



# HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

SUPPLEMENTAL NEWSLETTER #16

DECEMBER 2023

*"from past generations to future generations"*

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## HERSCHER 1878 & 1879

By Bob Voss

I thought you might enjoy looking over these newspaper clippings (Kankakee Gazette) from the 1870's. Most of these clipping were authored by Jersey Blue who's name was Isaac Ayres. Remember that the Illinois Central was completed to Herscher about the time on these clippings..

- **9/12/1878**

We learn that the laying out of town lots at the station is to begin today. John R. Griffin intends putting up the first building, which will be used for a blacksmith shop.

It is reported that the name of the new station is to be Herscherville. If so, we are truly sorry as are many others. Let it be Pilot, or rather Pilot Centre, and we will be content.

- **10/17/1878**

And still they come! A tinner is putting up a shop.

A. Jackson of Chebanse, for the past three days, has been moving J.H. Buck & Bro's store on rollers. The building was left in the middle of a flax field to spend the Sabbath. (Note: This building was part of the settlement just west of Gery Wright's house)

Our friend and townsman, John Wheeler and his wife, have just returned from England. Jack left us about a year ago in single blessedness, but he did not come back as he went. He has our best wishes all the same.

We haven't heard of a doctor who talks of locating here yet.

- **11/14/1878**

Phil Karcher, a prominent man in our town, has gone in the grain business with Charlie Johnson.

The gravel train is surfacing the road with dirt taken from Lee's cut.

About 200 people got on the excursion train Friday at Herscher and Dickey crossing. A very enjoyable time was had and our thanks are due Superintendent Jeffrey for his kindness in furnishing the ride and also to the citizens of Kankakee for their warm

reception and we are sure those who visited Kankakee on that day for the first time left with a very favorable impression of it and its people. Engine 44 hauled the train with "Hi" Rogers at the throttle.

General opinion has it that railroad men are tough cases, but we know there are exceptions, and among these we find engineer H.P. Rogers and R.M. Germain, fireman of it. Through the kindness of Mr. Rogers your correspondent had a "taste" of life on a locomotive and while engaged with these gentlemen was favorably impressed with their intelligence and gentlemanly bearing. Conductor Frisbie too, an old employee of the I.C. having served the company nineteen years is another such a man and we are sure that any person falling into their hands will be treated with all due respect.

- **11/28/1878**

John Herscher has commenced building a warehouse at the station. Sam Lonergan will soon have his completed.

A large number of hogs are being shipped now. A Mr. Streight, from Cambridge, Henry County, is buying in this vicinity and near Cabery.

- **2/13/1879**

A correspondent at Herscher informs of the existence of a gas well at that Station. John Herscher has been digging a well near the corner of the Herscher block and after getting down 39 feet into blue clay, having passed through several strata of gravel, the diggers struck a stratum of clean black gravel, from whence burst a jet of water, mud, and gas. The mass shot above the surface of the ground, but subsided afterward. At last account, water still foamed, emitting a roaring sound which could be heard 80 feet distant. The man at the bottom of the well came near being drowned when the water burst through the bottom. He was completely covered with mud and water, and saved his life only by clinging to the drill rod and sides of the well and getting out as soon as possible.

- **4/3/1879**

Herscher is going to have a doctor. Dr. Caldwell, a graduate of Rush Medical College, will open an office here forthwith. He is from Neponset, Bureau County, IL.

A young druggist named Lyon, from Wyoming, IL was in town last week looking for a location.

J.H. Buck & Bro are erecting a building 25x50 feet, one story high, to be used as a store room for flour, salt, and agricultural implements.

Sam Longergan deals out lead to the geese and cranes with a seventeen shot Winchester rifle. Sam is a good shot; he dropped a Teal duck at a distance of about four hundred yards recently.

*(Note: Wait a minute. Hitting a duck with a rifle at 400 yards. I'm not believing that.)*

- **6/5/1879**

Bert Herscher has gone to Saint Louis to join the regular army.  
(Note: I am not sure how Bert fits into the Herscher family)

Sam Longergan has had a new carriage top put on his buggy, the work being done by Harry Erwin. It is a credible job.

Michael Steinbach has opened up a line of fancy articles, red handkerchiefs, and red stockings being in profusion. That is better than keeping a saloon.

John Herscher is erecting a neat little grain office.

- **7/10/1879**

A couple of genteel looking tramps were shipped from here on Fresbie's express last Friday night in a grain car, the doors and windows being securely fastened.

Herscherites have a peculiar way of treating strangers who don't act just right,- they give 'em the grand "bounce" – ship them to some place where there is a calaboose.

The express office was broken into about half past twelve of the same day, the agent being absent, having taken the mail bag over to the post office. The thieves partly pried open a draw with a pair of pinchers in the hope of plunder but obtained nothing, a package of five hundred dollars being overlooked by them in their haste. It is supposed these tramps made the attempted robbery, but as there were no proof against them they were not arrested but skipped as aforesaid.

- **9/18/1879**

Kirchoff and Beckman have at last secured a license to carry on a dram shop at Herscher. It is said their petition was signed by 150 voters of the town, but we believe that to be false for no other petition for such purpose has contained more than one hundred and ten names and we feel sure the agitation of the question by the temperance societies and people of the town has not tended to increase of petitioners, but otherwise. There was no remonstrance circulated, it being thought useless by some as the supervisors would grant a license if the petition was signed by a majority no matter how the remonstrance "panned out". There are many displeased at the prospect of having two liquor saloons in our midst.

Two young ladies from Norton were considerably frightened and more or less bruised by being thrown from a buggy near Hastwood's corner on Friday afternoon their team becoming unmanageable. The young ladies, Miss Mathew and Miss Annie Patterson, were considerably "shook up" and will probably want "Joe" to drive his own team next time they of out for a ride.

The Rev. F. Davis of Chicago organized a Presbyterian church of twenty members at the Town House yesterday. His remarks at the Hubbard school house in the evening were good.

We were glad to meet Rev. M.C. Wilcox on the Sabbath. He was taking the place of Presiding Elder Brown at the quarterly meeting at Eldridgeville.

*(Note: M.C. Wilcox was a Methodist missionary to China)*

- **11/6/1879**

Our citizens now get their steak from Austin Ewing who opened a butcher shop last week.

Mr. Jacob Oberlin has charge of Charlie Johnson's warehouse and office.

Doctor Caldwell is about erecting a building 16x24 adjoining Herbst's shoe shop to be used as an office and dispensary.

George Corris, who is clerking for Buck Bros, was thrown from a horse last week, and one foot remaining in the stirrup he was dragged about for a number of minutes, finally getting loose from the animal. His foot was badly sprained and bruised. Fortunately he escaped other injury.

John Herscher is about to enclose a whole square for a town park. A great improvement.

The contract for building the school house in the Amidon district was let to Ed Stowitts for about \$585. It is to be 24x82 and will be placed on Amidon's land south side of the railroad track.

John Leroy Sr. is credited with the first boy at the station. John Herscher has very generously given the youthful masculine a nice town lot.

The streets in town are being graded and greatly improved.

The Oigl boys had a runaway last week, tearing the wagon in pieces and seriously injuring the horses. They ran nearly three miles before they were caught.

- **11/24/1879**

It would be a pity to put a shingle roof on so fine a structure as the new Presbyterian Church. Let it be of slate.

*(Note: The Presbyterian Church was located on Main St. near the current Grade School)*

These clipping are just for 1878 and 1879 when Herscher was just beginning. We have clippings for the years following. The 1880's were the years that Herscher sprang up and ultimately incorporated. Jim Riding's spent numerous hours at the Kankakee Library scanning these clippings.

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