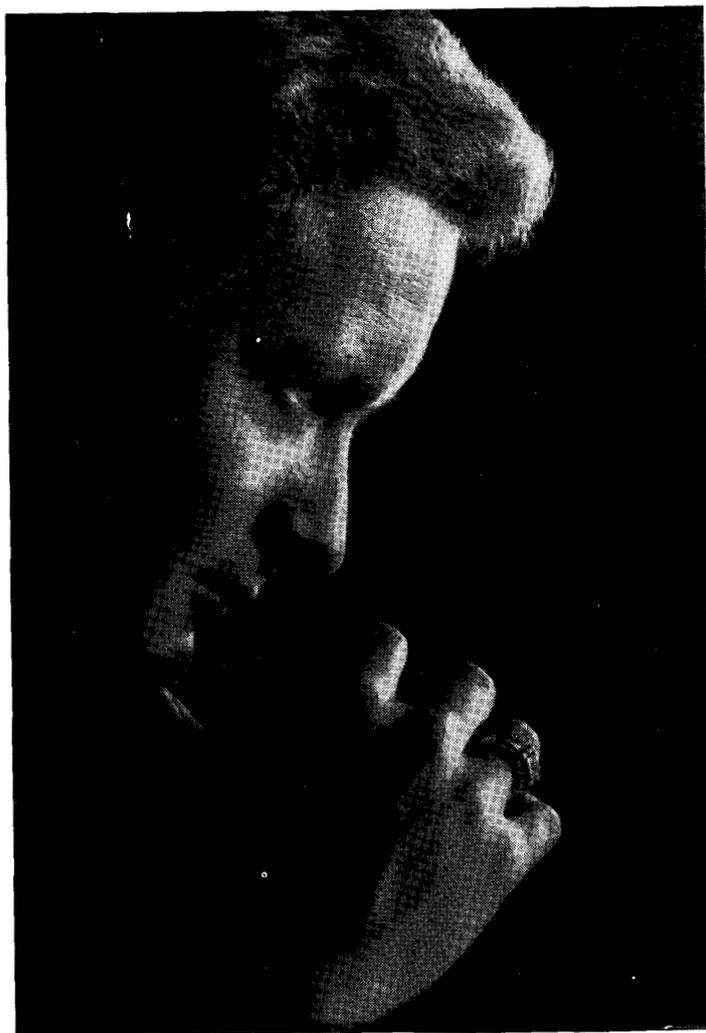


CHAPTER 9

People Who Helped Put Moweaqua On The Map



The versatile R. Garey Hodge

Moweauqua has had its share of citizens who have established themselves in various fields. These contributions range from art to politics. The following resumes present a brief look into their lives and perhaps give encouragement to the present generation demonstrating that being from a small town can be an asset. Their names could well be included in the Tricentennial Book.

ARTIST WITH BRUSH AND PEN

Sherry Lowe Wempen, a native daughter of Moweauqua, has captured much of the history and beauty around her hometown by putting it on canvas. She uses oils or watercolors, large canvas or miniatures; and has painted over a hundred pictures, many of them winning ribbons at art shows. Her pen, too, is versatile; it might be a poem, a child's story, or an article vividly describing a vacation or experience. Many of these have also been published. Sherry is a member of the National League of American Pen Women.

THE VERSATILE R. GAREY HODGE

Garey was born in Moweauqua July 27, 1937. He graduated from Moweauqua High School, received a Master's Degree with distinction, from Eastern Illinois University, attended Chicago Academy of Arts, and a summer at Harvard University. He is head of the art department and is boys tennis coach at Lanphier High School in Springfield, as well as instructor for the Springfield Art Association, and on the Executive Council of the Illinois Art Education Association.

Garey has exhibited in more than two dozen art exhibitions — some of them in Peoria, Decatur, Springfield and Chicago. He has also shown his sculpture and paintings in St. Louis, Evansville and New York City. This accomplished artist has also exhibited internationally, in London and Barcelona. Some of the exhibits are one, two or three man exhibitions.

