

## **The Story of James Harrison Cravens (Ripley County)**

Born 1802 in Virginia; admitted to the bar 1823.(1) Moved to Jefferson County, Indiana 1829. Established law office in Versailles, Ripley County 1833.(2) Served four terms in Indiana General Assembly.(3) Elected as Whig to U.S. Congress 1841.(4) Lost as Free Soil party candidate for Indiana governor 1849(5) and as Republican candidate for attorney general 1856.(6)

A well-known debater, he opposed extension of slavery, 1850 Fugitive Slave Act requiring citizens to return escaping slaves to their owners, and Article 13 of 1851 Constitution prohibiting blacks from moving into Indiana.(7) Served briefly in Civil War.(8) Moved to Osgood area before 1860;(9) built home here circa 1865.(10) Died at Osgood December 4, 1876.(11)

### **Notes:**

(1) There is some confusing information about the date and place of Cravens' birth. The Ripley County Historical Society has James Harrison Cravens' family Bible in its collections. Letter, Helen Einhaus to Stephen Berrey, received March 20, 2006. (B00725) It records James' birth on August 12, 1802, in Augusta County Virginia. Family records, James Harrison Cravens family Bible (Philadelphia, 1839), Ripley County Historical Society, photocopy. (B00711) According to the following source, he was born August 2, 1802 in Harrisonburg, Virginia, which is in Rockingham County. He was the son of Dr. Joseph Cravens and his wife Mary. Ruth McConathy, *House of Cravens* (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), 50. (B00239) Cravens was born August 12, 1802 in Rockingham County, according to *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-made Men of the State of Indiana*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1880), 2:263. (B00237). Augusta County was formed in 1745; Rockingham County was formed from part of it in 1778, according to Morgan Poitiaux Robinson, "Virginia Counties: Those Resulting from Virginia Legislation," in *Bulletin of the Virginia State Library*, Vol. 9, nos. 1, 2, 3 (Genealogical Publishing Co., 1992), 168-69.

At Franklin, Virginia, on December 23, 1824, James Harrison Cravens married Sophia Capito, daughter of Daniel Capito. (Einhaus to Berrey, B00725) James Harrison Cravens was admitted to the bar in 1823; at some time, he moved his practice to Franklin, Pendleton County, now West Virginia. McConathy, 50 (B00239). Cravens entered law practice November 1823 in Franklin, Pendleton County, Virginia; was admitted to the bar in 1823, after studying with Colonel John Kenney of Harrisonburg. *Eminent and Self-made Men*, 2: 263. (B00237)

(2) In 1829, Cravens moved from Virginia and settled on a farm near Madison and had a law office in Madison. Woollen, 273-75. (B00229) *Eminent and Self-made Men*, 2: 263. (B00237)

James H. Cravens listed in 1830 Indiana census, Lancaster Township Extension, Jefferson County. U.S. Census, 1830, p. 268 (accessed at Ancestry.com). (B00355)

In 1833, Cravens settled in Ripley County, Indiana. Eminent and Self-made Men, 2: 263 (B00237).

November 15, 1833, James H. Cravens purchased lot 57 in the town of Versailles. Ripley County Deed Record Book C, p. 488. (B00718)

In 1833, Cravens open a law office in Versailles, Ripley Co. Woollen, 275. (B00229)

James H. Cravens is listed in the 1840 Indiana census, Ripley County, 10 members in his household including himself. U.S. Census, 1840, p. 172 (accessed at Ancestry.com). (B00356)

(3) He served four terms in Indiana General Assembly. James H. Cravens elected August 1, 1831 to the 16th Session Indiana House of Representatives from Jefferson County. Served December 5, 1831 to February 3, 1832. Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, comps., Indiana Election Returns, 1816-1851 (Indianapolis, 1960), 208. (B00212)

James H. Cravens elected August 6, 1832 to the 17th Session Indiana House of Representatives from Jefferson County. Served December 3, 1832 to February 4, 1833. Election Returns, 211-12. (B00212)

James H. Cravens, Whig, elected, October 31, 1839, to fill Ripley County, Indiana Senate vacancy left when Thomas Smith was elected to U.S. House, August 5, 1839. Election Returns, 245, 250. (B00212)

James H. Cravens elected, August 3, 1846, to the 31st Session Indiana House of Representatives from Ripley County. Served December 7, 1846 to January 28, 1847. Election Returns, 301, 307. (B00212)

