

James H. Doughty
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"Village of London," 1870__1880
Lives In Poetry
"A Book of Poems" By Burdine Blake

*to Madison County
London, Ohio.*

A book of poems consisting of over six thousand lines of verse written by Burdine Blake, who was mayor of London in the seventies was found in a rubbish pile in Kansas City. The two hundred and thirty-five pages of the book reveal many of the civic and social problems that existed in "Village of London" from 1870 to 1880. Over thirty-five citizens of London are woven into the book. Among the names mentioned: James Raburn, (The Old Clown) B. F. Custer, Isacc Curl, James "Brick" Ryan, Robert Boyd, B. Marsh. Val Bower, MC Cloud, O'Donnel, Bryn, E.S. McLean, Richard Caslee, John and Jim Alf, Pat Powers, E.S. Freeman, Minshall, Jacob Beshar, Zada Brush, Chas Lowe, Proff. A.S. Kieffer, Wyatt Minshal, Minnie Minshal, Mary Ellen Blake wife of Burdine Blake, Ellen Blake, Bertha Blake, Etta Blake, Fannie Blake, Laura Hamilton, Col. Geo Ross, E. Gould, Eliza Christman, Samuel Drew, E. J. Meyers, Miss Rosanna Martins, Posey Chiseldine, Bro. Taylor, J. W. Hodge, J.E. Watson, G. R. Street, sons of the author, William, Daniel, James Blake, numerous relatives. Also the London Times, The Enterprise and Democrat papers are listed as are others who received copies of "Mary Ellen Music Books".

Fifty verses of Blake's book are about the town council and other officials of London of the years 1872-3-4. Notes alongside the poems are especially interesting. By one "Who'll Stand up for the Mayor?" there is the following note:

At the bottom of one hundred lines of verse, there is the following note: "Please excuse me. I could not help writing the above lines when the papers told us that you (General Grant) had banished wine from your table New Years Day. May God bless you, your administration the ensuing term. May it be proclaimed by law no more alcoholic or intoxicating liquors to be manufactured except for Science or Medicines. God Bless you!...Fare you well!

B. Blake, Mayor of the Incorporated
Village of Madison, Madison, County, Ohio

Sent a copy of the above to General Grant at Washington D. C. Jan. 31,
A. D. 1873

J. Doughty to London Press London Ohio
About three hundred lines follow the Title: "A Description of the Town Council and Corporation Officers of London, Madison County, Ohio for the Years 1872-3&4" By B. Blake, written as the spirit moves me. Parts of the description are fiery, parts decidedly funny.

It was the habit of Blake on arriving home from church to write of happenings and the sermon. One entry is: "Fear not, Little Flock", Thomas Munro's Text Oct, 20th, 1870 at eleven o'clock, A. M. in verse. (No 37 481 verses)

Other titles, "Gethsemane", The Judgement Morn, Come in, All hail! , The wonder of Grace, Sabbath, Home of Youth, At the Close of Day, Within the Fold, Lamb of calvary, Thanksgiving, Christmas 1872, Farewell to 1872, Murphy's Band, The Musical Million with notes that the sheet of that name costs fifty cents per year, The Blacksmith that charges twelve and one-half cents for replacement of a worn shoe and twenty-five cents for new ones. "An Address to My three Boys James, Daniel, William," (William Leaves for Singers Grove Virginia). This Day I take the train for Cincinnati in the service of the Lord, Today I'm fifty years old, Mary, come sit by me, The Camel Back Dress, To Minnie Minshal Blake Wanted to marry her, He was a very lonely man after the death of his wife in 1857. It is the belief of the writer that Mary Ellen and Blake were married in 1844. Burdine Blake at that time was twenty-one years old. Hundreds of lines are addressed to Mary Ellen down through the years that the book spans, from 1870 to 1906. He tells her of his plans, his hopes, the rearing of the three sons. Especially touching is that which starts: "Tis three and thirty years ago that Maryy went away". Others addressed to "My Mary" are much the same. The last entry is dated 1906. It is writing grows increasingly shaky. The last entries are easy to read. But as the years pass his writing hand shows

ABOUT THREE HUNDRED LINES FOLLOW THE READING: A DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN

About three hundred lines follow the heading: A Discription of The Town Council and Corporation Officers Of London, Madison County Ohio for the

The following is an advertisement found in the book:

ACTON & CO. and Co.