He has received many honors such as having the cover painting on the November issue of *LaRevue Moderne*, Paris, France; New York World's Fair Sculpture Award; listed in *Artists, USA (70-71)*; and in 1973 *Who's Who in American Art*.

Garey is a member of many educational, sports and dramatic organizations, and has travelled throughout the United States and Europe. He specializes in sports paintings of professional athletes including the St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago Bears, racing driver Al Unser, St. Louis Blues hockey team, and world team tennis player, Rod Laver.

MABEL GREGORY WALKER WRITES HISTORY VOLUME

Most of the following is taken from the *Moweauqua News*, 1930:

Mabel was born in Shelby County the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Gregory.

The friendship shown to the Moweauqua Public Library in its infancy has not ceased with time, and a number of volumes have recently been added to its shelves by very interesting persons. The *Making of a Nation* was the gift of Mrs. Mabel Gregory Walker of Columbus, Ohio; one of the three collaborators of the volume, which is a history of the United States.

Until a few years ago, Mrs. Walker made her home in Moweauqua graduating from the local high school, after which she received her B.A. degree from the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. She was a pupil in the history class of Prof. Harry Barnes, faculty member of the University of Boston; and it was his suggestion that the *Making of a Nation* be written.

As originally planned, Mrs. Walker was to cover the period from the beginning to the Civil War; and the instructor was to complete the volume, while Elizabeth Anthony Dexter was to serve as critic. However, it so happened that the writing of the complete history was done by Mrs. Walker and the volume bears the names of all three persons. She received her doctor's degree after the publication of the volume, hence the scholastic letters were omitted from her name of authorship.

Mrs. Walker is the author of several short stories for children and several other histories. She also is the author of a novel, *A Saga in Green*.

WRITES FOUR NOVELS ABOUT HOMETOWN

The following information is from many issues of the *Moweauqua News*:

Dora Aydelotte was born in Illinois in 1878, spent her early life in Moweauqua, and died at the age of 90. She spent most of her later life in Oklahoma. Her father was a partner of J. T. Haslam in one of the early dry goods and grocery stores in the Moweauqua area.

Though she attained fame in the literary world, she first went to art school in Richmond, Virginia in 1900. Miss Aydelotte had work published in the *Forum*, by the Dodd Mead Company, and portions of her work were broadcast over radio station WCFL, Chicago. She received the annual prize award of the National League of American Penwomen, was an honorary member of the National League of Pen Women, and conducted writing classes in Oklahoma City. Most of her material was taken from pioneer background in Moweauqua and Oklahoma, and she gave the local library copies of her writings.

She is best remembered for her six novels. Her first novel, *Long Furrows*, had as its format the story of the Miller family with the setting around her hometown as she remembered it. Its title was taken from the 125th Psalm. It is a vivid story of the hardships, heartbreaks, and joys of two generations ago, at the end of the nineteenth century.

Green Gravel is the attractive title of Miss Aydelotte's second book. It is a charming story of youthful exuberance and experience, suitable for girls from 8 to 80 to read and enjoy. Although the author's characters are modeled after local residents, they did not always recognize themselves because of the many changes Miss Aydelotte made to suit the exigencies of her plot. The title is derived from a game stretching far back into antiquity. Such landmarks as Keiser's Hall, the old calaboose, the schoolhouse, and many other places and events came to life on her printed pages.

Trumpets Calling, her third novel, had excellent advance reviews of the quality and accuracy of the pioneer story whose setting is the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma. You can feel the burning merciless heat, protracted droughts, interspersed with emotions of heartache, love and laughter.

Full Harvest is the rich and plenteous title of the fourth book written by Dora Aydelotte. It is a sequel to her first novel, continuing the saga of the Miller family in its detail and photographic clarity. Her other books were dedicated to members of her family, but this one was dedicated to a personal friend, Mrs. Edna Sollars, who also was a Moweaqua resident and author in her own right.

