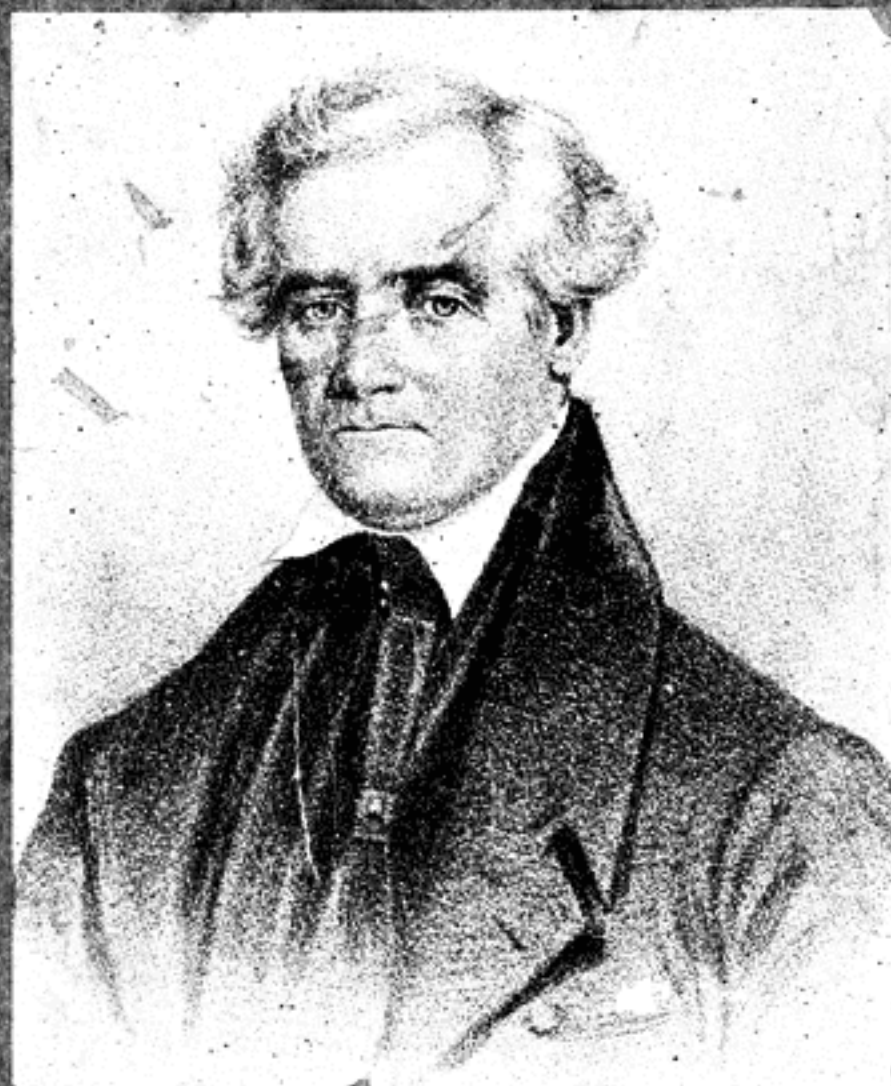


**A Glance at *The*  
History of Evans-  
ville, Indiana** *o o*

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## **Dedication.**

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This book is dedicated to the interests of the "Evansville Public Museum and Art Room," which owes its origin to the representative women of Evansville banded under the name of "Women's Federation of Clubs." Under their auspices impetus was given this project by an Art Loan exhibit held in the Willard Library building, May 5th, 1903.

