Township 11 south, Range 1 west, equaling 40 acres, and the remaining 40 acres were in the southwest northeast portion of Section 11, Township 11 south, Range 1 west. Joshua paid two dollars and fifty cents per acre (Bureau of Land Management, n.d.; Illinois State Archives, n.d.). The tracts of land Joshua purchased are situated south of Giant City State Park off Giant City Park Road.

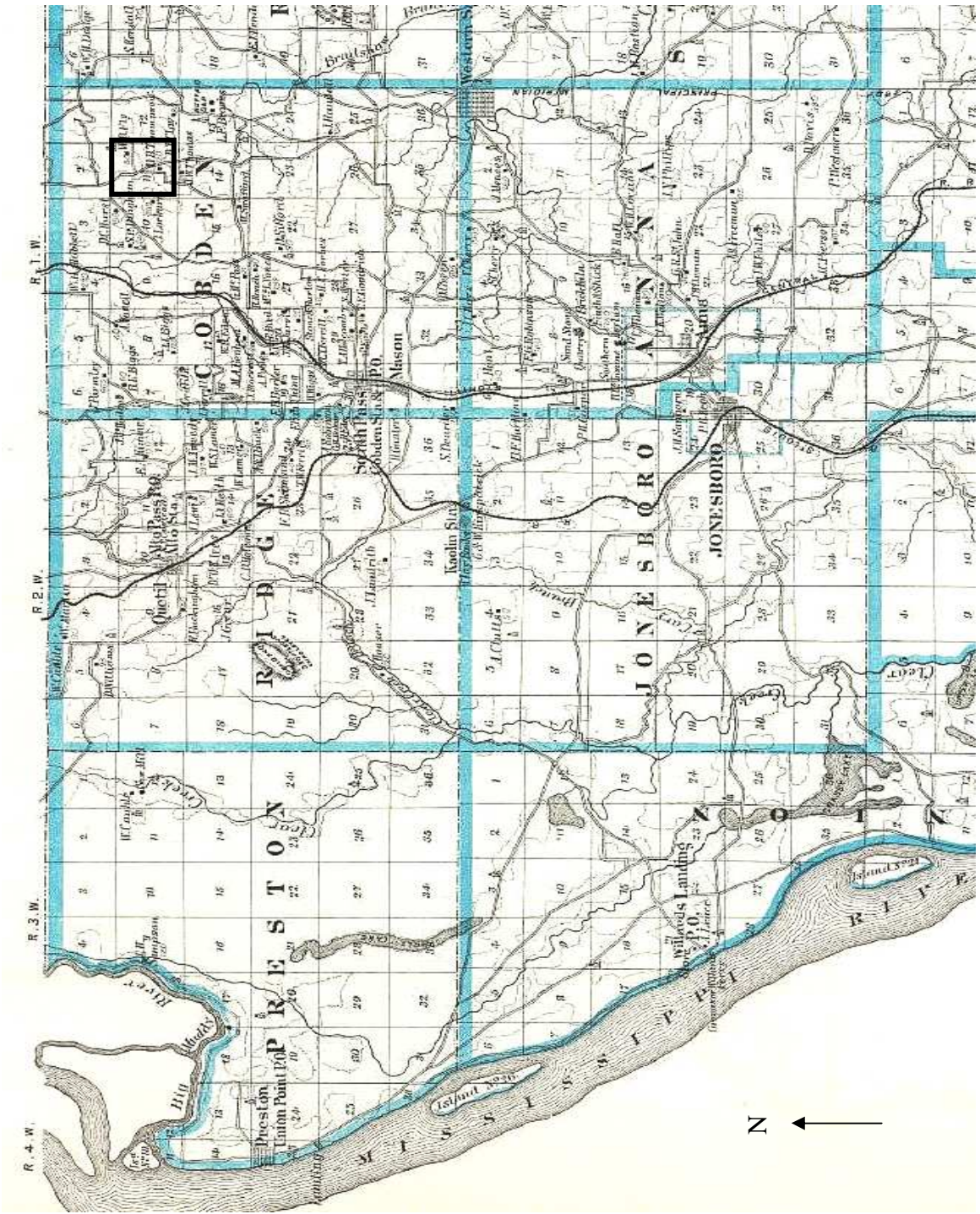


Figure 2.3. Location of the Thompson family farm in Union County, Illinois, in the center of Section 11 of Cobden Township (Section 11 is highlighted with a black box in the upper right of the image). Adapted from “Map of Union County,” by Union Atlas Company, 1876, *Atlas of the State of Illinois to which are added various general maps, history, statistics and illustrations*, p. 143. Chicago, Illinois: Warner & Beers. Copyright 2005 by David Rumsey Collection. Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix B)

One description of the train ride through the area during this time gave an accurate account of the topography as well as the livelihood of those living along the Union/Jackson County line:

The railway, for a considerable distance here, lies in a deep gorge, occupied by the Drewery-creek [*sic*], the course of which it follows; indeed, it occupies its channel for miles, a new one having been cut for the stream alongside. It is a very picturesque gorge, bluffs on both sides, 200 feet high, with water-worn surfaces. It is crossed by ravines leading into the country. All is finely wooded. On the table-lands above, and back into the country, are good farms. The district is pretty well settled. As a proof of the fineness of climate and fertility, we were told that one farmer, whose place is on the rocks above the station at Makanda [North Pass], makes from his own orchard annually forty hogsheads of peach brandy. (Ferguson, 1856, p. 382)

Peach orchards prospered on the rolling hilltops and the tablelands of southern Illinois as the climate and soils were exceptional for growing fruit. The farmers were making a considerable profit for themselves off their homemade beverages, considering one hogshead is “. . . equal to 63 gallons (238 liters)” (Hogshead, 2009).

The Thompsons ultimately became well-known farmers in their own right. However, it was strenuous and taxing labor to get their farm in working order. Theodore and his brothers were kept busy around the farm by their father and mother. There was always something to be done with the fields or the house, and when those responsibilities were completed, school lessons were provided by their parents (“Theodore W. Thompson,” 1903, para. 3). Theodore said of the labor he and his brothers partook:

Our principal work was grubbing, chopping, rolling logs, clearing the land to cultivate, or opening up farms to raise corn and wheat. The great desire was to get land cleared up to put in cultivation, and it took much time and the very hardest work to prepare these timbered lands for cultivation. When once cleared they produced immense crops for the amount of labor. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8)

Theodore mentioned how the overabundance of reptiles, while clearing the fields for planting, could interrupt their concentration:

I must here mention the first work Brother Albert and I did in the field. It was to cut cornstalks in the field in a little bottom field on Beaver Dam Branch where we first lived. It was getting late in the spring and the ground was covered with weeds. We were in our bare feet, and often we would see and step on black snakes. We were ready to jump and hop around at everything that would move or rattle. We even dreamed of snakes. They were so plentiful we killed thirteen large rattlesnakes the first year. Blacksnakes, blue racers and lizards we let go, as there were too many to try to exterminate them. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8)

Theodore also remembered how difficult it was to remain in good health:

Here on this farm was where we town boys had to learn to do solid hard work and shake and chill with the ague to perfection year in and year out. The ague would come and go until we got acclimated, and then it left us. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8)

Theodore was experiencing life as a true pioneer and his father's virtues of hard work and an honest living were being transferred to him at an expedited pace. Life on the Thompson farm was difficult, especially with the bouts of ague, or fever that they

continually experienced. Unlike the easy town life in Ohio, the Thompson family's life in Illinois depended on their ability to sustain themselves.

Even though this area of southern Illinois was inhabited, many farmers were scattered throughout the countryside. Nonetheless, some farms were grouped together, with neighbor helping neighbor. Pertaining to the appearance of friends and neighbors that inhabited this area of southern Illinois, Theodore later stated, "The people were all clad in their homespun jeans, colored red, brown or dark blue. Cotton was raised for clothing" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8). In speaking of his neighbors at the time, Theodore reported that "among the well-known families of early days . . . were the Vancils, Penrods, Davises, Grammers, Haglers, Rowans, Millers, Spences, McGuires, Flys, Demings, Whitacres, Treeces, Brooks'[sic], Stouts, Roberts'[sic], Rendleman brothers, and a few others . . ." (Thompson, n.d., para. 6).

Many families were spread out across the land in southern Illinois and so were the towns in which the early settlers purchased merchandise. Securing supplies for the farm was quite an undertaking, as they would have to travel quite a distance to do so. The Thompsons could not go to a nearby store, as they had done in Ohio. The village of North Pass was still too small at the time in order to provide the area farmers with the commodities they needed. Theodore remembered the trips he would take for supplies and later stated, "We would go to Jonesboro twice a year, spring and fall, to do our general trading and lay in our supplies" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8). This was also the location for the only post office in the area.

When not preparing the land for planting or harvesting, there were social events that brought everyone together. Theodore stated that, "log rollings and house raisings and

shooting matches for beef in the fall were about all the gatherings the people had in those days” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 8). Theodore further described this event:

Shooting matches for beef, held on Saturdays, were one of the chief sports; forty yards off-hand or sixty yards lay-down rest, was the distance. A famous old flintlock rifle, called Malden, very heavy and large in the bore, generally carried off the prizes. (Thompson, n.d., para. 12)

In addition to shooting matches, several noteworthy events happened over the next few years. In 1856, Theodore was surprised one evening by a stampede of squirrels. He later recalled that night:

I remember the great squirrel exodus from Missouri, in the fall of 1856. The failure of most of nut crop in Missouri caused the squirrels to emigrate in a body to the Illinois side of the river. They swam the Mississippi at or near Willard’s Landing early in October. I remember that in the latter part of October, one night about 10 o’clock, I was returning from Makanda to my old home, known as Banner Hill, the woods from Charley Roberts’ place through Dr. Agnew’s, Willis Rendleman’s Montecelo [*sic*] to near my house appeared to be alive with squirrels traveling eastward. (Thompson, n.d., para. 6)

Even though they had carved out a nice farm, Theodore’s father was holding onto the idea of constructing a sawmill. His second attempted at building a mill took him to nearby Williamson County, Illinois. He had started to build, but due to the onset of the Civil War, this attempt had to be abandoned as well. In 1857, around the same time Joshua was erecting his second mill, the town of Makanda gained a post office. It was opened for business by the Thompson’s family friend, Daniel McConnell, who served as

the first Postmaster. Theodore went to Jonesboro in 1858 with a friend to hear Lincoln debate Douglas (Thompson, n.d.). The Thompsons did not cultivate the land on their own, as they had two nephews, Harrison Thompson and Henry Thompson, living with them (“Illinois Census Records 1860,” n.d.).

