

Deceased veterans lists recall 'soldiers and patriots'

Among the useful books in the Indiana Room of the Monroe County Public Library is one called Deceased Monroe County Veterans. Since the county was established by the Indiana General Assembly in 1818, it is not surprising to discover that some of the earliest settlers were veterans of the Revolutionary War.

The book lists 42 people, in fact, three of whom are female, members of the Brewster family and aiders and abettors of the American Army during the war of independence. (They are buried, by the way, in the Dunn Cemetery next to the Indiana Memorial Union on the Indiana University campus.) Because their names are included on the list, it is headed, "American Revolutionary War Soldiers and Patriots 1775-1783."

Monroe Countians have long been proud of the area's history and the various residents who got here first. As early as 1852, there was an effort to organize an Old Settlers' Society.

Details of the lives of some of the Revolutionary War veterans can be found in various places in the county records and history. There were those veterans who were part of the fabric of the area they had adopted and lived here quietly, growing crops or going about the business of living in a virtual wilder-



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

ness. Others were not so anonymous.

In February of 1896, Laura D. Worley was attempting to track down the names and biographical information about as many Revolutionary War veterans as she could find. Her findings to date were published in the *Bloomington World* on Feb. 13. She issued an appeal for information about others.

Worley began: "In response to my card of inquiry I have located the graves of five of these heroes. James and Robert Blaine, Bean Blossom Township; John Heilman and wife, two miles south of Ellettsville, Figg graveyard; George Parks, Presbyterian graveyard, Ellettsville and Thomas Ashbrook, buried in Owen county on the old Ashbrook farm."

James Blain is on the list in the book at the library, but his brother is not. Worley described his contribution. "The eldest, James, entered the army in Virginia and served the entire seven years without a wound. His brother, Robert, served four years

and was equally fortunate in escaping a wound." She noted that the descendants of the Blaines are persons by the name of Harris and Chambers.

Then there was John Heilman, who enlisted from South Carolina and served for seven years. Worley adds that "His heroic wife, during his absence cultivated the farm and took care of their small children." They moved to Indiana in the fall of 1833.

George Parks was the father of James Parks, whose contributions to the life of the county in its early years are well documented. George joined the army at the tender age of 17 and was a man after serving for four years and surviving the Battle of King's Mountain.

The most flamboyant veteran of the Revolutionary War was William Lowe, who was one of the earliest land buyers in the new county of Monroe. He was already 40 years old when the Declaration of Independence was signed and came to the Indiana Territory from North Carolina when he was 80 years old.

His first stop was Washington County, but he moved to Monroe by 1818, when he was appointed "county clerk pro tem." Although he was considered a stalwart of the budding Bloomington community, he created a lot of

mischief before he expired at the age of 104.

There is an account of his life in Burton D. Myers' history of university officers and trustees. Lowe was on the first board of trustees and seems to have developed a couple of obsessions during his tenure in that post.

Lowe believed that the young Indiana College was too sectarian. Its early professors were clergymen, and Lowe was concerned that those professors could not be ecumenical enough. But Myers suggested another reason for Lowe's mischief making. It was politics.

David Maxwell, the "father of the young seminary," was an elector for the nomination of one U.S. presidential candidate, while Lowe was an elector for another one. Before he resigned from the board, Lowe had leveled charges against college officials and his fellow trustees, which would have included Maxwell.

According to the list in the Indiana Room at the library, the last of the Monroe County Revolutionary War veterans to die was Andrew Ferguson, who lived from 1765 to 1855. The county histories do not contain any information about his army service. Perhaps he was a drummer boy.

H-T 7/28/97