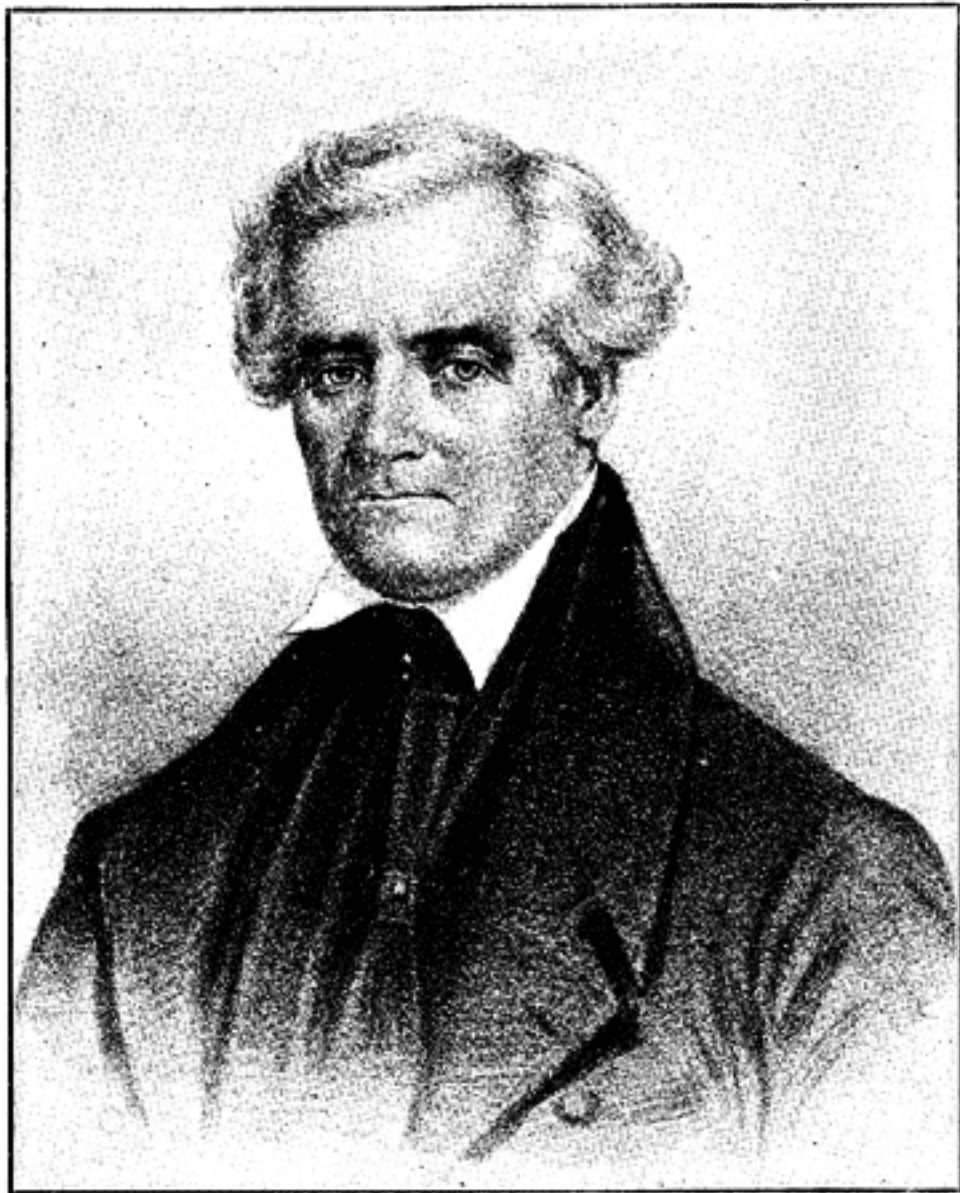
During the administration of Mayor William Akin, the Armstrong residence, formerly known as the old Barnes Homestead, was purchased. This building is situated at the head of Sunset Park, a strip of land bordering on the banks of the Ohio river, and which was a gift to the city in its early days by Gen. Robt. M. Evans. Recently it has been broadened and beautified by many magnificent shade trees, flower beds, and graceful fountains, thus making an ideal surrounding for the museum's home.

The women interested in this museum pledged themselves to pay \$3,000 towards the purchase money of the said building with the understanding that it would eventually become the "Home of Art."

At the close of the World's Fair at St. Louis, a committee visited the exhibits and procured a magnificent selection of curios, and some exquisite pieces of rare art.

In the spring of 1906 Mayor Boehne and his council turned the aforesaid building over to the "Women of Evansville," who obligated themselves to relieve the city of all expenses for maintaining the "Public Museum" which was then incorporated under the state law and its officers elected to serve for one year. One member of this official staff is a lineal descendant of Gen. Robert M. Evans, for whom Evansville was named.