Dora Aydelotte, the Sage Woman of the Cornland (the title given to her by the editor of the *Forum*), has vividly portrayed the "good ole days" in words that brought her fame and helped to put Moweaqua on the map, probably getting many to get out their atlas to see where this little village was on the map of the USA.

A fifth novel, *The Run of the Stars*, came off the press in 1940. The story tells of the long and stubborn fight waged by the common man against the wealthier overlords. You will enjoy the setting of this novel — the country store with its glittering tin can front and the people who come alive as the fight is won and the free range of the old west is no more.

A year later followed *Across the Prairie* which tells of the ill-fated "Boomer Army" and its hopeless attempts to settle the great southwest by force and lawlessness as Tenny Travis stands unflinching for the preservation of the home.

I. N. CORRINGTON WRITES POETRY

The following item appeared in the Moweaqua News in December 14, 1932:

Friends have received copies of Isaac Newton Corrington's latest book *The World's Love Story* which is read with interest and profit. It is expressed in excellent language. The book is dedicated "To My Little Crew and You," the latter being his wife, Minne Ferre Corrington.

Other gift books written by our former townsman and musician are *The Quest for Immortality*, *America's Historic Dawnings*, *Sage, Sand, and Sunshine*, and *The Spirit of the Desert*.

Mr. and Mrs. Corrington and their two sons are now living in Pasadena, California.

EDNA SOLLARS HAS WRITING CAREER

Most of the following was taken from the *Moweaqua News*, 1937:

In the May 1937 issue of *Coronet*, that handsome small-sized magazine, appears the name of Edna Sollars signed to an article entitled, "The Queen and The Cat," the first of six on nursery rhymes. This discusses the origin and meaning of the cat and the fiddle.

Readers of the *Decatur Review* will remember that Edna Sollars was the *Review's* correspondent in Moweaqua for many years. She wrote many articles about the history and highlights around our village. She had a way with words which made her articles very descriptive and enjoyable to read. In addition to her correspondence of community news, she wrote many feature articles. For those who did not know Mrs. Sollars, the interesting fact is that she was blind from the birth of her only child, Pauline. To the amazement of many she made her way about Moweaqua almost as well as anyone with eyesight.

She lived in Chicago for many years with her daughter, Pauline, who had married Gid Housh also a Moweaqua native. She did not quit her writing, in fact she increased it until now she has a more than comfortable income. She gathered her information by interview and turned it into readable copy on her typewriter.

She also writes syndicated articles. One of her recent ones was on furniture and appears in the *Catholic World* and she has written for *Commerce*, a business magazine published in Chicago for the Midwest. In addition she does considerable free-lance writing. She became the editor of a section in *Gardens and Modern Homes* in 1935 for a number of years.

Many will remember her as the teacher for the Mary and Martha class at the Methodist Church for many years. Though maybe she had not "seen" you for many years, all she needed to do was hear your voice. And on the trips that she took, through other's eyes she saw so much more than others whose sight was perfect. In her conversation she would always tell "What she saw". She was frequently in the audience of the local Lyric during the silent films, and her companion would read the captions. When "talkies" came in she enjoyed them even more. Being blind did not prevent Mrs. Sollars from attaining goals that many without that handicap have been unable to reach.

ELLE BOWERS, ACTRESS

Eleanor Bowersock, daughter of Mrs. Lou Gregory Bowersock, spent her early childhood on a farm one mile west of Moweaqua. Her great-grandfather, Michael Schneider was one of the founders of Moweaqua.

Mrs. Bowersock moved to California in the 1940's and since 1945 Eleanor has been active in film and television work, using the stage name Elle Bowers.

Elle has worked at all the major Hollywood studios and in the early 1950's worked as June Allyson's photographic double. She has worked in films with Marilyn Monroe, Bette Davis, Barbra Streisand, Orson Welles and Pat Boone. *Ma and Pa Kettle*, *Chained*, *Lili*, *Violent Saturday* and *For Pete Sake* are a few of her film credits.