Life was going well for Theodore and the rest of the Thompsons. He was a young man of 19 in 1860. Their farm was flourishing. The local economy had picked up significantly and with the railroad making several daily stops in Makanda, businesses were cropping up. Subsequently, an influx of people moved to the area. However, it did not take long for things to change. The inauguration of President Lincoln and the onset of the Civil War would bring trouble to Theodore’s doorstep.

Theodore had learned many things from his father over the years, and he had become especially good at speaking his mind on issues that were central to his beliefs. Like the rest of his family, Theodore believed in the Union’s stance on abolishing slavery. Theodore showed his support for the Union cause by placing an American flag at the top of a tree on the family farm in Section 11 of Union County. He later retold the story:

After the inauguration of Lincoln [March 4, 1861] brother Albert and I concluded to raise a large flag on what was known and called the lone tree, which stood on top of a very high hill on the great dividing range, between the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, being the highest point of land in Southern Illinois, Bald Knob not excepted. Said tree was a tall tulip poplar between three and four feet in diameter at the trunk and some sixty feet to the first limbs. This noted tree could be seen in some directions fifteen or twenty miles away. It was quite an

undertaking to climb to the top, and only five persons ever ascended to the top, viz; Charles and George Pelton, Lieut. William Sanders of Cottage Home, and brother Al. and I. We first split from white oak timber four foot slats for rounds. After placing two spike nails in each round, we began to climb the tree by sitting on the first round and holding to the body of the tree with our feet, and with a hatchet to cut away the thick bark and a rope to draw up the next round, until we reached the first limbs, and so proceeded to the top. We sawed off a small portion of the top and added a flag staff some thirty-five feet in length, chained and secured the bottom of the staff to the top of the tree, and with a rope and pulley we raised the stars and stripes, that could be seen all over that section of country, and at that time known as the flag tree on the hill top. (Thompson, n.d., para.16)

The Thompson family farm was from then on known as Banner Hill Farm due to its notoriety after the establishment of the flag tree. “Initially raised as a sign of support for the Northern Cause, the flag was hoisted after Union victories on the battlefield, and it also stood as a reproach to a group of Southern supporters . . .” (Earle, 1989, p. ix-x) Several fictional accounts of the flag raising episode were written about in books. One book, by Mary Tracy Earle, was entitled *The Flag on the Hilltop* and the other by Theodore’s daughter, Mable Thompson-Rauch, was entitled *Vinnie and the Flag-Tree*.

Theodore did not join in the fighting during the Civil War, although he did support the Union cause; like his father, he held strong convictions in an individual’s right to freedom, especially in a country to which his ancestors immigrated for the same rights. Theodore’s reason for not joining his brother Albert in the war was due to his own battles with ague and rheumatism, which hindered his ability to participate on the front

lines (Earle, 1989, p. xix). Theodore, however, assumed duties closer to home and later recalled his wartime conquests around Makanda:

The country seemed full of deserters. The government offered a reward of \$30 each for their delivery to Cairo On account of rheumatism I could not enlist so I. N. Phillips of Cairo appointed me deputy Provost Marshal to assist him in bringing in deserters and to act as a detective. One of the worst characters that I ever arrested was Bob Woods He had been arrested twice before I arrested him but had escaped both times from the guard house at Cairo I marched him down to Makanda and took him in a caboose to Cairo When we got there I put him in the guard house, got my voucher for \$30.00, and returned home. (as cited in Earl, 1989, p. xxix-xx)

There were numerous Confederate sympathizers in southern Illinois during the Civil War and they were known around the area as copperheads, or more commonly referred to as the Knights of the Golden Circle. One account stated, “The Golden Circle was a secessionist civilian group that was well organized throughout the Midwest, especially in Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois” (Earle, 1989, p. x). Theodore continued to speak out concerning his conviction for equality. However, the sympathizers tried to persuade him and his family to stop. “Membership in the Circle was high in the Makanda area (it was headquartered in bad weather in the Rendleman’s Makanda hotel), with numerous meeting points in the hills and caves of what are now Giant City State Park . . .” (Earle, 1989, p. xi). Theodore discussed one run in his family had with the Confederate sympathizers during their failed attempt to remove the flag from the flag tree at the family farm:

It was in the dark days of the civil war that the Knights of the Golden Circle surrounded this tree to haul down the old flag, but from some cause their courage failed them. It was in the shadow of the old flag tree that the first meeting of the Union League was held. (Thompson, n.d., para. 17)

The Union League was “a pro-Northern group that was the political opposite of the Knights of the Golden Circle” (Earle, 1989, p. xxviii). Theodore later recalled the inception of the Union League:

The Government made a few arrests of the leading copperheads which greatly discouraged the Knights of the Golden Circle. The first Union League in Jackson and Union counties was organized at Col. J. Thompson’s, my father’s house. The charter was issued by Geo. H. Harlow Sec. of State. Alvan Robinson was President of the Union League and myself secretary. In holding our meetings we had guards stationed out in military style. Many Union and Southern sympathizers on each side were waylaid and killed. In less than 2 years there were 19 killed in the vicinity of Makanda and Cobden. (as cited in Earle, 1989, p. xix)

Meanwhile, Theodore’s brother Albert was fighting in the Civil War as an elite member of General Fremont’s Bodyguard in 1861(National Park Service, n.d.). It was also during this time that Joshua’s life was threatened due to his pro Union stance and his membership in the Union League. A local Makanda woman, Elizabeth Rendleman, was the individual who would discover this plot against Joshua by secretly listening in on a meeting of the Knights of the Golden Circle at the Rendleman’s Hotel in Makanda (Kennedy, n.d., p. 73). She later recounted:

They made resolutions to kill every Republican President, until the Southern Confederacy could rule or ruin. O, how awful that shocked my poor heart as I sat there. I counted not my life dear. They plotted against my father's life, Mr. Freeman's at Alto Pass, Judge Whitacre, Thompson, Col. [Joshua Thompson], and many others in all the counties around. (Kennedy, n.d., p. 73)

The plot never came to fruition as Joshua, nor anyone else in his family, was ever injured.

In November of 1861, General Fremont's Bodyguard was mustered out, so Albert went back to Makanda to stay at the family's Banner Hill Farm. On February 22, 1862, as they had done many times before, Theodore went with Albert to the sandstone rocks that towered above the landscape just north of the family farm. This time Theodore and Albert were not going there for the sake of a leisurely afternoon, they had something they wanted to accomplish. They entered the colossal sandstone rock maze, in what is now called the Giant City Streets portion of the Giant City Nature Trail at Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois. As a boy, Theodore had observed the inscriptions left by others on the rock surfaces in the area and now it was his turn to leave his mark. He and Albert lowered a board tethered to some rope, forming a platform, over the top of the sandstone rock and using the rope, secured it to some nearby trees. They lowered themselves down, and stood on the platform to carve their inscriptions. Albert etched: (OF. ILL.) ALBERT S. THOMPSON FREEMONT BODYGUARD FEB. 22 1862 AD. Theodore left his mark on the sandstone, below and to the right of his brother's, by etching T. W. THOMPSON FEB 22 1862 (see Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6 and Figure 2.7)

(Thompson-Rauch, 1960, p. ix). Although slightly covered with moss, their inscriptions have not yet been destroyed by weathering or vandalism.

Throughout his early life, Theodore learned much from his family. He gained a solid understanding of his freedoms as an American. He watched as his parents started over, much like his ancestors, when they came to southern Illinois with little more than a dream of a better life and better land. Until he was 11 years old, he went through life as more or less a city living middle class citizen. However, this soon changed with the family's move to Illinois. He realized the importance of hard work on the family farm in Water Valley. He also became aware of how his father gave up his livelihood as a stonemason in order to start fresh as a farmer. Theodore would later realize that being able to adapt to changes and being an enterprising individual would make him very wealthy.



Figure 2.5. Photograph of Theodore Thompson's inscription at Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois. Image taken in August 2009.



Figure 2.6. Photograph of Theodore Thompson's inscription at Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois, with text placed over the image. Image taken in August 2009.

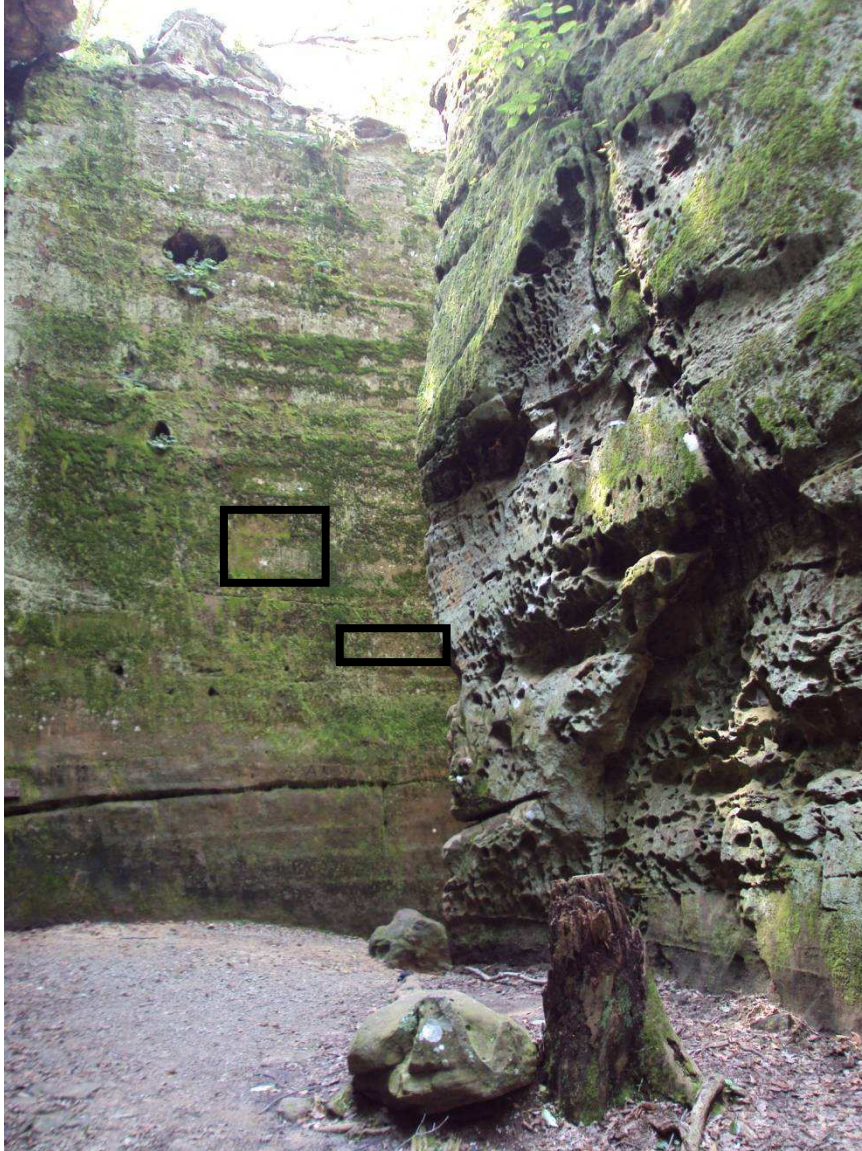


Figure 2.7. Photograph of Giant City Streets portion of the Giant City Nature Trail at Giant City State Park. Black box on top left encases Albert's Inscription. Black box at bottom right encases Theodore's inscription. Image taken in August 2009.

