

Newburg People of Prominence in 1892

By Gary Knehans

Incorporated as a village in November, 1888, Newburg continued its speedy growth in the years that followed. By 1892, it was quite a nice town, filled with people who worked hard not only to feed their families, but also to further advance the progress of their community.

Some of the more prominent citizens of that day were named and discussed in a lengthy "booster" article in the "Rolla New Era" in 1892. Their biographies, which were listed in the newspaper, are condensed and rewritten here to shed some light on the early residents of Newburg.

K. P. Alexander, age 27, the chairman of the board of trustees of Newburg, came to the town in 1889, when he was promoted to the position of foreman of the Newburg Shops and Round House. Originally from St. Louis, Alexander's rising career with the railroads had taken him in previous years to Kansas City and Springfield. Firmly established in Newburg by 1892, he had purchased six acres of land within the city limits, which he platted into lots for sale. On one of the lots, Alexander had constructed a house for his family.

Frank L. Kitchell, 40, a native of New Jersey, came to Missouri in 1866 and worked several years with the Frisco Railroad before employment at the Knotwell Ironworks near Newburg. Kitchell went into merchandising in 1881 at Beaver, but later moved his business to Arlington. When Newburg was founded, Alexander moved to the new community. The father of five children, he had been a member of the school board and town trustees, and was at this date the senior member of the firm of Marshall and Company.

John A. Hillerich, 63, a German by birth, brought international flavor to the village of Newburg. Hillerich and his son, George, were the town butchers, and were described as solid and substantial citizens.

Jerome M. Diehl, 37, came to Newburg after a stint as a farmer. At one time, he was a partner in the management of the Little Piney Mills. Arriving in Newburg in 1890, Diehl went into general merchandising. He also became the Newburg postmaster upon presidential appointment in 1890.

N. L. Burwell was the proprietor and owner of the Burwell House, just opposite the train depot. A native of Kentucky, he worked at Knotwell Ironworks for a number of years. When Newburg was first laid out, Burwell purchased four lots opposite the depot and erected his hotel building. This was described as a well kept hotel, which was the dinner station for the day passenger trains of the Frisco in '92.

Michael McNerney, age 30, a 12 year railroad veteran, was the conductor of the Dixon Hill engine at Newburg. Married in 1887 to Mary E. DeShirley of Newburg, he was by 1892 the father of three children.

John M. Dickinson, 34, was the town's railroad agent. A native of Tennessee, he had worked as agent and telegraph operator at various sites since he was 13 years of age. Dickinson was one of the prime movers in the organization of a town board for Newburg. His position with the railroad company ranked next to the division superintendent.

George R. Miller, 50, came to Newburg in 1892 after an illustrious career in adjoining counties. He was deputy sheriff and collector in Phelps County in 1869 and 1870. Miller ran a fruit farm and marble shop near Rolla for nine years. A native of Phelps County, he lived in his younger years in Pulaski County, where his father was a member of the county court for a long period. In '92, Miller, who was the father of eight children, rented the Sullivan House in Newburg and operated it.

Hiram Jones, 45, was in the liquor and hotel business in Newburg. Listed in '92 as a member of the school board and of the town board of trustees, he married Alice Murphy, the daughter of the late Dr. A. J. Moore of Dixon, in 1884. He had seven children by an earlier marriage, she had three children by a previous marriage.

Clinton Huckins was listed as the head blacksmith at the Frisco Shops. Also married to a Dixon woman, Minnie Smith, the daughter of Jeff Smith, Huckins had worked for eight years previously in Dixon for the Frisco Railroad.

William Butler, 42, was stationary engineer in the back shop of the Frisco Railroad operation in Newburg. He had worked in Newburg for eight years. He and his wife at that point were the parents of three fine sons.

James Huckins, listed as a machinist in the Frisco Shops, came to Rolla with his parents in 1867. Educated in Rolla, he had been in Newburg for four years. He was the father of five children.

William T. Hutcheson, 43, was a physician and druggist. He studied medicine under Drs. W. E. Glenn and M. C. Hutcheson. The second son of Robertus E. and Virginia Hutcheson, William was Newburg postmaster under Presidents Arthur and Cleveland.

Robert Peter Johnson, 42, a native of Denmark, came to Newburg in April, 1884. Known by the nicknames of "Pete" and "Old Reliable", he was car repairer and inspector and captain of the wrecking car for the railroad company. He was an 1892 member of the board of town trustees and of the school board.

Napoleon Bonaparte Prior, 36, was elected justice of the peace for Arlington township in 1890. For the past two years, he had been road overseer.