The officers and directors who will serve for the initial year are the following: Dr. Edward P. Busse, President; Mrs. Andrew Keck, Vice President; Mrs. Edward Sonntag, Secretary; Mr. Henry Reis, Treasurer; and Directors, Mr. Charles Artes, Mr. Sebastian Heindricks, Mrs. North Storms, Mrs. Harry N. Cook, Dr. Katharine Snyder Busse, and Miss Isadore Eells (first president of the "Federation of Clubs.") J. S. S.



GEN. ROBERT M. EVANS.

## **A Glance at the History of Evansville, Indiana.**

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Evansville, like all western towns, owes its birth to the ever steady march of civilization towards "the land of the setting sun."

The first settler was Col. Hugh McGary, a man of much intelligence and forethought. He was a native of Kentucky, though of Virginian parentage, and a companion in arms with Daniel Boone. With this hero he fought against the allied tribes of Wyandottes, Miamis, Pottawattamies, Shawnees, and Cherokees, who, in the year 1812, were incited by Simon Girty, a white runagate, to attack the settlers of Kentucky.

Col. Boone and Col. McGary organized a small pioneer army for the protection of these settlers and even the women armed themselves and fought for the safety of their homes and little ones. Later on a portion of this small army joined its forces with those of Gen. William Harrison, then commander of the western part of Indiana territory, and fought with him at Tippecanoe, in which bloody battle the Indians were completely subdued and peace established.

After the "pipe of peace" had been smoked Col. McGary with several companies started to return home. They took the Indian pathway leading from Vincennes and at night-fall halted to camp on the banks of the Ohio near what is now the foot of Evansville's main thoroughfare.

On the following morning Col. McGary arose very early and when he saw the beautiful view along the river front, he declared his intention of laying a claim to this fertile tract of land.

Accordingly, on March 27, 1812, four weeks after he had reached his home at Bardston, Ky., he persuaded his two brothers and several friends to return with him to this pleasing camping ground.

