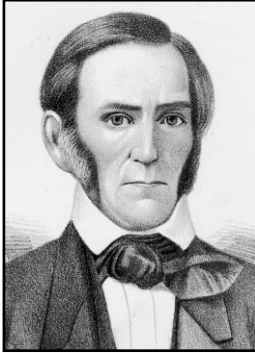


WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Milton Alexander



Milton K. Alexander was only 17 years old when he joined the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers under Gen. Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812. In 1814, at age 18, he was named First Lieutenant, an indication of the respect he engendered.

In 1823 “M.K.” settled in Edgar County, Ill., with his brothers, Washington and Isaac, and his wife, the former Mary Shields of Giles County, Tenn. He erected the first store in the village of Paris on the town square, owned the first log home in town (built by his brother Washington) and was issued the town’s first merchants license. Meanwhile, he operated a successful farm. His parents, John B. and Barbara (King) Alexander, were already living in the area. John was elected a county commissioner in 1821 before Edgar and Vermilion counties were carved from Clark County. Later, John was the first Edgar County representative elected to the Illinois legislature and the county’s first postmaster. When John resigned as postmaster in 1826, M.K. succeeded him for the ensuing 25 years. M.K. was also named clerk of the county commissioners court, serving until 1837.

Gov. Edward Coles commissioned M.K. Alexander as colonel in the 19th Illinois Regiment in 1826. In December 1830 he became Gov. John Reynolds’ aide-de-camp. Two years later — when Sac chief Black Hawk organized a formidable military force to dislodge squatters occupying northern Illinois lands assigned to Native Americans under the Treaty of 1804 — Alexander was commissioned brigadier general of the Second Brigade of Illinois Volunteers. His leadership in pivotal battles during the Black Hawk War generated high regard. He returned to Paris after the war as a military hero, credited with outstanding judgment and uncommon self-control.

In 1837 both houses of the Illinois General Assembly elected Alexander to a seat on the state board of public works. Equipped with \$10.2 million in legislative appropriations, the board had the authority to locate, condemn and acquire land to construct river, railroad and Illinois & Michigan Canal improvements. Elected president at the first meeting, he was re-elected each year until the internal improvements program was abolished in 1842. Alexander was the sole Illinois delegate named to a joint Illinois-Indiana Commission created to study improving the navigability of the Wabash River. Col. Thomas H. Blake of Terre Haute was the only Indiana representative.

Though solicited to assume other significant responsibilities, Gen. Alexander chose to remain in Paris, where he maintained an extensive orchard and was active in the Presbyterian Church. He suffered paralysis following a stroke in 1846 and was an invalid until his death July 6, 1856, at age 60.

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