



Wood River Massacre

January 16 2012 10:17 AM

People entering the northern section of Gordon F. Moore Community Park on the north side of Route 140 probably will notice the monument erected to the memory of the victims of the Wood River Massacre of 1814. Others will notice the small, fenced cemetery located near the entrance road. Few people understand the direct connection between the two.

The small cemetery is the location of the Abel Moore homestead, founded by Mr. Moore around 1810. He and his wife, who are buried in the small plot, were early settlers of the area between the east and west branches of the Wood River. Abel Moore's brothers, William and George also settled in the area. Another resident of the area, Reason Reagan, settled near what is now the Hilltop Auction.

During the War of 1812, the Native American tribes of the Mississippi and Missouri River valleys allied themselves with the British and preyed upon the American settlers through the sparsely settled Midwest. Blockhouses were constructed for shelter against raids. Locally, a blockhouse was constructed near the east branch of the Wood River.

On Sunday, July 10, 1814, Mr. Reagan left his wife at he home of Abel Moore while he attended church. Late in the afternoon, Mrs. Reagan started for her home with her two children and the two children of Abel Moore and two children of William Moore. At dark the families became uneasy about their absence and began to search for them. Their bodies were found near a creek bed, about three hundred yards north of the Hilltop Auction. They had been killed and scalped. The bodies were taken to the Vaughn Hill Cemetery and buried in a common grave.

The local citizenry pursued the attackers to near present day Virden, Illinois where one was killed and two escaped. The scalp of Mrs. Reagan was found in the belt pouch of the dead murderer.

The grandchildren of Abel Moore erected the Wood River Massacre Monument on the Fosterburg Road in 1910. On the monument's face is the inscription: "In memory of the victims of the Wood River Massacre, July 10, 1814. William and Joel, aged eight and eleven years, sons of Capt. Abel Moore; John and George Moore, aged ten and three years, sons of William Moore, Rachel Reagen and her children, Elizabeth and Timothy, aged seven and three years. Murdered by Indians about 300 yards in rear of monument. Dedicated Sept. 11, 1910 by descendants of Capt. Abel Moore."