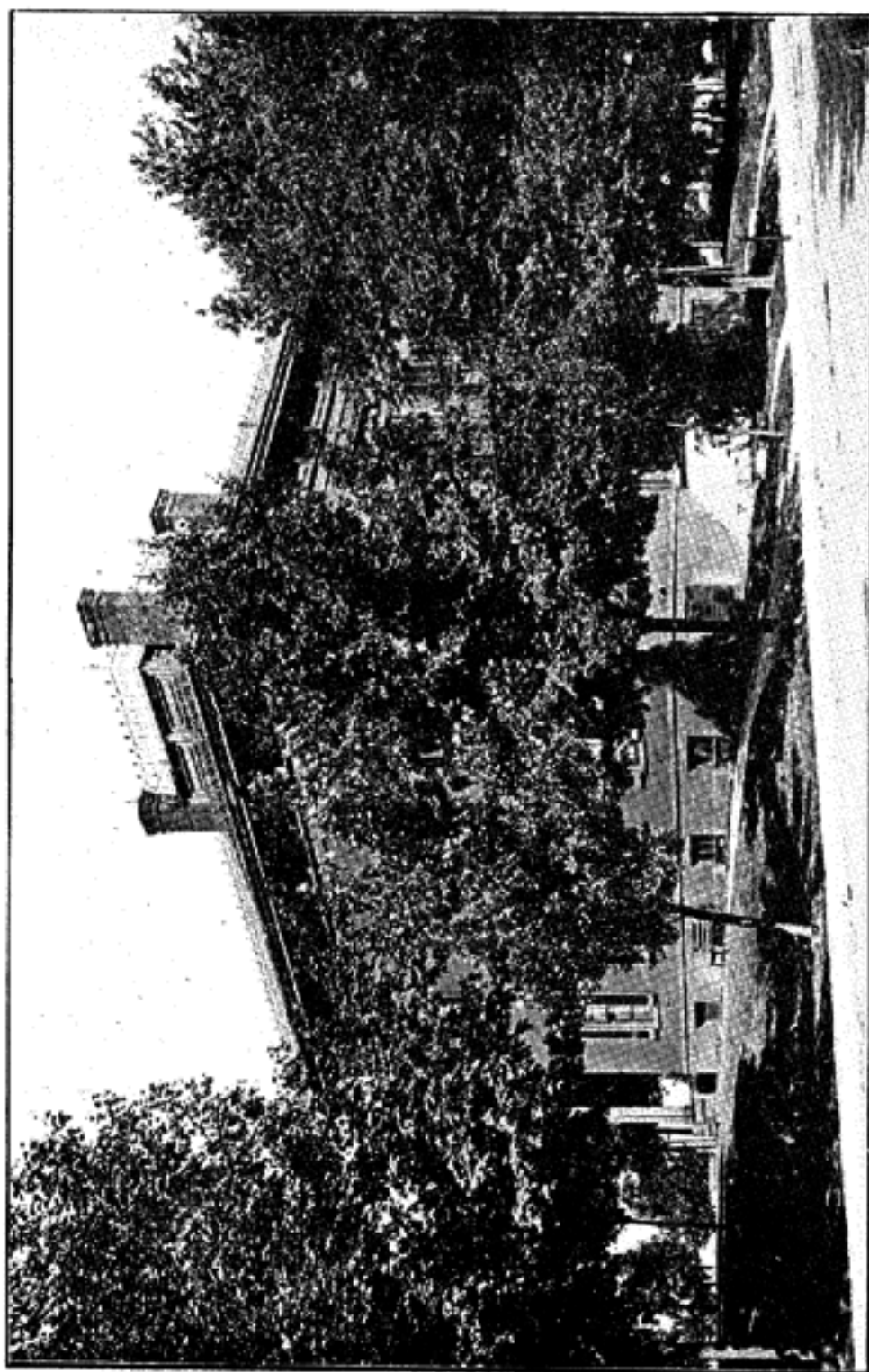


Here they built a cabin about forty feet from the present line of lower Main street and twenty-five feet from Water street. This building was a two-roomed log house constructed like most of the houses of the early settlers almost entirely without nails, wooden pegs being used in their stead. The windows and doors were made of split boards fastened by a sliding beam from the inside and on the outside of the crude habitation were hung coon, bear, and wolf skins.

Recently the site of this first house in Evansville has been appropriately marked by Capt. Tardy, who has planted an elm tree where the cabin once stood and all patriotic natives of Evansville are watching with keen interest the growth of this tree, hoping that it will soon develop into a sturdy and beautiful specimen of "elmhood."

After building this cabin, however, Col. McGary did not make it his home but he visited his claim quite often and made many improvements. In 1816 he sold a part of his interest to a man named James Jones and another part to Gen. Robert M. Evans. These three then laid out a town and soon six little cabins sprang up to keep company with the original McGary cabin. But, unfortunately, scarcely a year had passed by before there were so many misunderstandings about the original plans of the proposed city that Gen. Evans found it necessary to make new plans for the laying out of a city. He also bought out the share of James Jones and thus became owner of more than one-half of the original claim. Consequently when the city was named it was called Evansville in his honor instead of being named for its real founder.

Col. McGary continued a faithful friend of this settlement until his death but the Fates seemed to have desired to blot his name and fame from the escutcheon of Evansville, for despite the fact that he was the founder of the town his name was not given to the city and even the stork cruelly passed him by, bringing the first baby born on this site to a family named Linxweiler, who had originally



THE ART AND MUSEUM BUILDING.

floated down the Ohio in a flatboat but when they arrived at the foot of what is now Ingle's Coal Mine Hill they broke up their boat and built a cabin in its stead. Shortly after the completion of this cabin the stork brought the Linxweilers a sturdy baby boy.

When Col. McGary and Gen. Evans laid out the proposed city of Evansville in 1817, they also laid out a number of lots and gave them to Warrick county upon the condition that a court house should be located here. The legislature refused to accept this ground and located the court house four miles from Newburg. In the following year, however, owing to the local advantages of Evansville and a donation of 100 lots with \$500 cash from the settlers, the court house of Vanderburgh county was located here.

The first session of the Circuit Court convened Feb. 23rd, 1818, in Col. McGary's house. David Hart was the presiding judge and Hugh McGary was the first clerk of the court. The two associate judges had never been known to have opened a law book in their lives but they were sensible, level-headed men and filled their positions creditably.

At this time there were but 101 white inhabitants in the town. They lived in log cabins on what was then called State Road, but is now known as Main street. There was but one inn, the Bull's Head, which was kept by Ansell Wood, Esq., and likewise but one grocery or general store. This store was built by Col. McGary on what is now the lower corner of Water and Main streets.