CHAPTER 3

LIFE IN MAKANDA AND CARBONDALE

This chapter contains information concerning the later portion of Theodore Thompson's life until the time of his death. It was during this period that Theodore settled down, married and started a family. This chapter establishes Theodore's contributions and accomplishments within Makanda and Carbondale, Illinois.

In 1863, at the age of 22, Theodore was living in his parent's home at Banner Hill Farm in Section 11 of Union County, which was approximately 3 miles south of Makanda. It was also during this year that the area north of the family farm was gaining in prosperity. The growth was partially due to the increase in fruit growing, but was also the result of the platting out of the town of Makanda by Mrs. Minerva Zimmerman. The expansion of the town brought more settlers and new merchants to the area (Newsome, 1997, p. 116; "The Town of Makanda," 1878). One local account documented Makanda's growth:

This town is in the midst of the fruit region, and is an important place in the fruit season. It would soon become a large town if there was room enough to build one; but, cramped up as it is in such a narrow valley there does not seem to be much chance for it [to] grow. Yet the people have made some improvement since the town was organized, by spreading up and down the valley, or perching houses in almost inaccessible places up the sides of the hills. Near the bridge, the buildings almost encroach upon the creek, but Drury [Creek] asserts its rights occasionally. (Newsome, 1997, p. 117)

It was also in 1863 that Theodore's father permitted him to take on a small section of the family's Banner Hill Farm with the hope that Theodore would make a living on his own. Theodore later recalled that period:

In the spring of 1863, when I was 22 years old Father gave me the use of 8 acres on the hill above the house to raise such things as I wished. I traded for some hotbed sash from Jones who resided on the Hopkins farm adjoining Boskydell on the east and hauled them home on an ox cart. I used the sash on a coldbed to raise tomato plants. I put out three acres sweet potatoes, two acres tomatoes, and three acres cotton. I worked hard early and late, but the season was unfavorable for tomatoes and they ripened late when the prices were low. Sweet potatoes and cotton did fairly well, but instead of making 500 or 600 dollars as I expected I realized about two hundred dollars on my entire crop. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 9)

Theodore's attempt at farming did not bode well for him in either wealth or health.

Theodore later recounted his wellbeing after his unsuccessful attempt at becoming a farmer in 1863, stating, "Exposure to bad weather gave me a severe attack of rheumatism which confined me to the bed during the winter and then changed to inflammatory rheumatism" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 9). His earlier bouts with ague and then rheumatism would foreshadow his health later in life.

Theodore was the eldest son and the first-born child, and his father had been grooming him to take over the family farm. By allowing Theodore to raise his own crops, his father was testing his ability to sustain himself and the rest of the farm. However, Theodore recognized that his bouts with poor health would make it difficult for him to maintain the life of a hard working farmer. As with many families during that period, the

family farm would eventually be passed on to the younger generation. Joshua would eventually do the same, but it would be Rolla, instead of Theodore, who would take over the family's land.

Theodore was not disappointed after his brother took over the farm because he had gained his father's ingenuity and ability to reinvent himself from occupation to occupation. Therefore, it was in 1864 when Theodore traded in his overalls for a suit. He moved to St. Louis, Missouri where he had been offered a position by Mr. F. Evans at the St. Clair Hotel. Theodore was an intelligent young man and quickly adapted to his new surroundings (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.9). Theodore was later reminiscent of his time in St. Louis:

. . . Mr. F. Evans secured me a position as clerk at the St. Clair Hotel, corner Third and Market Streets, St. Louis. The city was under martial law and I had to take out papers as a nonresident to be exempted from service in the city militia. I frequently visited Benton Barracks on the Fair Grounds, as I was acquainted with many of the soldier boys of Company I, 13 Illinois Cavalry. I also visited Capt. Ed Brown when he was taken to Smallpox Island below Carondelet while he had the smallpox. Capt. Brown often said after the war that I had saved his life by visiting him and telling him he would get well. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.9)

Theodore may have gained many of his father's finer qualities, but he also gained his mother's compassion, as was illustrated by visits to his sick friend.

Although the position at the hotel may have been suitable to Theodore's physical abilities, he was not satisfied with his occupation as a clerk. Nevertheless, he was able

satiate his need for travel and exploration by traveling around the local area during his time in St. Louis. He later stated:

While at St. Louis I visited Kirkwood, a small station on the Merrimac River 40 miles west of St. Louis, also Alton. I saw several big fires occur in the city. I was over to East St. Louis hunting. The M. & O. R.R. station house was the only building across the river. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 9)

Theodore was born with his ancestor's necessity for travel and the desire for a better life. This was exemplified through his many changes of occupation as his needs, as well as the needs of the local economy, ebbed and flowed. Therefore, being unsatisfied with his position at the hotel, he left his job in St. Louis and moved back in with his parents in Section 11 of Union County.

It was not long before Theodore found another occupation. He later recalled this change stating, "Tiring of city life, I returned home and rode horseback to Makanda daily to learn telegraphy from A. C. Angel, then station agent for the I.C.R.R. [Illinois Central Railroad]" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 9). Theodore remembered his initial career with the railroad:

The first of December [1864] I was called by L. A. Louis, then Superintendent of Illinois and Mississippi telegraph lines, to take charge of the DuQuoin Telegraph office. In January 1865 I was sent to Kankakee, in February to Paxton, and in March back to DuQuoin. Night work did not agree with me, so I resigned in September and went to buying dried fruits. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.9)

Theodore enjoyed traveling, but the instability of his position with the railroad ultimately led him to quit. As he stated, he quit as telegraph agent in September of 1865 and began buying and selling dried fruits in southern Illinois.

However, soon after he started this new venture, he became ill and had to return home to Makanda. He later reminisced of his time in the fruit business:

Dried peaches were worth from \$6 to \$7 per bushel in Chicago, Cobden was paying \$5, Anna \$4.75 and Dongola \$2. I stopped at Dongola. I had about \$200, and the station agent, Ed Barnwell, loaned me \$200. I bought all the merchants had and rode out to Vienna, buying from farmers going and returning. After chasing around in the sun for about two weeks I was overcome by the heat and returned home . . . [;] the dried peach business netted me about \$500. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.9)

Theodore had made quite a profit for himself in a short period with his dried fruit endeavor. It was during this last venture that Theodore was able to realize his true talent in life and in profession. He used his communication skills and his ease with people to turn a profit for himself. He was very good with words and could be quite convincing, which is what netted him such a hefty profit for two weeks of work. He was also determined to make something of himself. Even while recovering at his parent's home, Theodore was able to secure new employment.

By October of 1865, Theodore had recuperated and was working as the railroad station and express agent in Makanda (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 9). He later stated, "After settling down to railroad work, which included station work, telegraphing, express agency, land agency, tie and cordwood agent, and changing the mail at 3 o'clock A.M., I

was kept busy” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.9). The kind of work that kept Theodore mentally occupied was exactly what he needed, especially if it entailed minimal physical labor.

Theodore was a person who was meticulous and this was a needed skill as his job was to keep careful records for the railroad. Being detail oriented allowed him to know the market values of local crops and produce, which made him and the railroad quite a profit. Theodore was ambitious because he worked on commission. He also utilized his communication skills and his knowledge of the local area and its people to help him succeed. He had finally found his niche and was settling in.

In 1866, Theodore had saved enough of his earnings to purchase a section of land on a hill just south of Makanda. The property was situated adjacent to that owned by Theodore’s good friend, and local doctor, Frank Agnew. Although the farm would not be known as Evergreen Fruit Farm until several years after Theodore purchased it, he referred to the property by this name when he described how he acquired the land. Theodore later recalled this purchase and stated, “In 1866 I bought the 80 acre tract 34-10-1W, section known as Evergreen Fruit Farm, from Prof. D. C. Wilbur of Normal, Illinois, for \$1800, paying \$600 down, balance on time. This tract was unimproved and heavily covered with timber” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10).

Theodore knew he did not have the physical ability to clear and farm his own land. Instead, he hired three African American men to prepare the acreage for planting. He later recalled, “I had a cabin built and had three colored men by the name of Stark move in it. They cleared up the land and put it in cultivation, mainly in corn” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). He later added that the Starks had “. . . put some thirty acres in cultivation” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10). Theodore hired these men because they had

fought in the Union Army during the Civil War (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). Once the Starks cleared the area, Theodore utilized the farming knowledge he gained while growing up to determine planting times, and the data he gained as station agent to determine what crops would bring the highest return. Theodore, not one to let anything worth a profit go to waste, made use of the timber that was removed by the Starks. He stated, "I had 8ft. rails made for fencing and timber made into R.R. [railroad] crossties and cordwood" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10). Theodore knew the going price for most local commodities because of his work at the station in Makanda. Concerning the profits he obtained while having the Starks improve his land he later recalled, "Ties were worth 38¢ and cordwood \$2.25" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10).

Theodore did not limit his work to the station, and later recalled, "I speculated in all kinds of produce, bought wheat on commission, I acted as fire insurance agent, Notary Public, and Township school treasurer. I sold [piano] organs, jewelry, wagons and so on" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). Over time, these ventures allowed Theodore to obtain a comfortable income that enabled him to move off the family farm. He later recollected the places he stayed after moving out stating, "I was boarding at Makanda part of the time at the hotel, boarding houses, and private houses, viz: Powers, Krysher, Watson, Shoup, etc" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10).

The fruit business was booming in southern Illinois; Makanda farmers were expanding their fruit commerce and so was Theodore. The farm Theodore had carved out was turning a profit from the sale of produce, but he wanted to create an orchard in order to capitalize on the warm climate and its ability to cultivate excellent fruit. Theodore remembered his desire to expand his farm and stated, "I hired a man by the name of Jack

Dawes to take off the dead forest trees one winter so I could put out an orchard”
(Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10).