Wholesale and Retail Dealers in
Family groceries and Provisions

Acton's Corner, Mainstreet, London, Ohio

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We have just opened for the inspection of the public one of largest and most complete stocks of Family Groceries and Provisions ever offered in this market, consisting in part of:

SUGARS,.....COFFEES.....TEAS.....MOLASSES.....SYRUPS
SALT FISH.....TOBACCO AND CIGARS.....SOAP
STARCH...CANDLES....BUCKETS.....TUBS
BROOMS...POWDER....SHOT....LEAD
HAMS AND DRIED BEEF
FINE FAMILY FLOUR

In short, anything and everything to be found in a first class Family Grocery establishment.

In addition we have on hand a large assortment of:

Candies, Nuts, Raisens, Spices, Pickles, Cakes, Crackers,
Canned oysters, Toys &c. Toys &c., &c.

As we bought our stock for cash, we intend to sell at very small profit, and thus secure for ourselves a liberal share of public patronage. RECOLLECT the place,
ACTON'S Corner, Phiefer House Block, Mainstreet.

ACTON AND CO.

London, Aug. 27, 1863

With the above there is the following news:

"What is left of the gallant old 26th arrived at camp Chase late on Saturday night, consequently our citizens who had waited around the depot during the day did not get to see them until Monday morning. When the regiment left Ohio in August 1861 they numbered over one thousand men, and at the time of re-enlistment as veterans at Knoxville, Tenn., January 5th, 1864, numbered just one hundred and eighty-seven men. We doubt if any Ohio regiment, save the fifth will show as large falling off as the battle scarred 26th. Company K. had one hundred men at that time. At the time of re-enlistment, they numbered sixteen all told. For an extended notice of the hardships endured and the deeds of gallantry performed by this devoted band of patriots, see an article from the Ohio State Journal.

Major Squires, Capt. James Hume and Lieu. Erastus Guy accompany the boys home. They have thirty days furlough, dating from Monday last. We are indebted to Capt. Hume for the following statistics in relation to Company K.

RE-ENLISTED AS VETERANS

Sergs. David Brooks, Henry W. Roland....Privates: Travis Lynch, Claudius Ellison, John Byers, Robert Powell, Isaac Mains, George Weems, William Steel, Patrick Corcoran, Nathaniel Clark, Louis Holswiger, Charles Howsman,, Joseph Kern, John B. Moore, John Bradley.

J. H. Doughty

The following is an advertisement found in the book:

ACTON AND CO.

Wholesale and Retail Dealers

Council and Corporation Officers Of London, Madison County Ohio for the

Acton's Corner, Cincinnati, Ohio

We have just opened for the inspection of the public one of the most complete stocks of Family Groceries and provisions ever offered in this market, consisting in part of:

SUGARS.....COFFEES.....TEAS.....BUTTERES.....SYRUPS
SAIT TIRE.....TOBACCO AND CIGARS.....SOAP
STARCH.....CANDLES.....BUCKETS.....TINS
BEANS.....POWDER.....SHOT.....LEAD
HAMS AND BACON.....RICE.....FLOUR

In short, nothing and everything to be found in a first class family grocery establishment. In addition we have on hand a large assortment of: Canned goods, Pickles, Spices, Pickled, Canned, Groceries, and various other goods, etc.

As we handle our stock for cash, we intend to sell at very small profits, and thus secure for ourselves a liberal share of public patronage. RESPECTFULLY, ACTON AND CO., 101 N. 3rd St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

London, Aug. 27, 1863

Whereas above there is the following news:

What is left of the gallant old 69th arrived at camp Chase late on Saturday night, consequently our citizens who had waited around the depot during the day did not get to see them until Monday morning. When the regiment left Ohio in August 1861 they numbered over one thousand men, and at the time of re-enlistment as veterans at Knoxville, Tenn., January 20, 1862, numbered just one hundred and eighty-seven men. We doubt if any Ohio regiment, save the 11th, will show as large a falling off as the battle scarred 69th. Company K had one hundred men at that time. At the time of re-enlistment, they numbered sixteen all told. For an extended notice of the hardships endured and the deeds of gallantry performed by this devoted band of patriots, see an article from the Ohio State Journal.