Money was seldom seen in the early days of this settlement and the settlers exchanged coon, bear and wolf skins for groceries, tea, and coffee. Taxes, which about this time were levied upon the people for the improvement of the roads, were also paid in this way.

Up until 1819 there was an Indian village at the mouth of Pigeon Creek, which now runs through the west end of this city. The settlers were often attacked by these Indians and a number of white chil-

dren were stolen and either kept in captivity or sold to other tribes where they were treated most cruelly. One of these captives, Isaac Knight, whose parents came from Washington county, Pennsylvania, gives us a most interesting account of the hardships he endured while living among the savages. Only one old squaw showed him any kindness. She attempted to cure him when he was suffering from smallpox by rubbing his sores with a rough stone and then bathing him during the month of December in the icy waters of the river. This poor lad at last escaped from his captors, after having seen two of his companions killed and the meat of their scalps cut off, cooked and eaten so that the Indian warriors could truthfully say "I have killed my enemies and eaten them."

In 1820 there was a great deal of sickness and suffering among the settlers of Evansville and as a consequence a number of them migrated to other fields. Among those who deserted this settlement was its founder, who went to Tennessee and there lived to a great age.

But health and prosperity soon returned to those who remained in Evansville and the town grew very rapidly. The soil around this settlement was sandy loam, well adapted for the growth of wheat, oats, barley and other garden produce. Corn and vegetables grew so rapidly that an American humorist in describing the growth of this corn said that a lad once climbed up a corn stalk and then tried to climb down but the stalk grew so rapidly that he could not reach the ground. Then some one came with an axe and tried to chop down the stalk but before he succeeded in his attempt the corn tassel had almost reached the sky. This same humorist described Indiana beets as growing so large that their roots extended through the earth to China.

Wild game was plentiful and the early settlers of Evansville, like many of their Kentucky ancestors, distilled great quantities of whisky, which was drunk in the harvest field almost as freely as the



farmers of to-day drink water, but this liquor being pure and unadulterated did little harm.

The first postmaster of Evansville was Daniel Warner who was appointed by President James Monroe in 1819. He received the munificent salary of \$50.00 per annum but as in those days there were but few letters to be received or sent he was perhaps well paid for his services.