Oscar W. Jones, 38, was a man of varied background. Educated in Rolla, he had been a deputy county clerk, a travelling salesman, and a mining store manager. In 1892, Jones was with J. M. Diehl, dealer of general merchandise in Newburg.

Charles W. Hulland, 41, a native of Kentucky, came to Missouri in 1876. After a period of training in St. Louis, he became head machinist of the Frisco Shops in Newburg. Listed as a member and the secretary of the board of town trustees, he was the father of three children.

James Oliver Harp, 33, became an orphan at an early age. After a stay in an orphan's home in Webster Groves, a couple arranged for his adoption. Four sisters and two brothers also



Newburg Front Street in 1911 1/2 block west of the Houston House. The frame buildings burned in 1917.

were adopted, but by different families. For a while, Harp lost trace of them, but apparently located them shortly before 1892. Raised primarily by "Uncle" Eli Allen in Miller County, James Harp learned the blacksmithing trade in Dixon. He later switched his vocation to railroading and became a passenger engine fireman in Newburg. His wife was Amanda Hughes of Dixon. Their family included two children at the time of the 1892 newspaper article.

Robertus A. Hutcheson, 37, was better known as "Alton", the principal of the Newburg school. He was the brother of William Hutcheson, another son of Robertus E. and Virginia Hutcheson. The younger Robertus was born in Maries County, educated in Indiana, and had taught school for ten years at the writing of the article. He was listed as having taught four terms of the Newburg school, whose enrollment in '92 was 132. "Alton is quite literary in his habits," said the article, "and some people have attributed to him the work entitled: 'How to Be Happy, Though Married'."

James Sullivan, age 33, was a locomotive engineer for the railroad operation in Newburg. He began his railroad career as a water boy in 1869. Unmarried, Sullivan lived with his parents in Newburg. Noting that 1892 was a leap year, the newspaper article said, "A gentle hint to the ladies we hope will be sufficient."

John Weckerly, 46, also was a locomotive engineer with the Newburg operation. He had worked a passenger run for many years. His wife, Frances, though the mother of three children, managed a successful general store in town. John was a 22 year veteran of the railroad profession.

Joseph C. Todd, 32, was a junior partner in the firm of Jones and Todd. He came to Newburg in the fall of 1883, was married in 1890, and was the father of a new infant daughter.

Daniel D. Burns, 37, was a medical doctor in Newburg in 1892. The article said he lived in Newburg since it was first started. Dr. Burns erected the second house put up in the village. The father of five children, he rode all over the Ozarks to administer to the needs of the sick. At the time of the newspaper article, he was a member and the secretary of the Newburg school board.

Joseph H. Blue, 37, was a blacksmith and wagon maker in the community. A native of Schuyler County, he lived near Lebanon during the civil war. Blue came to Phelps County in 1871 and lived on Mill Creek, where he learned blacksmithing from his father. Moving to Newburg in 1855, he established the first blacksmith shop in the town. A wagon shop and a feed and livery stable accompanied this shop.

John B. Spradling, age 46, the town marshal of Newburg, was a native of Tennessee. He came to Missouri and settled with his parents in Phelps County in 1850. Spradling served three years in the Confederate Army and came to Newburg around 1887. In '92, his aged father still lived on Mill Creek, where he was reported to be "hale and hearty and 85 years of age at his next birthday in August next."

Morris C. Moore, 38, was a locomotive engineer and a member of the board of town trustees and of the school board. At one time, he was employed at the Meramec Iron Works as a clerk in the company's store. In 1881, he commenced railroading and became a fireman. Moore became an engineer in 1886. He was married, the father of a daughter one year old, and owned his own home in Newburg.

James Kearney, 45, was the principal member of the firm of Scanlan and Company, dealers in sand, gravel, building stone, and wood, and proprietors of Livery, Feed, and Sale Stable and Transfer Line. He had been a railroad engineer until September, 1889, when he was laid off on account of his health. A bachelor, Kearney owned considerable property in the eastern and western United States. He was making his home at Newburg, boarding at the Newburg House, which was run by R. C. Murphy. Kearney also was a dealer in Angora goats, fine jacks and horses, game chickens, Emden geese, Pekin ducks, and fancy bulldogs. An easterner, he was born in New York.

Perry D. Hawkins, 38, the junior member of the firm of Marshall and Company, was born in Phelps County. He was the son of Robert P. Hawkins, whom the article said was one of the pioneers of that county. Hawkins joined Marshall and Company in 1883.