

## DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Taking Care of Sick Only Business for  
Three Months; William C. Holgate  
Pays Tribute to Edwin Phelps

**Editor's Note**—In the issue of Oct. 18, 1886, the Defiance County Express published an article by William C. Holgate, referring to the Phelps historical series which the Crescent-News is now reprinting. Because of the valuable data it contains and its illuminating comments upon the work and character of Edwin Phelps, we interrupt the Phelps articles to reprint the Holgate letter in its proper chronological order.

### BY WILLIAM C. HOLGATE

Editor of the Express: I have noticed with interest some of the reminiscences of Mr. Edwin **Phelps**, as published in your paper. In your suggestion that the numbers containing them should be preserved I fully concur. \* \*

In this connection please allow me to make a few corrections of the article published by you Oct. 7th. 1886.

1st.—Orville **Greer** died near Augusta, Kansas. He had lived in California some 12 to 15 years, but left there about the year 1866, going to Chicago. He afterwards married and settled on a farm he had purchased near Augusta, Kansas, where he died a few years ago.

2nd.—It was at Mrs. **Hilton's** the widow of Jesse **Hilton**, and the mother of Brice **Hilton**, that Dr. John **Evans** stopped when he became so sick he could not ride further, and it was there that he died with the fever in a few days after stopping. Mrs. **Hilton** lived about two miles west of Defiance, in the brick house on the south side of the Maumee river, which was the old homestead of Brice **Hilton's** father, and which is now owned and occupied by Philip **Smith**.

Wm. C. **Holgate's** admission to the Bar, alluded to in a prior article, was in the

summer of 1838, at a term of the Supreme Court held at Defiance in June or July of that year. Mr. **Holgate** was taken severely sick with a bilious fever shortly after his admission, which with the back-sets kept him confined till late in November. The Summer of 1838 was a very sickly season. It was estimated that five out of every six of the population were down with the fever.

It was in September, during the sickly season of 1838, that George T. **Hickox**, County Clerk of--Williams County, (Defiance County not having yet been made) was taken down with a violent fever and died in a few days. Mr. Hickox was scarcely twenty-one years of age, was very active and enterprising and very attentive to the sick, by whom he was much missed and lamented. The writer of this knows of Mr. Hickox's having been up with the sick of the village, every night, for long spells, and averaging every other night during the whole of two of those terribly sickly seasons of our early times. The taking care of the sick was a business in those early years, and almost the only business that was done for about three months. And this business was done by volunteers without fee or reward.

Soon after the death of George T. **Hickox**, Wm. C. **Holgate** was appointed by the Judges of the court of Common Pleas to fill the vacancy in the office of Clerk, occurring on account of his death.

At the Spring term of the Williams County court of Common Pleas, 1839, Mr. Holgate was appointed Prosecuting Attorney for Williams County, and Edwin **Phelps** was appointed to succeed him as clerk.

Mr. **Phelps** held this Clerk's office for very many years in the counties of Williams and Defiance. He also for an equally long time held the office of Justice of Peace. In this last office he had the power of doing unto other fellows, as had been done unto him, which we never remember of his having done. And we credit him with the fact, as well as the general

reputation, of having performed the duties of these and other offices that he held with an efficiency, and faithfulness rarely, if ever, equaled.

That was a memorable court that was held in the Spring of 1839 at Defiance. It was the first court of Judge Emery D. **Potter**, who afterwards was a member of Congress from Toledo, where he still lives. Judge Potter was then young and a fine appearing man. He came from Toledo on horseback, accompanied by some eight or ten, or more lawyers, nearly all young men for the time starting out to engage in their legal service. Two of these young lawyers afterwards became eminent. I refer to Hezekiah L. **Hosmer**, made chief Justice of Montana Territory, and to Morrison R. **Waite**, made chief Justice of the United States, which position he now continues to occupy.

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