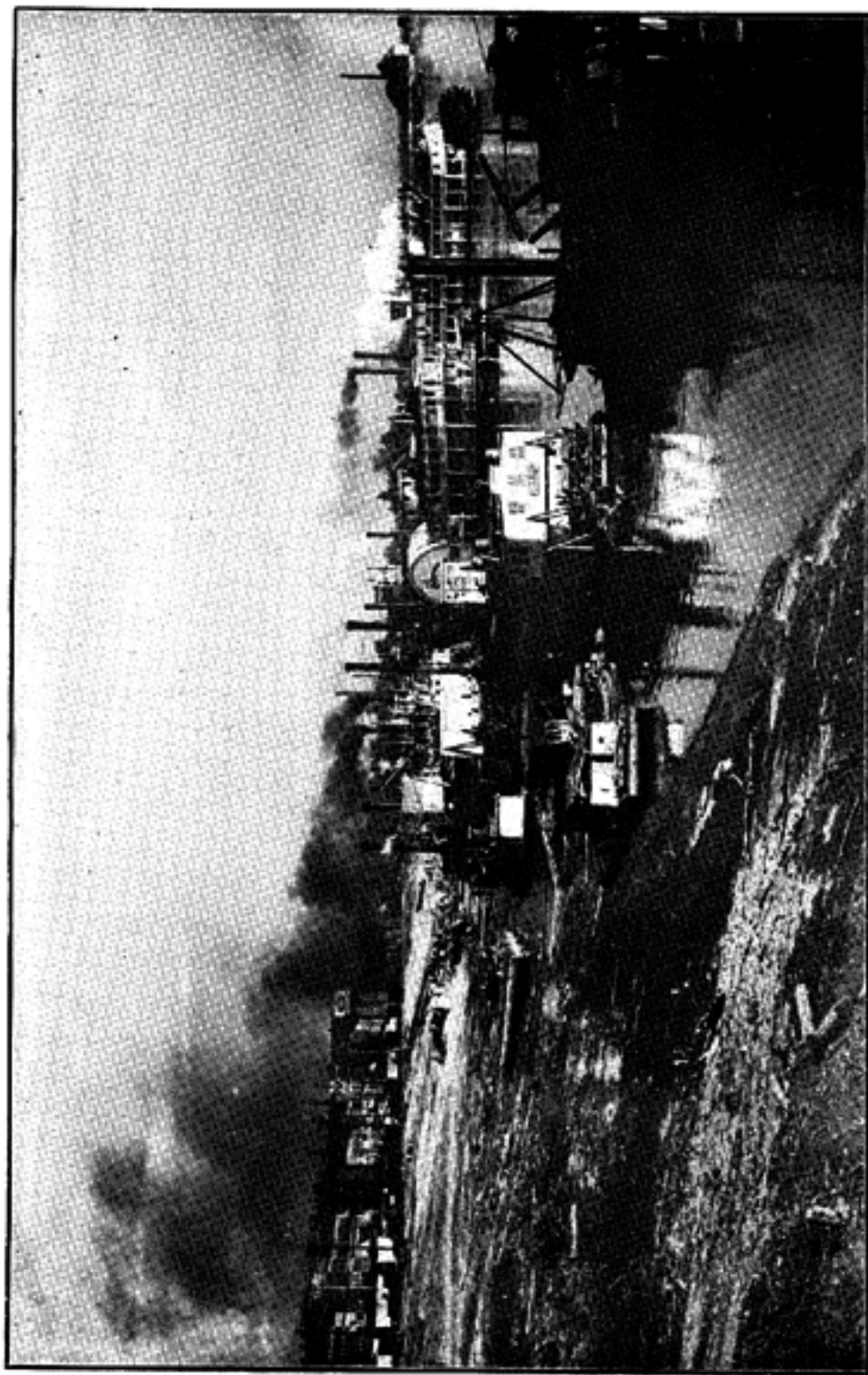
In this same year an old sailor of the Revolutionary war, being weary of the sea, resolved to become a landsman. Accordingly he built a cabin of unhewn logs as a school house and tried to draw pupils from all Vanderburgh county, claiming that he could teach "learnin' and spellin' as well as sailin' on the sea."

None of his pupils are alive to tell us how much they learned from their sailor teacher but he was regarded by many of the settlers as being mentally unsound and after his death they ignored his will in which he requested that his body be placed on a log pile and cremated.

The first steamboat to ply the waters of the Ohio was looked upon with wonder and amazement as it steamed past Evansville. This boat was called the Robert Fulton and was built in Pittsburg for plying between that city and New Orleans. It was a wee side-wheeler with a single deck and a cabin right above the hull. So slowly did she sail that several old settlers, it is claimed, walked for fifteen miles and kept pace with her. Consequently, after a short time she was used solely for transportation of passengers, and freight continued to be carried by sail boats and barges for many years.

Up until 1821, when the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church was organized, there was no house of worship in Evansville, but ever since 1817 camp meetings have been held regularly on Coal Mine Hill.

In 1836, Evansville had quite a boom when the terminus of the Wabash and Erie canal was located here and also a branch of the State Bank established. Up to this time, Louisville and Vincennes



**VIEW ON RIVER FRONT.**

furnished nearly all the supplies for the settlers living within a radius of 100 miles. Polish Jews, Italian and Greek peddlers also made a good living traveling with their packs of trinkets and wearing apparel. Great was the joy of many housewives in those days when they saw a peddler with a well-filled pack approaching in the distance and none of these ladies begged to be excused from viewing his goods as their granddaughters of to-day would do.

But now Evansville (much to the chagrin of her older sisters, Vincennes, New Harmony, Princeton, Boonville, Fort Branch and Newburg) began to grow so rapidly that she soon became a great marketing center and in fifty years made such gigantic strides that she became the second largest city in Indiana. She also took nearly all of the river trade from the towns of Henderson and Owensboro in Kentucky.

In 1845 a company with capital stock of \$1,500 was formed for building canal boats. They excavated a large basin from ground formerly used as a graveyard, and now occupied by the court house. This company, however, did not prove a success and in 1865 the canal was filled up. Eight years later this plot of ground was purchased for \$54,000 and a magnificent court house erected upon it. The court house, together with the jail near by, were completed in 1891 at a cost of \$650,000.