In television, she appeared in many of the Raymond Burr "Perry Mason" episodes and most recently in "Doc Elliot" opposite James Franciscus. She often appears in commercials, work she thoroughly enjoys as it is less time consuming. Elle makes her home in Beverly Hills, California.

ISABEL WITHERS, ACTRESS

Isabel Withers was born Isabella Irene Withers on Jan. 20, 1896 a daughter of Edward H. and Minnie Snow Withers. Her father was a photographer, who in the 1880's had what was then called a "photo car". He was one of the finest photographers in the Moweaqua area. Isabel spent a good portion of her youth in Moweaqua, often times in the home of her aunt, Mrs. Valentine Snyder, Jr.

She attended acting school in Kansas City and her first professional acting was for William Keighley in the stage play, *The Melting Pot*. Since that time she has appeared in over thirty plays, appearing opposite Geo. M. Cohan, Elliot Nugent, Pauline Frederick and Charlotte Greenwood. Her first film appearance was in 1930 opposite Joan Crawford in *Paid*. Altogether she appeared in more than forty films and

numerous radio and television productions. Her last professional acting was in a 1960 TV segment of Robert Taylor's *Detectives*.

Miss Withers died September 3, 1968 and following services in Hollywood her remains were sent to Moweaqua for burial in the West Side Cemetery.

MUSIC BY JAY COFFMAN

On October 31, 1917 the following article was printed in the Moweaqua News:

A new music roll for a player-piano is made from the music composed and written by Jay Coffman. It is an instrumental ragtime composition, first published in sheet music form as a piano solo, later the music was put on rolls for the player-piano. The company who cataloged and manufactured the rolls, say it has been a good seller and have asked Mr. Coffman to send them more of his compositions. The tune is titled *Jerusha Pepper Rag*.

DON DREW OF THE CHEERIO BOYS

Don Drew, who has added much color to our village, is the son of P. L. and Frances Drew. Don was a music pupil of Grant Hadley at the Millikin Conservatory of Music and is a member of Delta Sigma Phi. In 1941, he married Mary Dobson, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. J. W. Dobson. Mary attended Millikin and is a member of Alpha Phi Omega. They have one son, Don. The following is taken from the *Moweaqua News* as we scanned it for additions to our history book.

The Cheerio Boys were one of the most popular musical organizations ever known in this city, and as their name suggests, lend an atmosphere of cheer and dash to every gathering in which they perform. The group began quite informally. Lloyd Adamson and Don Drew were driving gaily along the local streets, humming to themselves as they dodged various autos and trucks. Hearing a hail from a nearby corner, they picked up Tom Nalbach, and the humming duet became a trio. Before many blocks had been traversed, another lad was added to the number, and Charles Stout made the fourth. They decided to meet in the hospitable Drew homestead. Mrs. Drew became their inspiration and critic. That was three years ago and the sings and friendships have continued to sing at lodges, schools, churches, celebrations, fairs, etc., always receiving a repeated and enthusiastic encore.

All were lettermen in football, and all but one had won basketball letters. They all graduated from Moweaqua High in 1928-29.

It would not be complete without including the trip the Cheerio Boys took in '29. Leaving Moweaqua Friday morning at 8:30 A.M. they journeyed southward on a sight-seeing trip. By way of Pana, Vandalia, Sandoval, Flora and other towns they returned home. They sang on street corners and passed the hat after Don gave his line about making their way back home. They sang at an auto race in Breeze, netting \$10. They arrived home Sunday, one flat tire and one rain shower being their only misfortune during the trip, and they counted it a wonderful outing.