Major Spitzer, Capt. James H. and Lieut. Ernestus H. are among the boys here. They have thirty days furlough, dating from Monday Aug. 10. We are indebted to Capt. Hume for the following statement in relation to Company K.

RE-ENLISTED AS VETERANS

Sergeants: David Brooks, Henry W. Roland... Privates: David Lynch, George Wilson, John Myers, Robert Pomeroy, Isaac Keith, George Wynn, William Fitch, Patrick Gordon, Nathaniel Clark, Louis Holst, Charles Bowman, Joseph Kern, John B. Moore, John Bradley.

"These lines are written by me under very trying circumstances.
I was elected Mayor of London on the first Monday in April, A. D, 1872
And being a prohibitionist, the whiskey men, "proffessed christians," tried
to break down my administration. They obstructed my enforcing the liquor
laws for the two years served. The council repealed the salary ordinance
which was contrary to law and refused to pay. After my term expired, I sued
in court, and after a stand of five years "lawing", I got the salary but paid my
lawyers McCloud and O'Donnel three hundred dollars, which was just one half."

Blake was a very religious man, but believed in action along with
prayer to better the town. Women flocked to his side in the clean-up fight.

"Prayers and songs to heaven they sent
While up and down the street they went
O wonderous! O Wonderous sights
As these were witnessed day and night

Such powerful prayers and songs so sweet
Was never heard upon our streets
Strong men stood trembling, then with fear
They felt the God of Heaven was near

On went the women with courage bold
Without regard to heat or cold
To sing and pray upon the street
Mid rain and mud and stormy sleet

The first saloon they found to yield
Was Patrick Powers in the field
To him they prayed to be a man
The powers of God he could not stand

So now they went for S. E. Freeman
He sent them word he could not see them
So they bothered him along
'Til he acknowledged he was wrong

And then he made a mighty sale
Where Minshal bought his fattened quail
In went B. F. Custer with a rush
And bought his wines for Zada Brush

J. H. Clayton

Blake wrote of John Brown and his raiding men, and of the taking of Brown at Harper's Ferry. He admired the man, greatly. His account starts with:

"Of all the men of great renown
Who lived and walked with us on earth
There's none so brave as old John Brown
Who gave his life for freedom's worth!"

The rebs they fought and bravely too
They fought as rebels always do
They fought in fields and in the towns
But none so brave as old John Brown
On battle fields the blood did flow
Where wheat and rye and corn did grow

The lines lead on, telling about the shooting of a negro and the siege of the fort. Opposite the writing of "Brave John Brown", a poem of eighty verses, "Where Families Dwell" has a foot note stating that it was published in the Vigilant. Many of the poems were published, according to the notes.

Evidently, Blake traveled around considerably. Two pages tell of buffalo around Kansas City bellowing a good bye forever as the first trunk-line railway train entered the place:

"On the morning of Feb. 23rd, the last herd of Buffalo that remained in this vicinity threw their tails into the air and galloped westward through the grass grown streets of the village of Westport. Three miles from Westport Landing on the Missouri river, near the confluence of the river Kaw and bellowed a good bye forever to that territory. A little later in the day, the plain to the west was seen to be alive with prairie dogs, and their companions, the rattlesnake and the owl, they too were bound in the same direction as the buffalo. As the day wore on, a band of Indians with feathers, war paint, blanket and moccasin, followed by squaw and papoose, pony and litter, stoically turned face to the westward, leaving behind them haunt and home of their fathers for the land of the setting sun, never to return.

And why this migration of man and animal? I will tell you with one word. CIVILIZATION!

Civilization had reached that point (place) on the Missouri river known as Westport Landing and had given it a new name Kansas City! And what of this new place? I will try to tell you, as well as I can, in the brief time allotted. (At this point in Blake's story, there is a break, leaving the writer of this article wondering as to all that Blake might have written, had he more time.)