After the land was cleared, Theodore set out to locate suitable varieties of fruit trees. He later recalled when he purchased his first trees and stated, “In 1869 I bought four apple trees to plant from Carpenter and Bailey [of Makanda]” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11). These apple trees provided the base for his fruit growing business as he soon purchased more trees to expand his Evergreen Fruit Farm. Theodore later reminisced over the beginnings of his orchard business and his ability to profit from buying and selling local crops:

I went to Bloomington in the spring of 1869 and had 10,000 apple grafts put up to order and put out a nursery. I purchased my first peach trees from A. T. Horine and W. H. Swigert [of Makanda]. I have bought at the depot 1/2 bushel boxes of peaches for 50¢ to ship north that sold for \$2 and \$3 per box. Sweet potatoes and Red Astrachan apples sold in Dubuque, Iowa, for \$1 to \$1.50 per 1/3 bushel box.
(Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10)

Theodore was a man who lived by the numbers. He was often speculating on the cost and profit ratios in order to determine what would bring him the largest yield.

Theodore had had numerous productive years leading up to 1869. He had gained employment in Makanda close to his family, carved out a fruit farm for himself, and among other things, was making a profit off of his railroad commission for selling wheat, corn, and various other fruits and vegetables at the Makanda station. However, on July 13, 1869 Theodore experienced a downward swing on his recent string of good fortune. It was on that day in July that his mother, who was just shy of her 54th birthday, passed

away. Theodore was 28 years old (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Joshua Thompson Jr.).

It was around the time of his mother's passing that Theodore had proved himself a successful businessperson, but he was unable to secure a steady home life. This was due in part to his unstable living arrangement, which included boarding with different townspeople. Dr. Frank Agnew, who was a Thompson family friend, local doctor and ordained minister, assisted Theodore with this dilemma. Dr. Agnew owned the house adjacent, and to the north, of Theodore's property. The two friends finally came to an agreement on Theodore's living arrangement and he moved in with the Doctor and his family. Theodore later recalled the transition by stating, "Finally I went out to Dr. Agnew's adjoining my farm. I bought a horse 'Charley' from William Rendleman and a buggy. Then I built a barn for same on my place [Evergreen Fruit Farm]" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). Theodore was finally settling down.

Theodore's need for a horse was necessitated not only by his health, but also by his occupation. He later recalled:

I made special effort to sell all the railroad lands that I could, as I received from \$5 to \$10 for each forty. I kept a horse, saddle and buggy so I could get out in the country and hunt up business. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11)

Theodore was exceedingly self-motivated in his business dealings. He bought and sold numerous properties for the railroad, which provided him enough commission to live a very comfortable life. However, Theodore was also ambitious, as he had begun purchasing property on his own within the town of Makanda (see Figure 3.1). He later recalled:

In 1870 I bought the eighty acre tract that Makanda is located upon and laid out my first addition, afterwards the second and third additions to the town of Makanda. I sold many of these lots at a fair price, and the purchase of this tract was a very paying investment. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11)

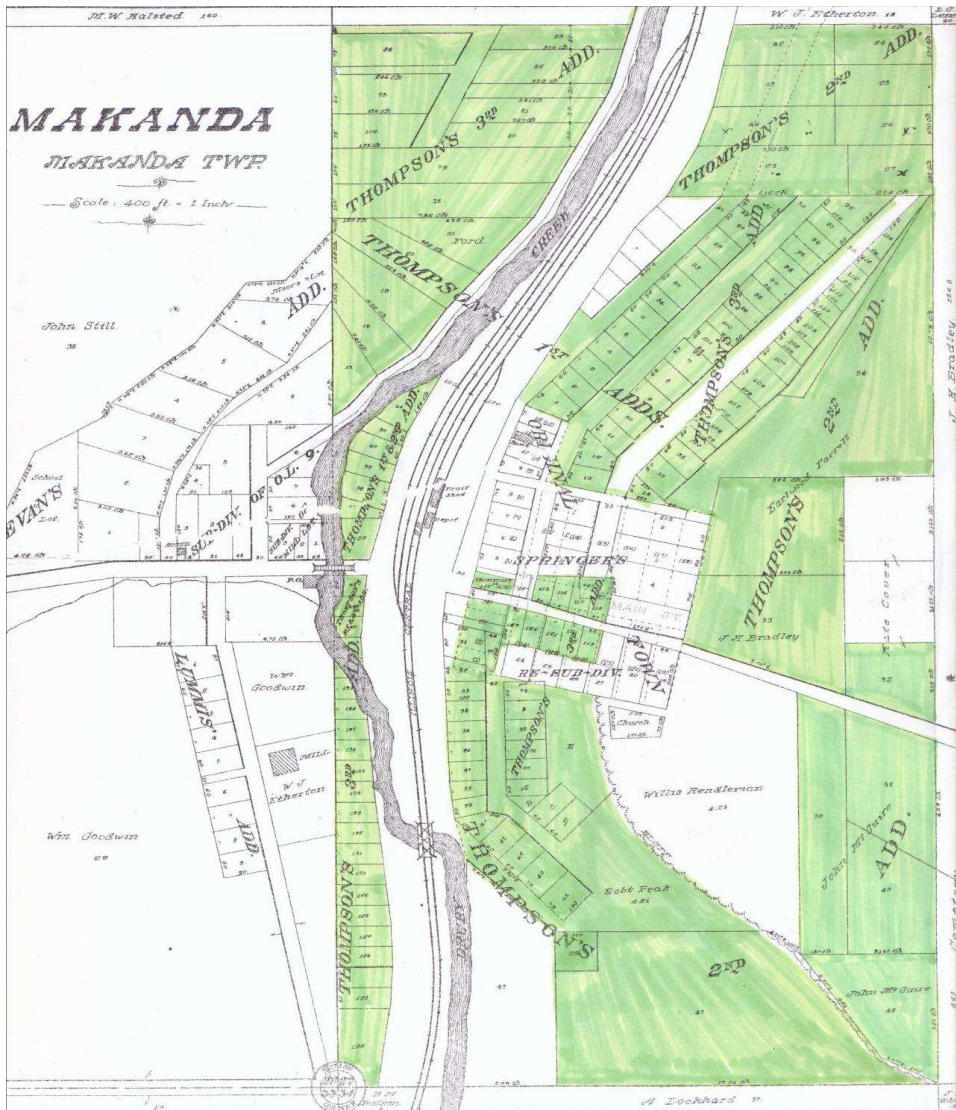


Figure 3.1. Town of Makanda with green highlights added to emphasize the three additions made by Theodore Thompson. Original town purchased by Theodore Thompson is located in the center of the image. Adapted from "Map of Makanda," by Union Atlas Company, 1876, *Atlas of the State of Illinois to which are added various general maps, history, statistics and illustrations*, p. 16. Chicago, Illinois: Warner & Beers.

After purchasing the town, Theodore set out to change its name. It was not a major change, but there had been a small discrepancy over the years between the Illinois Central Railroad spelling of the town name and that of the Makanda Post Office. One account states that, “when a post office was established on March 11, 1857[.]. . . the name of the town was set down as Markanda. In 1870 the name was changed to Makada, and in July, 1872, it received its present one of Makanda” (Allen, 1945, p. 23). Theodore later told of the change he applied in order for the two names to coincide. He stated, “When John McGuire was postmaster it cost me a dollar revenue stamp to have the letter r taken out of Markanda to correspond with the railroad name of Makanda” (Thompson, n.d., para. 10).

During this period of buying and selling, Theodore made time for his private life and began courting Lovina Rendleman. Lovina lived with her parents, William and Anna (Hileman) Rendleman, on the property adjoining the west side of Theodore’s Evergreen Fruit Farm. In essence, Lovina and Theodore were neighbors. The courtship between the two did not last long as Theodore soon decided it was time to settle down. He and Lovina were wed in 1873. Theodore was 32 years old and she was 15 years his junior. Theodore remembered this time by declaring, “I finally got tired of boarding houses and single blessedness. April 23rd, 1873, I married Miss Lovina Rendleman, daughter of William Rendleman, Dr. F. M. Agnew officiating” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10).

Theodore commenced building a home for himself and his bride on the grounds of his Evergreen Fruit Farm in section 34 of Jackson County (see Figure 3.2). During this time, Lovina was also pregnant with the couple’s first child. While their house was being

constructed, they lived with the Agnews (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.11). Theodore was later reminiscent of his first home:

. . . I built a very fine residence, the finest house in all that section of the country.

When completed it was locked up and myself and wife went to Chicago to get material to furnish it. After buying all our furniture we concluded to stay over Sunday, finish our purchasing and return home. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10)

Theodore and Lovina had taken the train to Chicago to furnish their home. Their life together had started out well due to their financial stability. They had just left their new, two story home with a widow's walk and were about to return with enough items to fill its rooms and live comfortably.

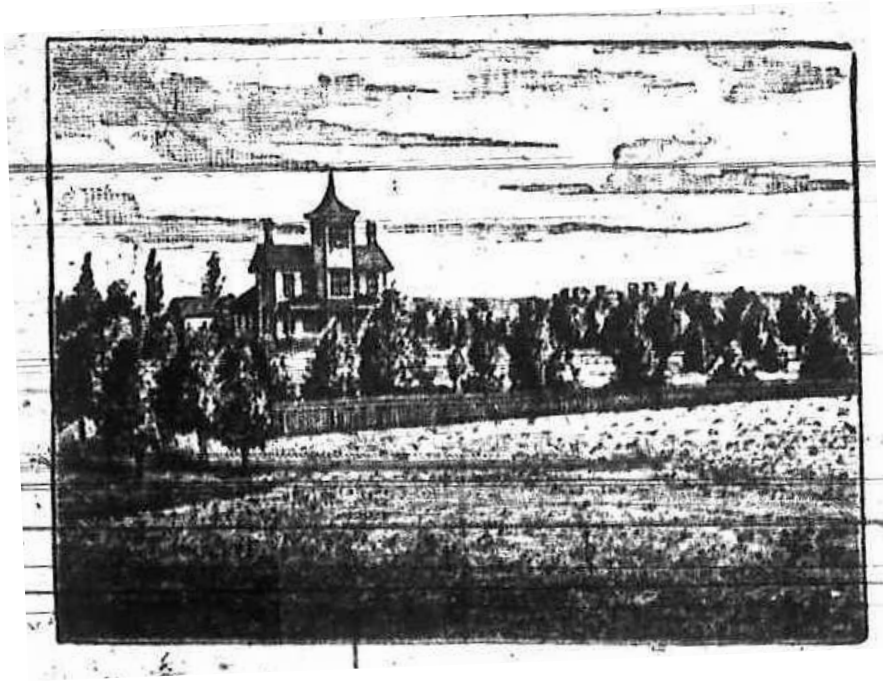


Figure 3.2. Newspaper image of Theodore Thompson's Evergreen Fruit Farm. Adapted from "Evergreen Fruit Farm For Sale," *Barton's Free Press*, January 1, 1887. Carbondale, Illinois: J. H. Barton. Housed on microfilm at Morris Library, Southern Illinois University.

