

JESSE R. SURRELLS.

As stated last week, we this week give a brief history of the eventful life of our late esteemed county treasurer, Jesse R. Surrells. We say a brief history, for a full narration of the interesting incidents of his long, honorable and useful life would fill a volume.

Jesse R. Surrells was born in Virginia, January 10, 1803, and at the time of his death, January 21, 1879, was aged 76 years and 11 days. He was of French extraction, his grandfather having come to America with Lafayette in the days of the Revolution, and served in the war. His ancestors settled in Virginia after the close of the Revolution, and at the age of eleven Jesse P., together with his father and family, emigrated to Kentucky, where they remained for a time, and then removed to Indiana. In 1831, at the age of 28, Mr. Surrells came to Clay county, Illinois, where he resided, with the exception of short intervals, until 1854, when he came to Effingham county, and has resided here continuously until the time of his death. He was married three times, having five children by his first wife, five by the second, and one by the third, his present widow. Of these, one by the first, W. P. Surrells, three by the second, and the one by his present widow, survive him. As may be inferred from his connection with the early history of our county, his life was checkered and eventful; but through it all wells irresistibly to the surface the motto, HONESTY.

During his residence in Clay county he carried on the business of raftsmen, and while engaged in this business he made several trips to New Orleans with produce and merchandise. On one of these trips during an epidemic he was attacked with the cholera, from which he however recovered. It was no uncommon thing in those days for merchants to be their own carriers, and Uncle Jesse was one of this class. A flat boat would be built on the banks of some suitable stream, and launched loaded with the produce of the country. The boat was always well manned with experienced river men, and at the first rise of the stream would be cut loose and floated all the way to New Orleans. Uncle Jesse carried on this business and, as already stated, made several of these hazardous voyages, embarking on the Little Wabash near Louisville, Clay county. In this way he accumulated quite a competency, C

owned toward pay him of his indebtedness. Nor did he rest here, where men of even much reputed honesty would have halted. The gold fever of California had begun its ravages by this time, and Uncle Jesse, with his son Perry, started in penury in 1850 for the West. Here he was again successful, and in 1853 returned to Louisville with several thousand dollars in gold, with which he paid off every cent of the indebtedness left upon his shoulders by his disaster upon the river. This was the crowning act of his life, and in it is found the true reflex of his character. It takes rank with any act of Aristides, the just, and only gives place to Walter Scott's typical discharge from indebtedness in point of amount. Again a poor man, he came to Effingham in 1854, going behind the counters of C. F. Falley, then a merchant of this place. After a few years' service for Mr. Falley he became an employe of J. Matte, the principal merchant of this place at that time, with whom he continued for some six years.

With his subsequent life our readers are familiar. He had held the office of county treasurer for six terms, his death occurring while yet an incumbent of that office. While a resident of Clay county he was similarly honored, being for many years a justice of the peace in that county, and for twelve years its sheriff. From his settlement in Clay county in 1831, he may be really called a resident of this county; for his name is indissolubly connected with the important events of our county's history from his first advent in Clay.

He was a laborer on the National Road in 1832, and many a shovelful of dirt, now unrecognizable in its decaying grade, were thrown up by the hands of the deceased. His patriotism, too, was never lacking when his country was imperiled. He raised a company for the Mexican war, but the quota of our state being full he was compelled to return, and age only prevented him from bearing arms against the Southern Confederacy.

Such was the life to which that large concourse of citizens and impressive funeral pageant paid such marked tribute upon last Wednesday, when his remains were consigned to their last resting place. The men who knew of and had been the recipients of his lavish liberality and favors crowded around and followed him to his grave. Perhaps no man's name has appeared oftener, and upon more paper as security than that of Jesse R. Surrells, and no name has given that paper more evidences of value. In life he bore an irreproachable character, was a man of uncompromising honor and sterling integrity, and in death he commanded