"When the sun rose on Feb. 24th, this new gateway to the golden west had a complete municipal government in active service. Streets were being laid out and graded, additions were being platted, the buildings being erected from material unloaded from boats at the landing, and everywhere was evidence of a new life and spirit. As the sun pursued its onward course, it shone on the road-bed makers and track layers of the first railroad to enter this new city. Just at nightfall, a shrill resounding whistle was heard at the depot, where carpenters hammers were driving the last nails, putting on the finishing touches. Two days and a city under construction with a trunkline railroad in full operation!"

Then up the stairs the women went
The door was locked; the night they spent
Upon their knees upon the stairs
In songs of praise, in songs of prayers

They sang and prayed for Jacob Beshner
Until he thought h'd make them fresher
He got so mad he could have threshed
So them with water he just splashed

They watched for him all through the town
And in the livery office found
That he was in and sitting there
So then again they knelt in prayer

That he would quit the liquor dealing
And stop the peoples money stealing

He made them wet, he made them mad
We must arrest him so they said
An affidavit they did file
It made him mad, It made him "bile"

On they went to Mary Webers
Although she was a woman clever
She would not scare, no never, never
Her from beer they could not sever

When they came, she stood her ground
Although they sang and prayed around
They asked her for the pledge to sign
She said "No", My beer I cain't resign."

So they tried to worry her out
She was too big, she was too stout
They could not Mary Weber rout
Nor would she pour her lager out
~~When Mary got mad, I heard her~~
When Mary got mad I heard her say,
They drove her customers away
So after a while she found
The women watching all around

She said that praying women had
Taken from her children bread
And while she wept and swore and sobbed
Forgot that others she had robbed.

The preceding lines are but a fraction of the thousands written on Blake's fight against liquor. Blake fought against the "Beef Trust" of the vicinity, writing of the ~~the~~ agreement boosted the price of meats in the town by half again what it was worth. Reading his verse of such struggles gives one the belief that Blake was ready to take all comers, man or devil. He was certain that the latter lurked at the skating rink, and cautioned young people against such frivolity.

Janeal Doughty

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Deserters:....Paten Buckly, WM. H. H, Curlis; Thomas Conneally, Joseph Mahoy, Lemuel Reed, Nelson Swogger, John Toops, William Guy.

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Prisoners of war now in the hands of the rebels:...Marion Anderson, James Campbell, Serg. Isaac Ray, David Showalter, Jas.M. Wright,A. Clingham, David Moler. These prisoners are now confined in Libby Prison at Richmond Virginia.

Killed in Battle:.....Serg.Benj C. Putman, killed at the battle of stone river;Dec. 31st, 1862; Wm. S. Swyger, killed in same engagement; Jerry Flynn, killed at Chicamauga, Oct.19,1863; Samuel S. Cisna, killed in same engagement; Wayne Simpkins,killed at Chicamauga; Gamaeiel W. Sanders,killed at Chicamauga; Patrick Graham, killed at Chicamauga; Marion Williams, promoted to Company"E",killed at Chicamauga; Jacob Benderwald, killed at Mission Ridge Albert S. Jones killed in a bayonet charge at Lavergne, Tenn. Dec 27,1862; Abel Mock in front of Corinth,Miss., May 25,1862; John Devault, killed at Mission Ridge."

An enclosed letter is addressed to Mrs. Wm. P. Rhodes, formerly of Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland. It bears a three cent stamp, a mark of Point Comfort, April 30, 1865. "By Flag Of Truce" is written twice on the envelope, heavily underscored. The letter;

" Petersburg Virginia
16th of March 1865

Dear Mother,

I have seated myself to write you a few lines to relieve your anxiety on my account. I am very well and have been so ever since I left you but would like once more to see the dear ones at home. I am very comfortably placed. I am acting as Couier to the Medical Director of the Army and do not have any ~~hard work~~ to do. I am kindly treated and but that I often think of my old home and wish I was there___am very well satisfied. You know that I am entirely to young to be in the army___And on that account I am treated more kindly by the gentlemen with whom I am. Do not be uneasy about me as I am getting along well. Give my love to all and accept the largest portion for yourself. Direct to me to the care of Sing. L. Guild Medical Director of Army of Nothern Virginia and write at once___giving all the news of home to___

Your affectionate Son
Silas W. Rhodes

When you write sendme a few stamps.