Although things were going well in Chicago, back in Makanda a sad situation was unfolding. Theodore later remembered receiving the news that his new home had just been destroyed by fire:

About 12 o'clock Sunday night we were wakened up in our room and a telegram was handed us. It announced that our new house had been set on fire and burned to the ground that night about sundown. This stroke of misfortune almost paralyzed us. We could not understand why our house should be burned, as I did not have any enemies and had never had a lawsuit. We concluded that it had been done by some person who was jealous and did not want to see me live in the finest house in the country. Monday, as our goods had not been shipped, we got the merchants to take them back. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10)

This news was devastating to the new couple; however, Theodore's strong resolve made his new home a reality. Theodore later stated, "We kept house till spring, then moved out to my father-in-law's and rebuilt in 1875" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10).

While staying with friends and relatives, Theodore and Lovina had their first child, a daughter, Rose Anna Thompson. She was born on February 28, 1874. Her birth was followed by tragedy, as less than two months later, Rose passed away from pertussis, or whooping cough. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Makanda near her paternal grandmother and grandfather. In all, Lovina would give birth to six children throughout her marriage to Theodore (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson).

Hardships were plentiful at this stage in Theodore's life, but he looked toward the future when times were difficult. He later recalled the financial stresses of his destroyed home stating, "The loss of my house kept me back ten years in my business or cost me

what I had saved up in ten years. I first rebuilt the ell and moved in and then finished the front part of the house” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). As Theodore stated, they moved into the ell, which is the part of the home that “. . . projects backward from the main block of a house and lies at a right angle to it . . .” (“Memorial Hall Museum,” n.d.). In order to assure no further harm would take place at the farm from trespassers, Theodore acquired several family pets. He stated, “I kept two large dogs, Watch and Nick, bloodhound and Newfoundland. Both weighed over 100 pounds. I also had a black-and-tan rat terrier called Money” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p 10). Even though he had experienced a significant amount of misfortune over the course of a year, Theodore was still able to show his lighthearted and humorous side when he named his rat terrier. He may have been strict in his business dealings, but he had a kinder side with his family.

Theodore was taking on numerous tasks for one individual between the rebuilding of his home, starting a family, his duties at the station and selling land for the railroad. In order to free some of his time, he decided to hire an assistant who would take over his daily routine at the station. Theodore later recalled this occasion and stated, “Johnny Cain of Council Hill, Ill., was my clerk who stayed at the station and attended to the office work so I could get out on other business and attend to other things besides my railroad duties” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 10). He later recalled his other business:

I planted out more orchards and kept improving my farm, although I had to borrow some money to complete my house. I had a fair apple and peach crop which brought me in considerable money. I usually bought all the wheat that came to town and considerable in season. During the fruit season my commission

on express was very large, running from \$5 to \$20 per day and on some occasions it reached \$40. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.10-11)

Theodore also spent some of the wealth he was accumulating on expanding his farm. He later recalled, “. . . I had added to my farm of eighty acres until it had increased to 240 acres, including in it the romantic place known as Giant’s City” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11). As Theodore stated, his fruit farm included the area that is now known as the Giant City Streets portion of the Giant City Nature Trail in what is now Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois. Theodore had a sentimental side for purchasing the Giant’s City section of land, as it encompassed the rock formation containing the 1862 inscriptions of both him and his brother Albert. Theodore typically bought and sold items in order to gain wealth, however his purchase of the Giant’s City tract was a break from the norm.

Theodore was proud of his accomplishments in life; he had moved to southern Illinois with his parents and younger siblings and started from scratch living in a log cabin on the family farm. He was known among the local residents of Makanda for rebuilding his home in 1875, and for owning a prospering fruit farm. Theodore would eventually make more additions to his farm by building a house for a tenant farmer and his family. Adding to the positive aspects in Theodore’s life at that point, he was about to become a father for the second time at the age of 35. A daughter, Bessie Thompson was born on July 22, 1876, to Theodore and Lovina (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson).

Theodore enjoyed traveling and had the means to do so. In 1876, he began a journey with his friend George Pelton. George was the friend with whom Theodore had

gone to see Lincoln and who had been one of the few individuals to climb the flag tree. Meanwhile, Lovina, who had just given birth, stayed home and tended to their daughter and their new home. Theodore later recalled:

In 1876 I visited the Centennial at Philadelphia, going by way of Chicago up through Canada. I went from Niagara Falls to Albany down the Hudson by daylight by boat, 144 miles in 9 hours. I visited New York City, Trenton and Washington, where I met Gen. Grant. I stopped in Philadelphia on Arch Street with my old friend George Pelton. After seeing the sights of the Centennial I returned home over the B. & O. This was in the month of October. Johnny Cain and Brother Mort [Morton] attended to my office work during my two weeks absence. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11)

Over the course of the next few years, Theodore was gaining in prosperity and so was the town of Makanda. In 1878, Makanda contained “four dry good stores, one drug store, one millinery store, one shoe shop, two cooper shops, two wagon shops, one grist mill, and combined saw mill and box factory, three blacksmith shope [*sic*], three hotels, two churches, and one public school” (“The Town of Makanda,” 1878). It also gained at least one new resident. On October 31, 1878, Ralph Eginton Thompson was born to Theodore and Lavina. Theodore was 37 years old, his wife 23 and their daughter Bessie 2 (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson).

During this burgeoning period, Theodore was enticed into another venture, a new kind of engagement for him, one in which he became a partner in owning a store.

Theodore later recalled this event:

My wife's uncle, Marshall Rendleman, induced me to go into the merchandising business with him as a partner. After one year's experience I became dissatisfied and sold out to my partner and rented him my stock house. He did not continue long in the business as he was not a popular merchant. I rented my store building to H. L. Bell for a number of years and then sold it to him. He afterwards remodeled it and joined the same to the Cover store house. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11)

Theodore was a straightforward person when it came to life and business. He was also very good at making sure his money multiplied. Seeing that his newest endeavor was not creating sufficient profits, he decided to end his partnership before incurring a substantial loss. The H. L. Bell building that once housed their business is still standing on the boardwalk in Makanda. The name has been changed on the upper facade to read L. L. Bell.

While Theodore worked out his business dealings, and spent time with his son Ralph, a sad occurrence took place on his father's farm in Section 11 of Union County. Theodore later recalled the time that the tulip poplar, which had not only served as a beacon for his family's pro Union stance, but had also provided the location for the inception of the Union League of southern Illinois, was felled by Mother Nature:

The old [flag] tree was killed by lightning about 1880, and has since disappeared, although another very large and tall poplar stands a little west of where the old flag tree stood that can be seen plainly from Carbondale, old DuQuion, Bald Knob and the surrounding country. (Thompson, n.d., para. 17)

In regards to the flag tree in contemporary times:

Today no banners fly on Banner Hill, although the hill itself is still a farm, and its elevation is still a boon to those who wish to send a message. Orchards surround the hill, while at its top a silent metal tower transmits more messages in a minute than the Thompson boys ever dreamed of. (Earle, 1989, p. xxiii-xxiv)

The disappearance of the towering landmark did not pass quietly as it was written about in the local newspapers of the time.

Theodore and Lovina continued to expand their family. In early January of 1882 their fourth child, Emma Edith Thompson, was born. Lovina had another daughter to tend to along with her two other surviving children, Bessie and Ralph. However, tragedy struck the Thompsons soon enough, as Emma's life was short lived. She passed away on April 1, 1883, just a little over a year after she came into the world. She was buried next to her sister, Rose, in Evergreen Cemetery in Makanda (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson).

Over the course of the next few years, Theodore and Lavina continued to experience the highs and lows of life. In 1883, after the death of his young daughter, Theodore took his family on a trip to Mobile where he saw General Tom Thumb for the second time. "I last saw him at Battle Hotel in Mobile in 1883. Ralph was four years old, and we had him to call on Gen. Tom Thumb at his room in the hotel" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 7). In 1884, Theodore and Lovina welcomed with their fifth child, a boy, Theodore Albert Thompson. He was born on January 14 of that year (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson). The following winter, Theodore dealt with the death of his father who died from a heart attack. He passed on November 27 at the age of 73 (Agnew, ca. 1885, para. 5). Joshua was buried next to his wife, Maria, and

two grandchildren, Rose and Emma, in Evergreen Cemetery in Makanda. “His funeral, one of the largest ever seen in this section of the country, took place at the new cemetery on the hill East of Makanda, Sunday November 29” (Agnew, ca. 1885, para. 7). He was remembered by family friend Dr. Frank Agnew after his death in an article in a local paper. Dr. Agnew stated, “He was a perfect representative of those noble traits of true manhood embraced in words—industry, honesty, integrity, temperance and frugality, bearing the strongest affection for his friends and the utmost contempt for his enemies” (Agnew, ca. 1885, para. 6). Theodore was very much like his father and had inherited each of these qualities.

Theodore had built a comfortable life for himself and his growing family in Makanda. Nevertheless, he was still trying to improve himself. His brother Morton lived in Carbondale, Illinois. Therefore, Theodore had gone to visit him numerous times. Over the course of Theodore’s visits to Carbondale, he and Lovina had decided that the family needed a change.

As my family increased and my children grew older I found it difficult to give them the proper education at the district school. On account of distance and bad roads. In the mean time my wife and I had driven many times to Carbondale [Illinois]. In going we passed the tract of land adjoining the Normal [Southern Illinois Normal College] on the south west which pleased us very much. We determined to buy this place if it could be bought, although we had fixed up a fine home at Makanda which we had intended as permanent. But circumstances had made it necessary for us to move where our children could have the proper advantages. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11)

Theodore left the security of his business dealings and a profitable farm in Makanda for a fresh start in Carbondale. He was later reminiscent of his occupations in Makanda and stated, “I acted as township school treasurer for 14 years, I was agent for the Aetna Fire Insurance Co. for 15 years and never met with a loss” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.11).

Before moving up the road to Carbondale, Theodore had one more contribution for the local economy; it was another first for him. He was an admirable writer and utilized this ability to induce others to move to southern Illinois, much like Daniel McConnell’s letters had persuaded Theodore’s father to move to the area. Yet Theodore’s plan was on a much grander scale. His strategy was documented in a local newspaper:

He [Theodore] originated the Southern Illinois Land Association, organized in August 1886, which has printed and distributed 10,000 copies of a 4 page 21x32 paper, showing up Southern Illinois and its advantages, and inviting immigration to help develop the great natural resources in their end of the state—it being the first paper of the kind ever printed to give Southern Illinois a boom. (“T.W. Thompson Biographical Sketch,” 1887, para. 3)

Theodore may have had his own interests in mind when he tried to entice new landowners to the area; however, this venture also doubled as the area’s first tourism brochure. Although Theodore did not gain prosperity from his other writings, he did enjoy contributing several articles, in the late 1800s, to the local *Barton’s Free Press* newspaper. The articles covered local history and his early days in Makanda. They were entitled *Pioneer Days and Early Settlers in and Around Makanda*.