Don Drew was accepted for the men's chorus in the St. Louis Municipal Opera the summer of 1933. He was one of thirty to be taken from 800 aspirants. After the three months season closed, Don was one of the chorus chosen for a two

week contract by the St. Louis Theater to give sketches from the operas. Later Don was again one of the chorus as they boarded a special train for Texas to give the following operas: *Florodora*, *Nina Rosa*, and *Bittersweet*. Don was one of fifteen that was chosen.

He toured with the chorus in Schubert's Opera as they travelled through the midwest. In 1933 he appeared at the Grand Opera House in Chicago. In 1936, he was in a Paramount singles reel taken in New York City. The sketch, *A Broadway Highlight* was taken from Earl Carroll's *Vanities*.

Don appeared in twelve musicals with the St. Louis Opera. The troupe appeared at the Dallas State Fair, then one night stands in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Little Rock, Memphis, Nashville, Columbus, and Chicago. Then he went to New York where he played Vaudeville and was in three shows on Broadway, *Bittersweet*, *Say When* with Bob Hope and Earl Carroll's *Vanities*.

Since he and Mary both drank from Flat Branch, they "commute" between California and the old hometown. They have fixed up "their old homestead" in the former telephone office that he and his father, P. L., operated for many years. The decor has many reminders of the good old days.

TED CARSELL, MUSICIAN

Ted Carsell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Carsell, was born in Moweaqua and attended the Moweaqua schools. He was active in local theatrical productions and was very talented in both the musical and acting fields.

Deciding to pursue a career in the entertainment field he attended the Decatur College of Music and later studied pipe organ in Greensburg, Ind. During the days of silent films he served as the pianist at the Lincoln Square Theater in Decatur and the Lyric Theater in Moweaqua.

At one time he was the pianist for the Leslie Sanders evangelistic group, appearing throughout the midwest and south. For a time he was with the Charlie Wortham tent shows, a popular form of entertainment during the 1920's. In 1926 he was with the Blair-Donovan Company appearing in legitimate stage and vaudeville acts in Chicago and throughout the midwest. Being a talented musician he was always in demand and played at numerous supper clubs.

Ted is now retired and resides in Santa Rosa, California.

GEORGE L. MEREDITH

George L. Meredith came to Moweaqua as an orphan in 1918, when he was seventeen. Several people befriended him and helped him find various kinds of work. He studied law and osteopathy in his free time. In 1926 Mr. Meredith and Syrena Howse were married, bought a farm near Patoka, Illinois, and spent sixteen years there. They then returned to Moweaqua and bought a home at 230 North Macon Street where Mr. Meredith set up an osteopathy practice. After fifteen years he retired and the Merediths moved to Mountain Home, Arkansas, where they live. He later practiced osteopathy there. Mr. Meredith began composing songs and has written over 75 to date. One song, "Blue Southland," was in Paul Robeson's repertoire. Another, "Pretty Moon," was in an album which made ninth place on the charts. His newest song, "Pictures in the Rich, Red Wine" is to be released this summer.

Taken from the *Moweaqua News*, January 17, 1945: "Moweaqua Man Has Song Accepted for Publication." Mr. George L. Meredith has been informed that a song written by him has been accepted for publication by a New York music company.