Liberty Party in 1846 in Indiana did not nominate a candidate for State Representative from Ripley County because the party endorsed James H. Cravens as a suitable antislavery candidate. Eminent and Self-made Men, 2: 263-64. (B00237)

(4) James H. Cravens elected to the U.S. Congress, May 3, 1841 from the Indiana 4th District which includes Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Ripley, Rush, and Switzerland counties. Election Returns, 101, 103. (B00212)

(5) James H. Cravens listed as the Free Soil party nominee for Indiana Governor; John W. Wright of Cass County for lieutenant governor on Free Soil ticket. Indiana State Sentinel, June 28, 1849. (B00211)

On election day, August 6, 1849, James H. Cravens received 3,076 votes for Governor of Indiana. Joseph A. Wright, Democrat candidate, received 76,996; John A. Matson, Whig, received 67,218. Election Returns, 155, 158. (B00212)

Cravens was appointed a vice-president (1 of 3) at the September 9, 1848 [Free Soil] convention at Buffalo, New York. The National Era, August 24, 1848. (B00400) Cravens was chosen to attend the August 1852 Free Soil Convention in Cleveland. Grace Julian Clarke, George W. Julian (Indianapolis, 1923), 127n. (B00213)

(6) James H. Cravens of Ripley County was nominated for Attorney General of Indiana at the Republican State Convention held in Indianapolis, May 1, 1856. Lawrenceburg Democratic Register, May 2, 1856. (B00375)

(7) Craven's hatred of slavery grew while serving in U.S. Congress 1841-1843, where he became lifelong friends with John Quincy Adams and Joshua Giddings. Eminent and Self-made Men, 2: 263-64 (B00237).

After Craven's nomination (May 9, 1846) by Whigs of Ripley County for state representative, he was denounced by other Whigs for his views on right of petition and his position against slavery. Cravens responded eloquently with an address "to the Whigs of Ripley County." Eminent and Self-made Men, 2: 263-64. (B00237)

Indianapolis, August 30, 1848, at State Free Soil Convention, J. H. Cravens gave an address satisfactorily explaining to his "old Whig friends" how he could vote for the Free Soil candidate. Free Territory Sentinel, September 6, 1848. (B00401)

During his Free Soil candidacy, The National Era described Cravens: "Born in slave state; he sacrificed one-third of his property in emancipating his slaves. . . . Solely for his devotion to the cause of Free Democracy, he is now receiving the abuse of certain political organs . . . . Let us show by our votes that we appreciate James H. Cravens. . . . The National Era, July 12, 1849. (B00404)

William W. Woollen opened his biographical sketch of Cravens thus: "James Harrison Cravens, one of the ablest of the men who changed public sentiment in Indiana on the slavery question . . . ." Nominated in 1856 for Indiana Attorney General on the Republican ticket, Cravens made eloquent speeches on behalf of the party and its opposition to the extension of slavery. Woollen, 273, 279. (B00229)

Cravens wrote to Allen Hamilton, Fort Wayne, December 17, 1850, that he was opposed to "all" resistance to the Texas boundary bill and the Fugitive Slave bill, but that he would do all he could to modify or repeal those laws: "I would just as soon be commanded by the law to Steal, as to catch runaway slaves." Letter, James H. Cravens to Allen Hamilton, December 17, 1850, Allen Hamilton Collection, L62, Box 6, Folder 1, Manuscripts, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library. (B00233)

"The Black Republican Nominees . . . . James H. Cravens, of Ripley County, is the candidate for Attorney General. He is a noted abolitionist, of the Giddings, Julian and Garrison school. He was the leader of Van Buren's followers in 1848, and a strong supporter of Hale, in 1852." Lawrenceburg Democratic Register, May 9, 1856. (B00374)

Lawrenceburg Democratic Register May 16, 1856 quoting the N.[ew] A.[lbany] Tribune: "'The most objectionable nominee on the whole State ticket is the Hon. Jas. H. Cravens. . . .' Mr. Gregg is personally acquainted with Mr. Cravens, and of course has good cause for his objections-the principal of which, no doubt, is his abolitionism." Lawrenceburg Democratic Register, May 16, 1856. (B00373)

Lawrenceburg Democratic Register reported August 1, 1856 (B00372) that James H. Cravens, "the Black Republican candidate for Attorney General said in a recent speech at Madison, that he would rather see the Ohio river run pure blood than that another inch of slave territory should be added to the Union."