After deciding to move and having initiated the Southern Illinois Land Association, Theodore purchased the property in Carbondale for his new farm. He later recalled this event:

After spending some time in St. Louis trying to purchase the Carbondale tract I found it necessary to employ a real estate agent by the name of George Ross. Through him, by inducing the parties to come to Carbondale, I succeeded in purchasing the land, 480 acres for \$16,000. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12)

He went on to reiterate his memories of the move to Carbondale when he stated, “I bought the Carbondale land in 1886 and moved to Carbondale in 1887 in the property now owned by Dr. Lee” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12). This placed his first home in Carbondale at 610 South University Avenue (“T.W. Thompson History,” n.d., p. 4). Theodore lived there while he purchased the “. . . property in the Carbondale area, principally the west half of Section 28 in Carbondale Township, and the northeast quarter of Section 29 . . .” (Wright, 1977, p. 300). Theodore remembered his financial status at that point stating, “I had but little money on hand at the time. I paid \$6000 down in cash, and gave my notes for the balance, \$10,000, \$2000 payable annually, making the whole sum due in five years” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11).

Theodore later described in detail the land that his new farm contained and commented on how he developed the area:

This tract of 480 acres was taken up by William Morrison on the “Kaskaskia Trail” in 1815, three years before the State was admitted into the Union. This tract of land was left to one of the heirs, a Mrs. Von Schrader, who was a Morrison. She had an agent at Carbondale to rent and look after this land. It was originally

covered with very heavy timber consisting of poplar, white oak, sugar tree, hickory, red bud, black oak, etc. As it lay adjoining the city limits it was convenient to the town people, who preyed upon it for firewood etc. It was leased out to some dozen tenants who had built log huts and were clearing up the land for cultivation. It seemed that the most profitable work for the tenants was cutting the good timber to sell to the town people for fence posts and firewood. The grove on the north east [Thompson Woods], adjoining the Normal [Southern Illinois Normal College], was the regular camping place for Gypsies. The woods on the south were headquarters for gamblers and sports of the town. West of the grove was an old field thrown open to the commons where the town cows pastured. When I began to fence this field I counted at one time some sixty cows grazing there. Those owning land adjoining had pushed the roads over upon it and had made roads through it for convenience. Everyone knew that it belonged to a widow with a worthless agent who made himself popular by allowing the people to take what they wanted from the land. When I took possession there were about twenty-five log shanties upon it. Some of the corn fields had cockle-burs that were nine to ten feet high. The farm was in terrible shape, as it had been occupied by worthless tenants. I first got rid of the worthless tenants, punched back the roads to where they belonged, and put my fences on the line. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12)

Theodore was always trying to improve his surroundings and did not have patience for people who were unproductive. Although he had much disparagement for the poor condition of his acreage, he enjoyed putting the land into working order. He truly

believed in his father's motto: "a machine should wear out, not rust out" (as cited in Agnew, 1885, p.1).

Theodore worked diligently to improve his new estate and construct his home while he lived at the house on University Avenue. Theodore later recalled this instance and stated, "I lived there a little over a year before I could get my house built to move upon the farm" (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12). When his home and other out buildings were completed (see Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4), a newspaper article highlighted the achievement:

Twenty acres is still in timber, and on one corner of this grove [Thompson Woods] he has erected a handsome residence, stable, barn, vegetable house, and various other buildings, together with one on the cold storage plan with a capacity of 10,000 bushels of sweet potatoes" ("T. W. Thompson, Fruit Farm, Etc," n.d., para. 1).



Figure 3.3. Image of the Thompson family barn (in the background) with the carriage house (in the foreground) on Theodore Thompson's Carbondale estate circa an unknown date. From Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, *Thompson Family Barns*, University Archives Photo Collection: 1897-1978 (Series 3: Places, Box 18, Folder 3). Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix C)



Figure 3.4. Image circa 1959 of Theodore Thompson's home at the eastern edge of Thompson Woods in Carbondale, Illinois. Adapted from Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, *March 24, 1959 Aerial View of Southern Illinois University*. University Archives Photo Collection: 1897-1978 (Series 3: Places, Box 11, Folder 10). Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix C)

Theodore had built his new residence and had moved his family onto the Carbondale farm; subsequently, he attempted to affect a sale for his Evergreen Fruit Farm in Makanda. He also continued selling lots within his Makanda additions. He later reminisced, “I now made a great effort to sell my home place at Makanda. I sold it for \$10,000 to Mowery and received \$5,000 cash down. He failed to pay the remainder, so I had to take it back” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11). He then publicized the sale of his farm in a Carbondale newspaper:

No. 7 FRUIT FARM 40+ ACRES ½ Mile from depot 35 acres in cultivation . . . apple orchard; a young peach orchard coming into bearing; 2 acres in strawberries; . . . two story frame [house]: 2 barns, cistern and tenant house. The land is in a good state of cultivation, while the buildings need repairs: beautiful location fronting the public road on the north and west. Price and terms reasonable. Large bodies of unimproved land in tracts to suit purchasers. Special bargains offered to capitalists. Inducements unsurpassed. (Thompson, 1887, “No. 7 fruit farm”)

Meanwhile, at his Carbondale farm, he had positioned his fences, moved roads and had begun planting fruits and vegetables. Theodore later stated, “In 1887 I planted 90 acres in peaches and 70 acres in apples, besides making many other improvements” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12). A later account detailed the continued advancements to his Carbondale farm:

Mr. Thompson intends to make a vast fruit farm . . . and has laid out 175 acres in young peach and apple trees. These trees were planted three years ago, and this is the first year they will bear fruit; twenty-five acres has been laid out in small

fruits and vegetables; seventy-five acres in wheat, fifty acres in meadow; twenty-five acres in pasture, 100 acres in clover and thirty acres has been utilized to make an artificial lake on which will be built a summer resort for boating, fishing, swimming, baths, etc. (“T.W. Thompson, Fruit Farm, Etc,” n.d., para. 1)

Theodore wasted no time making his farm operational. He made mention the construction of a lake on the estate. This attraction would become a popular destination for many in the summer months, as well as a favorite place for his children to play.

By 1888, Theodore was 47 years old and Lovina 33. Their children were advancing in years as well: Bessie was 12, Ralph 10, and Theodore Albert 4. On November 30, 1888, the children gained another sister. Mabel Chalfont Thompson was born in Carbondale to Theodore and Lovina. She was the last of six children born into the Thompson family (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson). While living on the farm in Carbondale, Theodore’s older children at had the benefit of dividing their time between attending the local school and exploring the family farm with their younger siblings.

In March of 1891, Theodore had found another buyer for his original 120-acre Makanda property. Arthur J. White and his wife Anna M. White of Battle Creek, Michigan purchased the farm from Theodore (Jackson County Deed Book, n.d., Book 36, p. 509). Theodore later recalled this event stating, “I again sold it to A. J. White for \$4,800 and some worthless Dakota land. Disposing of my farm left me in good shape” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11). However, Jackson County Illinois records indicated that he sold the land to the Whites for a profit of \$7,600, which was a little more than Theodore reported (Jackson County Deed Book, n.d., Book 36, p. 509).

The following year in 1892, Theodore would make a large improvement to his Carbondale farm when he expanded its lake. Theodore's generosity was demonstrated when he left open this body of water to be utilized by local citizens for recreational purposes. The Southern Illinois Normal College was established during this time as well, as it was situated to the north of Theodore's farm. The school would later go through several expansions and was renamed Southern Illinois University. Theodore later recalled constructing the dam for his lake:

In 1892 I began to build a dam for my lake. At that time Gen. Bell of Philippine fame was at the Normal [Southern Illinois Normal College] as instructor of military drill. He helped me take levels for the lake. This lake covers between 40 and 50 acres and is the finest body of water for its size in Southern Illinois. It is well stocked with game fish, and fall and spring wild fowl stop here. The water is deep and clear, and it is a fine place for boating. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.12)

The lake would also serve as a resort destination on which its banks served as a place where small cabins were built by those who frequented the area in the summer months.

In addition to making his lake available to the local population, Theodore opened his farm annually to the meeting of the Illinois Chautauqua. The road that led to Southern Illinois Normal College from the west was later named West Chautauqua Street. Even after Theodore's death, Chautauqua gatherings continued to take place in Carbondale on the campus of Southern Illinois Normal College. A newspaper clipping highlighted the use of the farm and lake for this purpose:

T. W. Thompson is improving his lake by enlarging the dam and building it higher. The lake, as a pleasure resort, has been the means of no little enjoyment to

the citizens of Carbondale and visiting friends, all of whom are loud in praise of Mr. Thompson's fine farm and its appointments. Next year, when the Illinois Chautauqua meets on the banks of this beautiful lake, Carbondale will become noted as a pleasure resort and add to its reputation as an educational center. ("T. W. Thompson is improving," n.d., para.1)

Another local newspaper at the time boasted of the additions Theodore had made to his farm recounting, "The magnificent lake, the beautiful grove, the vineyards, the orchards, the strawberry fields and the elegant residence, all are the pride and boast of our people" ("Theodore W. Thompson," 1903, para. 6). Theodore was very generous with his spacious estate by having left areas open for the public to be utilized for leisure pursuits. This also made him well known within the local population.

Theodore's expansive estate in Carbondale also made available an area large enough to hold Civil War reunions. The gatherings took place in the forested area that is known today as Thompson Woods. Thompson Woods is situated in the heart of Southern Illinois University's campus behind the Student Center on Lincoln Drive. Theodore's daughter, Mabel, later wrote about her experiences at these get-togethers and stated, "Up until 1905 the annual encampment of the Southern Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Reunions were held many times for three days in the twenty-acre grove at the corner of our farm" (Thompson-Rauch, 1959, p. viii). She went on to recall, "At these reunions I sat with him [her father, Theodore] at the campfires of the survivors of the famous Illinois Thirty-first, 'Black Jack's' own Regiment, and heard these wartime days lived over in song and story" (Thompson-Rauch, p. viii). A later account of the gatherings,

which they were held on the farm, mentioned that tens of thousands attended the reunions over the span of several years (“Theodore W. Thompson,” 1903, para. 6).

