

Felix Moses, Peddler, Died 66 Years Ago, But Boone County Still Honors His Memory

BY W. ROBERT ELLIS.

March 28 marks the 66th anniversary of the death of Felix Moses, who came to Boone County about 100 years ago, local historians recall. Felix Moses was the hero in the book "Felix Moses, the Beloved Jew," written by the late Prof. John Uri Lloyd, a native of Boone County.

Mose, as he was known to young and old alike, was a peddler, dealing in produce, furs, hides, trading for whatever the farmer had to offer. From a pack peddler, Mose became the owner of a horse and a covered spring wagon, carrying a full line of household wares, yard goods and tools. Never forsaking the faith of his forebears, Mose was a frequent visitor at the religious services of the gentiles and contributed financially to the various country churches throughout Northern Kentucky. At the time of his death he was a member of Good Faith Lodge 95, Free and Accepted Masons.

During the Civil War Felix Moses served on the side of the Confederacy with Gen. John Hunt Morgan, a native of Lexington.

At the time of his death Moses was returning by packet boat from a business trip to Louisville. The Enquirer published an item which said that the body of a man had been washed ashore and found among the willows of the Ohio River at North Landing, below Rising Sun, Ind. Citizens of Florence identified the body as that of their friend, Felix Moses. The Boone County Recorder, in an item printed March 31, 1886, said that John Cox and John Henderson were on the packet boat and had gotten off at Belleview, leaving Moses on the boat. The newspaper item said that the body bore marks of violence, and the belief was that Moses had been killed and robbed. Moses was known to carry a large unmounted diamond, which he brought with him from Europe.

In the minutes of his Masonic lodge dated April 1, 1886, we read, "At an emergent communication of Good Faith Lodge 95, F. & A. M., held on this day and date, the lodge was duly opened. The master stated that he had called the lodge together on account of the death of Brother Felix Moses, whose body was found in the Ohio River at North Landing, Ind., on the 28th day of March, 1886. He had sent two of the brothers, Butler Carpenter and George Goodrich, after the body, and it had arrived in Florence that morning; and that the lodge would follow the body to the grave, and deposit the remains with the usual formalities. (But after the services the body was, on motion, de-

livered to Mr. S. March of Cincinnati, for burial in the Jewish Cemetery on Walnut Hills, with the Jewish burial service. This was done after Mr. March advised the lodge that it was the desire of Felix Moses to be buried in a Jewish cemetery, with a Jewish service.)

"The following committee was appointed to draft resolutions on the death of Brother Moses: A. Sayre, William Allen and Butler Carpenter. These resolutions to be printed in the Boone County Recorder, and a copy to be sent to David Moses, Natchez, Miss. There being no further business, the lodge closed in brotherly love and kindness." At that time M. S. Rouse was Master of the lodge.

The historian of Good Faith Lodge 95, the late Henry F. Childress, wrote that "sometime after his burial, a monument was erected to his memory; and at a later date, dignitaries from the North and the South, as well as Christian and Jew, paid tribute to his memory (and may we add—he richly deserved it)."

The inscription on the monument in the Jewish cemetery reads: "Felix Moses, a Confederate Soldier and a True Friend—1827-1886."

Recorded as being present at the memorial services in Cincinnati presided over by the late Rabbi David Philipson, we find the following pioneer Boone County family names: Brady, Bristow, Campbell, Childress, Conner, Crisler, Gaines, Goodridge, Grant, Graves, Helm, Hewitt, Huey, Kelly, Kennedy, Lamkin, Lassing, Norman, Parker, Presser, Riddle,

Riley, Robinson, Rouse, Ryle, Scott, Smith, Souther, Stephens, Sullivan, Terrill, Utz, Walton and White.

Other Boone County historians say that after the body had been removed to Cincinnati for the Jewish burial, a Christian funeral service was preached at Florence Christian Church. It was not unusual, they said, to hold services after the body had been interred. Mose made Florence his home during his entire peddling career. Florence Christian Church still is in use today. It stands at the junction of U. S. 25 and U. S. 42.

Many stories are told about Felix Moses. It is said that Mose was befriended by the late Rev. James Kirtley, who was pastor of Bigbone Baptist Church for 50 years. It is related that Preacher Kirtley saved his life on one occasion and then had Mose as his house guest. Legend has it that Rev. Mr. Kirtley gave Mose a letter of introduction to friends in Florence, for it was in Florence that Mose started his peddling business.

Rev. Mr. Kirtley was the grandfather of Judge Carroll L. Cropper of Boone County Court. Judge Cropper says that his grandfather owned a farm in the North Bend Bottoms and that every Saturday he saddled his horse, rode to Bigbone, an all-day trip, preached the morning and evening services at Bigbone Baptist Church on Sunday and returned to his farm on Monday. Judge Cropper said he did this for 50 years, in all kinds of weather, summer and winter. As the roads began to be improved, he graduated to a horse and buggy before his retirement.

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