(8) At the outbreak of the Civil War, 1861, Cravens was active in recruiting. Served as Lieutenant Colonel in 83rd Indiana Infantry, Company F & S for a short time. National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (Web site accessed November 15, 2005). (B00412) Ill health forced him to resign. William Wesley Woollen, Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana (Indianapolis, 1883), 279. (B00229)

Cravens was mustered in as a Lieutenant Colonel November 21, 1862; he resigned February 23, 1863. William H. H. Terrell, Report of the Adjutant General, 8 vols. (Indianapolis, 1866), 3:52. (B00713) Terrell, 1:189-90 indicates that Cravens' was captured by Confederate General John Hunt Morgan in July 1863.

(9) The 1850 Census shows Cravens and his family residing in Shelby Township, Ripley County. U.S. Census 1850, Shelby Township, Ripley County, Indiana, AncestryLibrary.com (accessed March 28, 2006). (B00724) In 1850, Cravens writes from New Marion (Shelby Township), Ripley County to Allen Hamilton of Ft. Wayne. Cravens to Hamilton. (B00233)

Cravens bought and sold a lot of land in Ripley County. There is some question regarding when Cravens moved to Osgood; to date it is not possible to indicate a

specific year. Deed Records for 1856 and 1857 indicate the following land purchases by Cravens in Osgood.

On October 30, 1856, Cravens purchased Lots 119 and 120 in Osgood. Ripley County Deed Record Book Z, p. 24. (B00719)

Cravens purchased Lot 54 in the town of Osgood for \$50.00, recorded April 30, 1857. Ripley County Deed Record Book Z, p. 320. (B00719)

During the same years, Cravens sold land in Shelby Township, Ripley County, as indicated below.

Cravens sold Lot 7, Block No. 4, in the town of Marion with note due dated December 28, 1855. Ripley County Deed Record Book Y, p. 159. (B00720)

On May 1, 1856, Cravens sold 40 acres in Sec. 25, T7N, R10E, in Shelby Township, Ripley County. Ripley County Deed Record Book Y, p. 342. (B00720)

On May 1, 1856, Cravens sold an additional 40 acres in Sec. 25 and also 40 acres in Section 26, T7N, R10E in Shelby Township, Ripley County. Ripley County Deed Record Book Y, p. 368. (B00720)

On March 1, 1857, Cravens sold Lots 25 and 26 in the Town of Marion, Ripley County. Ripley County. Ripley County Deed Record Book Z, p. 276. (B00719)

(10) To date it is not possible to state with certainty when the Cravens home in Osgood was built. In the U.S. Census, 1860, Center Township, Ripley County, Cravens and his family are listed under "Osgood and Otter Village." The value of his real estate is \$15,000. Following is the primary source information that has been located.

Cravens' residence is listed as Osgood in November 1862 when he mustered into the Union Army. Terrell, 3:52. (B00713)

February 20, 1865, Cravens purchased about 7 acres of land from Jehiel Mullin and wife located in the NE1/4 of Sec. 22, T8N, R11E, beginning on the north line of the section, 6 rods east of the NW \_\_. Ripley County Deed Record Book 34, p. 125. (B00721)

May 5, 1865, Cravens purchased land from Edwin Sheppard and wife located in the NE1/4 of Sec 22. T8N, R11E beginning on the north line of the section, 34 rods from the NW corner of the NE \_\_. Ripley County Deed Record Book 34, p. 410. (B00721)

On October 16, 1875, Cravens and his wife sold to William L. S. Jones the same parcel located in the NE1/4 of Sec. 22 that Cravens had purchased from Mullin

and his wife on February 20, 1865. Ripley County Deed Record Book 47, pp. 215-16. (B00722)

July 22, 1994, Dean L. Wygant and Pamela J. Wygant sold to Jeff and Cathy Volz, 487 E. Fairground Avenue for one dollar, 1.9 acres of land, legally described as being situated at the north end of the land purchased by Cravens in 1865 and sold to Jones in 1875. Ripley County Deed Record Book 203, p. 674. (B00714)

Osgood tax records that might indicate when Cravens home was built have not been located. Einhaus to Berrey. (B00725)

According to the Versailles Republican, September 19, 1900, in the obituary of John Andrews, he was described as a carpenter who built "some of the finest residences in Osgood, among them being that of the late Col. James H. Cravens." (B00715) NOTE: The U.S. Census, 1870, Ripley County, Center Township lists James H. Cravens and his wife under the Versailles Post Office. It is unclear why they were listed under this post office instead of the Osgood Post Office. Einhaus to Berrey, (B00725) According to Baker's Postal History of Indiana there were post offices at both Versailles and Osgood.

(11) James H. Cravens died at Osgood.