While Theodore kept track of his expanding fruit and vegetable business, he again found himself trying to sell the Makanda farm that he once owned. The latest proprietor, Arthur White, was looking to sell, and had asked Theodore to help him. Theodore later recalled the ordeal:

As White could not sell the farm, he agreed to give Willis Rendleman and myself each \$100 to affect a sale for him. He [Arthur White] sent Dr. McGregor of Chicago down to trade for the farm for his mother, who owned a hotel. I made the trade but never received my \$100. This was about 1897. (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 11-12)

Jackson County, Illinois records indicated that Arthur J. White and his wife Anna M. White of Battle Creek, Michigan sold the 120 acre Evergreen Fruit Farm in Makanda to Margout E. McGregor of Stevens Point, Wisconsin for \$1 in September of 1899 (Jackson County Deed Book, n.d., Book 48, p.334). Lawrence McGregor, son of Margout McGregor, and his wife May Lina McGregor moved into Theodore’s old home on the property. Theodore later recalled, “The fall of 1902 her crippled son moved upon the farm to repair and put it in shape, to the great delight of the neighborhood” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p. 12).

Lawrence and May McGregor did not live out their days at Evergreen Fruit Farm. In 1927, Lawrence sold out to one of Lovina Thompson’s relatives, Willis Rendleman. Willis purchased the estate for \$2,910 (Jackson County Deed Book, n.d., Book 104, p.155). In turn, Willis Rendleman sold the fruit farm to the State of Illinois in 1928 for

\$10,605. (Jackson County Deed Book, n.d., Book 105, p.148) Willis' sale placed Theodore's original 120 acre Evergreen Fruit Farm within the boundaries of the newly created Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois. The open landscape of the farm still exists (see Figure 3.5), although the stately residence and other out buildings have long since disappeared. The fruit farm landscape is situated off Church Street, which is also County Road 12, within Giant City State Park, behind a metal gate that leads to a small gravel parking lot. Three large pine trees are visible on the right just past the parking area, as they once towered above the home of Dr. Frank Agnew. Theodore's home sat just down the lane, surrounded by the open expanse that was once Evergreen Fruit Farm.



Figure 3.5. Image of Evergreen Fruit Farm taken in August 2009. This area is administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and is included within Giant City State Park in Makanda, Illinois.

Meanwhile, Theodore once more set out to increase his Carbondale acreage and improve his Carbondale farm (see Figure 3.6). He later spoke of this accomplishment and stated, “. . . I got 20 acres on the south, making 500, and in 1902 I bought adjoining on the east for my son Ralph, 100 acres more, making 600 acres that will finally be in the T. W. Thompson estate” (Thompson, ca. 1902, p.11). Even though he had the strength to become a profitable farmer twice and had overcome many health related hardships along the way, Theodore was no longer able to utilize bed rest to slow his deteriorating physical condition. His battle with severe rheumatism had begun to take a serious toll on his health and his prognosis was poor.

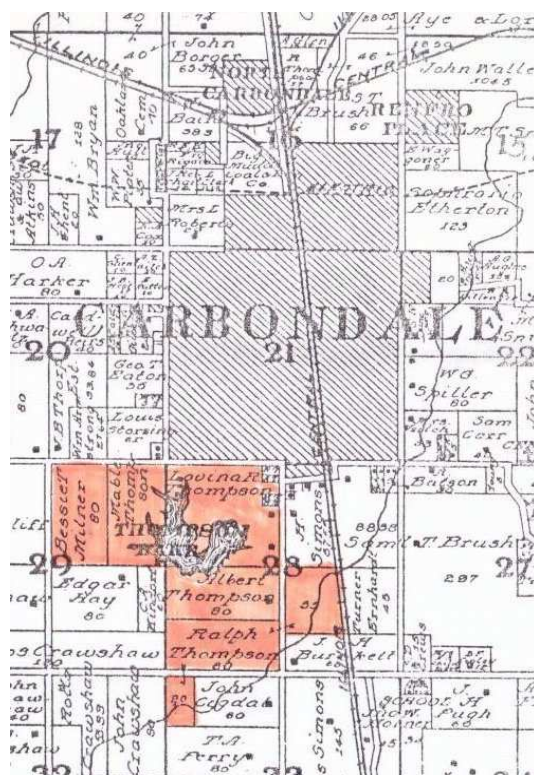


Figure 3.6. Theodore Thompson’s Carbondale, Illinois estate highlighted in orange. Adapted from “Map of Carbondale Township,” by George A. Ogle & Company, 1907, *Standard atlas of Jackson County, Illinois, including a plat book of the villages, cities and townships of the county*, p. 31. Chicago, Illinois: George A. Ogle & Company.

Theodore continued his philanthropic ventures while his health was failing. His monetary contribution to the First Baptist Church in Carbondale made it possible for a new church to be constructed. This event was later reported in a local newspaper article that stated, “Mr. Thompson’s generosity and public spirit are exemplified in the magnificent Baptist church building now in course of erection. Enterprises of this character have always received liberal encouragement at his hands” (“Theodore W. Thompson,” 1903, para. 8). This was the last act of generosity he would complete before his death.

On March 2, 1903, at the age of 61, Theodore Wilson Thompson’s body could no longer sustain his spirit and his life end. The local newspaper ran his obituary, which included the following:

When the . . . announcement [of Theodore Thompson’s death] was made to the public it carried with it a feeling of relief rather than surprise, and yet the community felt keenly the loss of one of its most respected leading members.

There was no one that did not know that for many months Mr. Thompson had been the victim of disease and that his body was constantly racked by torture of most excruciating character, and that there was no help this side the grave.

Therefore when the word was given out that the victim had passed from suffering to rest a sigh of relief welled up in every breast. (“Theodore W. Thompson,”

1903, para. 2)

Theodore was buried in Oakland Cemetery in Carbondale, Illinois with a dignified granite headstone indicating his final resting place (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7. Image of Theodore and Lovina Thompson’s gravestone located in Oakland Cemetery in Carbondale, Illinois. Image taken in August 2009.

In the wake of his death, Theodore left behind his wife and four grown children. At the time of their father’s passing, Bessie was 26 years old, Ralph 24, Theodore Albert 19 and Mabel 15 (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson). Lovina eventually moved to a smaller home that was built for her alongside the family dwelling. Ralph then moved into the large Thompson family home with his wife Elizabeth (Brewster) Thompson. He served as a rural mail carrier for the Carbondale Post Office. Ralph had also graduated from the University of Illinois in 1899 (Wright, 1977, p. 300). He had spent time in the Philippines as well where he served with the Navy (“Mr. Ralph Thompson,” n.d., para.1). Theodore Albert married Cora Smith (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson). Bessie married Paul C. Milner (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson). She was also a Librarian at Southern

Illinois Normal University from 1899 to 1901 (Lentz, 1955, p. 145). Mabel married twice, became a writer, and moved away from the Carbondale area (Wright, 1977, p. 300). She wrote numerous articles and two books. Her literary works included *The Little Hellion* and *Vinnie and the Flag-Tree*, which covered family history and southern Illinois history. Lovina continued to live in her small home on the Carbondale farm until her death on January 18, 1943 at the age of 87. She was buried next to her husband in Oakland Cemetery in Carbondale, Illinois (Milner, 1978, Family Genealogy Chart: Theodore Thompson).

The last contribution that Theodore made to the Carbondale community and the campus of Southern Illinois University pertained to his 20-acre grove in which his home was built. Before her death, Lovina began selling off portions of the Carbondale farm to be included in the expanding campus of Southern Illinois Normal University, which later became Southern Illinois University. When it came time to sell the section containing the grove, there was a stipulation. Rufner et al. (2003) reported the findings of this addendum and stated, “The purchase contract included a restrictive clause stating that Thompson Woods was to be retained in a natural state as a ‘priceless feature of landscape architecture’” (p. 337). Thompson Woods stands in the heart of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale campus as a reminder of the pioneering and philanthropic spirit of Theodore Thompson (see Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9).



Figure 3.8. Image of the north side of Thompson Woods behind Morris Library on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Image taken in August 2009.



Figure 3.9. Southern Illinois University aerial view, circa 1959, with Thompson Woods located on the left edge of the photograph. Theodore Thompson's home is highlighted with a black box on the left side of the image. The approximate location of the Student Center on the campus of Southern Illinois University in 2009 is highlighted with a box in the center of the image. From Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, *March 24, 1959 Aerial View of Southern Illinois University*. University Archives Photo Collection: 1897-1978 (Series 3: Places, Box 11, Folder 10). Reprinted with permission. (see Appendix C)

Although Theodore has long since passed, his memory is kept alive by the locations in Carbondale that now bear or once bore his name. “His [Carbondale] home stood [just west of] where the SIU [Southern Illinois University] Student Center now stands [on Lincoln Drive], and he left at least three place names significant to the town and the University - Thompson Street, Thompson Woods, and Thompson Point” (Earle, 1989, p. xvii). The original Thompson Lake remains on the campus of Southern Illinois University; however, its name has changed (see Figure 3.10). Wright (1977) explained this modification:

When the university expanded to take in the lake area the name of it was changed to Campus Lake and a new Thompson Lake was provided north of Carbondale [on the east side of the intersection of Illinois Route 13 and West Lake Road] to replace the recreation cottage area that had grown up around the original Thompson Lake. (p. 300)

Although Theodore has departed this world in the physical sense, his memory and contributions continue to survive in the place names and the landscapes of southern Illinois (see Figure 3.11, Figure 3.12 and Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.10. Campus Lake, originally named Thompson Lake, on the campus of Southern Illinois University. Image taken in August 2009.



Figure 3.11. Image of the entrance to Thompson Point student housing area at the intersection of Lincoln Drive and Point Drive, on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Image taken in August 2009.



Figure 3.12. Image of Thompson Point student housing area, with Campus Lake in the foreground, on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Image taken in August 2009.