In the early days each new postmaster was expected to use a room in his own home for the post-office, but since 1879 it has been located in the custom house.

Although Evansville has not as yet celebrated her first centenary she can boast of being the second largest city in her state, having a population of 80,000 inhabitants, and from the one little State Road of Col. McGary's time with its six rude cabins, have grown 230 broad and level streets, most of which are well paved and kept in excellent order. She can likewise boast of having more manufactories than any other city of her size in the union

and it is said that she has the largest hardwood market in the world.

Instead of making long trips up the river to get supplies as the citizens of early days were compelled to make, nine railroads carry supplies to and from this city which is so situated as to make an excellent railroad center and market for goods shipped from the North and the South.

A number of steamboats also carry produce up the Ohio and Green rivers and in addition to the usefulness of these river boats for shipping they also furnish pleasure to those who delight in viewing the beautiful scenery along the Green and Big Barren rivers. The steamers "Park City" and "Bowling Green" carry passengers from Evansville up these rivers noted for their ever varied and unsurpassed scenery to the very mouth of that wonder of the world "The Mammoth Cave" of Kentucky.

No true lover of nature need hunger for scenes of beauty, while living in Evansville as the country drives are beyond reproach. The scenery of hill and dale, the magnificent forests of oak and elm trees interlaced with dense shrubbery and vines, the fields of waving grain over which myriads of fireflies love to throw their flickering lights after the sun has gone to rest in his golden nest, and the neat farm houses with their well-kept lawns dotted with many colored flowers, surprise all strangers into exclamations of delight.

Travelers also claim that the sunsets in this vicinity outrival those of far famed Italy.

The children of Evansville do not suffer for want of fresh air as those of many other cities because the streets are so wide and there is scarcely a house that does not have at least one or two flower beds. Besides there are eleven beautiful parks where the little ones are free to enjoy themselves playing in the grass and shrubbery.

There are good homes for the poor and needy and for the shelter of helpless orphans; the Rathbone home for old ladies, and a number of comfort-



able homes where factory girls can live at small cost. The city has an excellent system of street railways, 23 churches, 10 hospitals, 18 hotels, 9 banks, 4 theatres, 16 newspapers and periodicals, 64 ministers, 111 physicians and 100 lawyers, many of whom rank high in their profession throughout the state.

A number of noted men have also come from this portion of "Hoosierdom" and despite the fact that Evansville is still a very youthful city, she is not lacking in historic interest as in her near vicinity is New Harmony, the so-called "Athens of the West," which was founded by the Rappites and afterwards became the home of the first socialistic community of America. Old Vincennes, which has been immortalized by Maurice Thompson's famous novel, "Alice of Old Vincennes," and the site of old Fort Sackville recently appropriately marked by the Daughters of the Revolution, are also within close range of Evansville.

Owing to the kindness of Honorable Willard Carpenter, who gave to this city in 1876 property worth \$200,000 to be used for maintaining a public library, the citizens of Evansville have enjoyed the pleasures of a well equipped library since 1884 when the Willard Library was completed. A branch of the Tabard Inn Library is also located here and well patronized.

Woodmere, the southern Indiana hospital for the insane, is located on the Newburg road about three miles from the city limits. It was finished in July, 1890, at a cost of about \$457,000 and having a capacity of 400 patients.

In 1856 the United States government built a marine hospital on the block between Ohio and Vermont streets and Wabash and Tenth avenues for the care and treatment of sick sailors who made their living on boats plying between Pittsburg and New Orleans and often had no place that they could call their home. After the war this building was sold to the Sisters of Charity who made a contract



VIEW ON COAL MINE HILL.

with the government to reserve certain wards for sick and disabled sailors.

The present Marine Hospital, of which Dr. James Buchanan Stoner is Surgeon-in-command, was built in 1888, when ten acres of land on the western outskirts of the city were purchased by the government and buildings costing \$125,000 erected. These buildings with their beautifully kept grounds form one of the prettist sights about Evansville.

There are many beautiful homes in Evansville and also a number of public buildings which attract the notice of strangers. Among these, the new Elks' Home, which has but recently been opened, is perhaps the most magnificent.

Looking back over the history of Evansville for the past fifty years, all of her citizens should indeed be proud of the rapid strides that she has made towards winning for herself a place among the great cities of the United States.