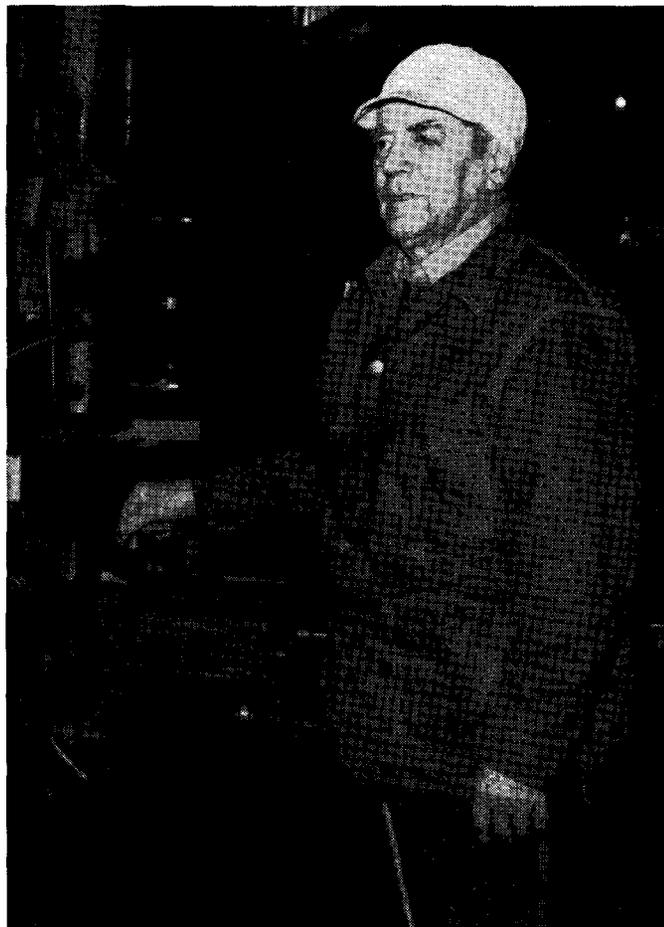
OWEN HILVETY

Owen Hilvety was born March 27, 1904 in Shelby County, the oldest child of Luther O. and Sallie Ahl Hilvety. Owen showed his mechanical ability as a very young child. He could name the parts of a steam engine before he learned his ABC's. He started running that steam engine for his father's threshing rig when he was ten years old.

In farming he has always been forward looking. He was among the first in the community to practice minimum tillage and was one of the first to study and use chemical fertilizers and weed killers, which he now distributes.

Owen started repairing cars and tractors in a small shop as a side line to his farming. Next he converted an old bus into a traveling welding and machine shop so he could take the shop to the work. He repaired broken tools and machines and built a few bridges. He went all over the country for several tire companies changing steel tractor wheels to rubber. If a missing part is not at hand. Owen makes the part. He designed and made the hydraulic basketball goals for the new Moweaqua School.

Owen designs and manufactures parts for sprayers for firms throughout the midlands, from Texas to Minnesota.



Owen Hilvety

Since Owen's hobby is piloting his own airplane, he built hangars and a small airfield on his farm, the first in Shelby County. Many local pilots learned to fly from Hilvety Airport. Owen has a rating of Captain in the Civil Air Patrol.

The R.E.A. magazine, *Farm Journal*, *Successful Farming*, and the *Prairie Farmer* sent their photographers for items for their magazines at regular intervals.

Owen is married to the former Blanch Garrett and they have one son, Neal.

INVENTS NEW TYPE OF MOTOR

The following is an excerpt from the *Moweaqua News* issue of April 12, 1939:

J. C. Connor of Peoria, Illinois, formerly of Moweaqua and Ted Moore of this village, have invented a new rocket type motor on which they have been working for the past three years and expect to have patented in the near future.

This motor is claimed to make a savings of 80% on fuel, eliminates the use of cylinder oil and water cooling system. Simple in construction, it also eliminated the crankshaft, pistons, and valves.

Small in construction this new rocket type motor will develop an immense amount of horsepower and speed.

MONTANA SENATOR WAS MOWEAQUAN

The following is condensed from an article in the *Moweaqua News*, February 17, 1926:

Senator Glenn Corrington is another example of leaders coming from a rural environment. He spent all of his boyhood in Moweaqua, graduating from the high school class of 1905, and then going as a student to the University of Illinois and later graduating from business college.

Mr. Corrington went to the more sparsely settled west, settled in Montana where he homesteaded until he proved his claim. He later went into business in Ryegate, was its mayor for several years, and is now a member of the Senatorial Body of his state.

JAMES E. DUFFY, ABC TELEVISION PRESIDENT

The following is taken from a personal letter from Mr. Duffy and his best wishes for much success for the Moweaqua Bicentennial Celebration.