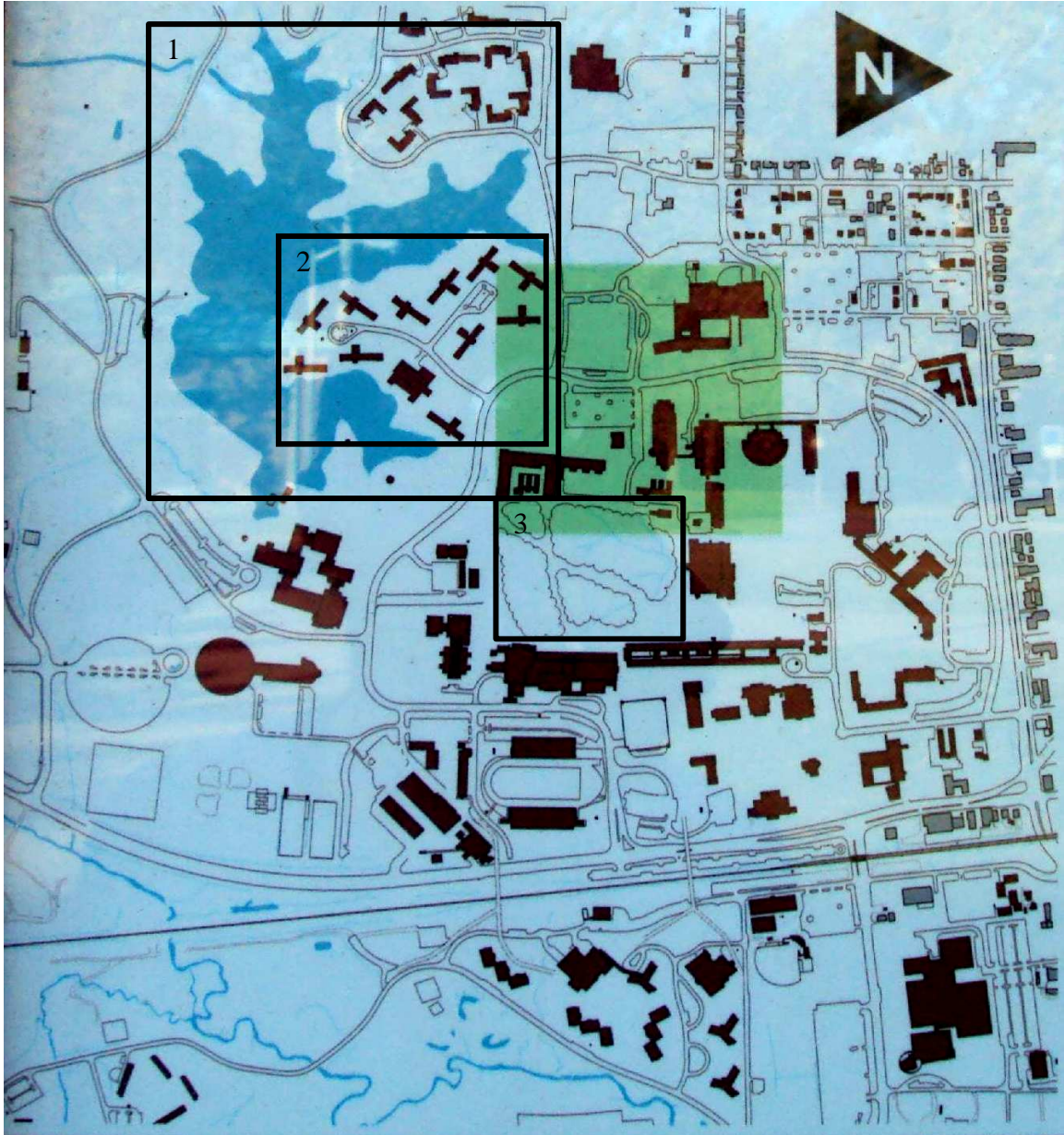


Figure 3.13. Image of a kiosk map of the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Box 1 contains Campus Lake (Thompson Lake). Box 2 contains Thompson Point. Box 3 contains Thompson Woods.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Over the course of his life, Theodore Wilson Thompson gained considerable wealth for himself from the economy in southern Illinois. He accomplished this by selling fruits and vegetables, becoming a merchant, working as a station and express agent, and selling real estate. In addition to becoming prosperous in his business dealings, Theodore aided the growth of Makanda by establishing three additions to the original town. As in business and with friends, Theodore was outspoken and unwavering in his beliefs. For example, he supported the Union during the Civil War; he became a founding member of the Union League of southern Illinois. Theodore was also very adept to change, as he was able to create a niche for himself wherever he lived.

Theodore's history also connects him with recreational opportunities both during and after his lifetime. By etching his name in what became Giant City State Park, he left his mark on a stone wall that would become part of a popular hiking trail. At his Carbondale estate, he hosted the Illinois Chautauqua along with soldier and sailor reunions. Theodore's 20-acre grove still stands in the heart of Southern Illinois University, where paved walking paths can be found. Thompson Lake, on his Carbondale estate, was a pleasure resort during his lifetime. After the resort area was incorporated into the campus of Southern Illinois University, it became utilized for many events. Currently, it serves both students at Southern Illinois University and local residents as a place for boating and fishing. The lake also has a 2.2 mile paved walking path around its perimeter and a beach with a swimming area. While living in Carbondale, Theodore

generously provided a four-page brochure of the local area to attract new homeowners. This was the first attempt at drawing in tourism to southern Illinois.

Theodore Thompson may not be well known today, but he is worth remembering because of his ties to Giant City State Park and local communities. Many visitors to Giant City do not know that working farms and homesteads were once scattered within its boundaries. They may see the inscriptions of Theodore and Albert along the Giant City Nature Trail and think that these etchings were created by passersby. It is therefore meaningful to bring to life these individuals, who inscribed their names throughout the park, in order to remember their contributions. In doing so, park staff will be providing visitors various ways to not only connect with the physical landscape, but with the cultural landscape.

While researching Theodore Thompson several questions arose that could not be answered through the information gathered for this study. The business, entrepreneurial and pioneering side of Theodore was revealed through information found in books, newspapers and family history files. However, what was left undiscovered was the psychology of the man himself, what motivated him, how he felt about his children, what his relationship was like with his mother, father, sister and brothers. The information gathered on Theodore did portray some sense of his emotions during certain tragic events in his life, but this was not enough to portray his overall demeanor. Even though many sources contained the accomplishments in Theodore's life, none described his wife Lovina's daily role in the Thompson household.

Recommendations for Giant City State Park

Based on the research that was conducted on Theodore and Albert's etchings at Giant City State Park, it is recommended that future research address the remaining names found on the rock walls within the park. The development of interpretive programs highlighting the names engraved at Giant City State Park is the next step in preserving the history of the etchings. In addition, park staff should provide future visitors with interpretive trail panels, informative trailhead handouts, living history programs, or other forms of interpretive media. As a result, they will be providing additional historical information beyond the simple carvings.

Much like Worrell's (2009) description of the need to document etchings on trees because of their importance to park history and interpretive practices, this study concurs that, ". . . among the trees exists a form of history that is as simple and inexpensive as a walk in the woods" (p. 19). The rock inscriptions provide park staff with a low cost interpretive resource. Worrell believes that arborglyphs ". . . afford interpreters an opportunity to introduce other topics, including stewardship, threats to trees, environmental and historic preservation, and the legacies of various groups of people" (p. 19). This perception brings forth the idea that park staff could broaden their approach to interpreting the park's historical resources. They might not only extend the depth of interpretive material surrounding the inscriptions, but also link this material with other aspects of the park. For example, plant diversity, animal diversity, invasive species, Civil War history, the Civil Conservation Corps, or old home sites within the park could be discussed. Bringing other elements of the park and surrounding area into the interpretive

media will assist interpreters because visitors will better understand the significance of these resources on the historic landscape of the park.

In order to convince local citizens and visitors that these historic resources are worth preserving, park staff should inform visitors that they exist. Many people hike trails at Giant City and never see the inscriptions. Marcus Woolf (2009), in writing about hiking with a park ranger among long forgotten homesteads within Great Smoky Mountains National Park stated, “Often, we build bonds with wild areas by learning the names of the flowers, animals, and native trees. But here, among the misty slopes and hollows of the Smokies, the stories of a people long forgotten are the ties that bind” (p. 18). By utilizing interpretive techniques to help link visitors with the physical presence of early settlers who etched their names or lived within the park, park staff can help visitors gain a *sense of place*.

Ken Burns, a noted documentary filmmaker, reflected on the idea of getting people into national parks so they could experience not only their physical aspects, but also envelop the spiritual side of parks that helps rejuvenate the human spirit (Dorn & Ross, 2009). In order to attract more visitors to these places of wonder, Burns suggested that, “you have to grab people at trailhead parking lots and let them know what awaits when they hike a bit farther in. You have to make converts” (Dorn & Ross, p. 79). This philosophy should extend to Giant City State Park insofar that Park interpreters find new ways to entice visitors to get out of their cars, hike the trails, and experience the physical and historical landscape.

Once visitors are alerted by park staff to the location and historical importance of inscriptions, they can then invite visitors to help protect these resources. Visitors need to

feel that they have some ownership over their actions. Therefore, any information provided by park staff has to be understandable to the visitors. This in turn can result in less degradation to the inscriptions. Moscardo (1999) extends this view to include positive visitor outcomes:

The end product is that good communication should create mindful visitors who are able to retain more information (e.g., learn more), who think about new ways to behave, and who experience a qualitatively different kind of satisfaction. As such, and delineated below, principles for encouraging mindfulness are: 1) communicate from a conditional perspective when appropriate, 2) provide variety, 3) make connections to visitors/participants and get them involved, 4) help visitors/participants find their way around, 5) tell a good story that makes sense, and 6) get to know and respect visitors/participants. (as cited in Frauman, 2002, p. 62)

These methods for helping visitors connect with the historic resources and become more mindful could be utilized by park staff in creating interpretive media concerning the inscriptions.

Park staff should communicate the importance of keeping inscriptions intact, while at the same time continuing to document and research the names etched in the park. By relying on volunteers from local communities, as well as members of the Friends of Giant City, park staff can better organize the fieldwork and research that needs to be completed. Those groups who might be of assistance to staff include local experts in photography, history enthusiasts, school groups, Boy and Girl Scout troops, as well as any other interested parties. It is inevitable that the inscriptions will eventually become

indecipherable as the result of erosion or vandalism. Through these cooperative efforts, park staff can create a visual and historical representation of the inscriptions before they disappear.

Although rock formations within the Giant City Nature Trail are located within the Giant City Geologic Area, which is designated as a National Natural Landmark, the distinction gives no protection to the inscriptions themselves. Therefore, locating external funding sources is important to continue the documentation and research of inscriptions. By gaining support of local individuals, especially those with expertise in grant writing, park staff will be able offset costs associated with documenting and researching the inscriptions.

Recommendations for Future Research

The inscriptions contained within Giant City State Park are not the only pioneer inscriptions located in southern Illinois. Future research should focus on documenting inscriptions found across the region in order to create a catalogue of historic etchings. This compilation would provide future researchers with raw data to continue investigating the names of individuals who etched their names on rock formations in southern Illinois. This would also provide information for a combined effort between federal, state and private landowners to present the public with comprehensive information regarding the inscriptions and the individuals who created them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

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 > For: robertmorefield@ymail.com
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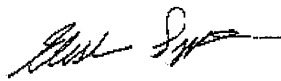
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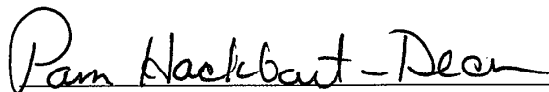
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11-10-2009

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