

“Lane pioneer instrumental in area history”

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Franklin County was named for Dr. Benjamin Franklin, of whom the following could be said: “A statesman of rare genius who inquisitive, inventive mind probed dozens of diverse avenues of science, history and philosophy, as well as politics.”

That statement, however, could also be made about a remarkable pioneer of Franklin County, Judge James Hanway of Lane.

Hanway’s fascinating and eventful life included roles as a farmer, statesman, scientist, historian, philosopher, poet, author, horticulturist, quarryman, journalist, judge, scholar and humanitarian.

He was, in effect, the “Benjamin Franklin of Franklin County.”

His story begins on the outskirts of London where he was born in 1809. While just a young boy, James Hanway developed his thirst for knowledge and as he later wrote, “books became my delight.”

Less partial to novels and light literature, the boy was captivated by volumes of history, science, biography and geography.

At age 21, his pursuit of knowledge and adventure brought him across the Atlantic to New York, over the mountains and down the Ohio River. He eventually settled in Darke County, Ohio, where for the next 25 years, he raised a family, farmed and pursued his many interests.

In 1856, Hanway came to Kansas with his family, and settled just south of present-day Lane. Here he found the hot political and guerilla warfare over the issue of slavery just beginning to explode.

Politics was a keen interest of Hanway’s and for years he had actively supported such “enlightened” and radical ideas as women’s suffrage and the abolition of slavery.

In 1852, he had been a delegate at the Pittsburg convention of the Free Soil Party that nominated a leading anti-slavery senator for president. Hanway was also one of the original organizers of the Republican Party of Ohio.

In Kansas, he continued his active participation in Republican politics and firm opposition to slavery. This latter issue bound him in a close friendship with his new neighbor, John Brown.

Brown frequently visited at Hanway’s home and sought refuge there when things became “hot” for him. An extra cabin of Hanway’s was used by the famous abolitionist as a “station” on the “Underground Railroad” through Franklin County.

In one incident, this cabin on the open prairie was the daring hiding place for several weeks for 11 fugitive slaves from Missouri. Food prepared by Hanway’s wife was slipped to the runaways under cover of darkness while slave hunters combed the area for days.

Hanway was asked by Brown to participate in what is now known as the “Pottawatomie Massacre,” but Hanway refused. He was well acquainted with all of the participants and victims of that slaughter.

Judge Hanway was a member of the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention of 1859 and served in the territorial legislature in 1860. During and after the Civil War he represented Franklin County in the State Legislature and served many other official capacities, including that of judge and notary public.

After Franklin County was organized, he was made superintendent of its schools and initiated its school system.

Later, he was one of the commission that located the Asylum for the Insane at Osawatomie and was a trustee of that institution for several years.

Besides his active role in politics and public service, Judge Hanway was an avid horticulturist and scientist. His primary occupation was farming, but his keen curiosity advanced him far beyond the realm of the typical pioneer farmer.

He read and wrote on subjects as diverse as insects and fruit propagation and wrote a regular column in the *Ottawa Journal* entitled, "Stray Leaves from a Farmer's Portfolio."

Hanway was delighted when he discovered on his property a vein of rock that resembled coralline marble in England. He and his sons established a quarry, and the fine, light chocolate brown marble was used regionally for tombstones, buildings and on fancy furniture.

One of Judge Hanway's most lasting contributions to Franklin County and the state of Kansas was his role as historian. Early on he saw the need for preserving eye-witness accounts of the events that shaped Kansas and wrote voluminously, and modestly, of his own participation.

It was his efforts to document the truth that positively established his friend John Brown was indeed responsible for the Pottowatomie Massacre – a fact that other Brown biographers and sympathizers tried to refute. On another point of historical accuracy, Hanway wrote, "It is a small matter perhaps, but the truth of history should be vindicated."

In all of these areas of interest, James Hanway was a meticulous scholar who kept detailed notes of what he read, and in turn was a prolific writer.

His papers, now preserved by the Kansas State Historical Society, are a fascinating record of the scope of his interests and breadth of his knowledge. Included are notes on the history of witchcraft, Cicero, temperance, fish culture, literature, European history, Voltaire, linguistics, and bees in the West Indies.

His nine-part series of "Reminiscences of Anti-Slavery Days" keeps company with his studies on de Tocqueville, the increase of insects, the life of Apostle Paul, otters in America, and drawings of inventions and scientific experiments. He also wrote poetry.

Hanway conducted a lengthy study of the dying words of famous men and martyrs, which he entitled, "The Last Moments of Men of Genius and Bravery." He explained this curious interest by writing, "Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain."

Of Hanway, another writer penned, "(he) writes with the grace and vigor of young manhood, to which is added that ripeness of wisdom and moderation, which does not always come with age."

The extent of Hanway's knowledge was all the more remarkable considering the times in which he lived—when a man who could simply read and write stood out in the community.

In 1882, Judge Hanway died and was laid to rest by his friends and neighbors at Lane. His grave is marked by an imposing monument, carved from his own marble quarry.