Mr. Duffy lived in the mid 1930's with his mother and grandmother and grandfather on the John Wheeler Adams Farm, just west of town. This formerly had been the John Ponting Farm and represented a landmark in this area of the country. He attended Moweaqua public schools from kindergarten to the second grade and remembers the mine disaster of 1932. His mother, Corrine Longenbaugh, and her mother, Helen Longenbaugh, and her brothers and sisters lived in Moweaqua in a house across from the old hospital and funeral home for a number of years. His mother and grandmother are deceased.

Through the years, he has had the pleasure of visiting Moweaqua on occasion, and it still stands strongly in his

memory as a very friendly and solid town that provided some very happy moments in the early part of his life.

Mr. Duffy is president of ABC television.

LOCAL "SON" BECOMES CIRCUIT JUDGE

Robert J. Sanders, the son of Emerson and Daisy Armstrong Sanders, spent his early years in Moweaqua. Daisy Armstrong Sanders, age 97, is the only living grandchild of John Armstrong, who was one of the first white settlers in northern Shelby County, having built a log cabin on Section 6 in Penn Township in 1825. On July 6, 1940, Robert married Mary Bohlen, who is also a graduate of the University of Illinois, majoring in hospital dietetics and interning at St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester, Minn.

Shortly after graduating from the University of Illinois College of Law, Judge Sanders began his law career in Moweaqua, where he practiced until entering the military service in World War II as a private. Before completing his military career, he advanced from the rank of private to captain, being commissioned in the Judge Advocate's Corps.

Upon being discharged from military service he entered the race for county judge of Shelby County. He was elected to that office in 1946, and continued in that position until 1966. In that year he aspired to become a Circuit Judge in the Fourth Judicial Circuit, and was retained as a Circuit Judge in the Fourth Judicial Circuit in 1972. This circuit consists of nine counties in south central Illinois, with Shelby and Christian counties being the most northern counties of the circuit. Judge Sanders stated that of his many judicial duties, adoptions are the most gratifying of all, as he realizes an unwanted child will be given an opportunity to grow and develop in a good home with loving parents.

In the spring of 1947 Judge Sanders, his wife Mary, and their two small daughters, Nancy Jane and Mary Carol, moved to Shelbyville, so he would be nearer his work. They resided in Shelbyville until the fall of 1967, at which time they

built a home in the Bohlen Addition of Moweaqua. This seemed a logical place for retirement, as so many of their good friends and relatives reside in the Moweaqua area.

DR. CHARLES L. STEWART

Charles L. Stewart was born September 3, 1890 in Moweaqua the son of James Gray and Tryphena Margaret Brooks. He married Ruth Want in 1916 and they had two sons and two daughters. Since his interests were in economics and agriculture, he was an instructor, advisor, and researcher in many areas. Some of the universities where he was on staff were the University of Illinois, University of Arkansas, International Institute of Agriculture, as well as governmental positions both in this country and abroad. Because of his background, ability, and understanding he authored books in his field.

He received many outstanding honors, belonging to many honorary fraternities, was sketched in each issue of Who's Who from 1920 to 1976. But probably even more of an honor are the testimonials of his many students and colleagues of the influence he had on their lives. As a national scholar, Stewart's best known contribution was his conception and development in the 1920's of an export debenture plan, and used later in a federal price-support legislation. As a community leader, he was the sponsor of pension legislation. He was a devoted member of the United Methodist Church, and even here touched many of the young people.

The memorial in honor of Professor Charles L. Stewart that was presented to the University of Illinois College of Agriculture faculty at its meeting of February 7, 1975, following his death September 1, 1974, summarizes his life: Because of his boundless energy, keen intellect, and independence of thought Charles L. Stewart symbolizes a lifetime of professional service in research, teaching and national policy-making; and, because of his warmth as a human being and his great consideration for others as well as his contributions, he will be long remembered by his many friends and associates.