



# Jacob S. Paulmer, Master of Relief Carved Rifles In The Percussion Era of Riflemaking

By Shelby Gallien

## PART ONE: THE GUNSMITH

### The First Jacob S. Paulmer Rifle:

In 1985 a fine percussion half stock rifle came to light in Auburn, Indiana, a small town in the north-eastern corner of the state. The gun was noteworthy for its extensive relief carving, despite being made in the mid-percussion era when such carving had generally gone out of style. The carving was done in a florid, flamboyant rococo style that covered the butt, wrist, tang and side facings areas. It was well executed and handsome, flowing with the lines of the rifle and attesting to the abilities of the carver. A full script signature of "Jacob S. Paulmer" was engraved on the barrel, framed in flourishes of scrolls and vines. Contemporary reference books had missed this obviously noteworthy maker, and the gun's style gave little indication of where Jacob Paulmer had worked, except for perhaps an inference of Pennsylvania based on the extent of relief carving and the patchbox finial design. Fortunately, the rifle's owner provided an oral family history that had accompanied the rifle through many generations.

The owner stated that the rifle had always been in his family, and was passed down to the oldest male heir in each succeeding generation. Along with the gun went the story that it had been purchased originally by "great-great Grandpa Lawrence" somewhere in DeKalb County, Indiana, prior to the Civil War. Thus the gun was probably of Indiana origin, and that knowledge provided a starting point for a search to locate its unknown maker, Jacob S. Paulmer.

### The Elusive Hunt for Paulmer Information:

Census records for the 1820 to 1850 period showed no Jacob S. Paulmer in Indiana, nor anywhere else in the midwest. The only place where the particular surname spelling could be found was Stark County, Ohio. The lack of any further leads or documentation finally resulted in the search for Paulmer being dropped. But recently several new Paulmer rifles have come to light, all fullstocks and most with fine relief carving similar to that found on the Auburn, Indiana rifle. These new rifles carried signatures of "J\*Paulmer," "J\*P" and "J:S:P" on their barrels. One rifle with identical carving to the Indiana rifle had no signature, but was without doubt the work of the same man. The appearance of additional good quality rifles by Paulmer generated a renewed interest in searching for the elusive gunsmith, and determining where he had lived and worked. Based on available information, there appeared to be an Indiana connection, an Ohio connection, and possibly a Pennsylvania connection. The consensus of most knowledgeable collectors who examined one or more Paulmer rifles was that Paulmer probably worked in Ohio, based on "gut feel" plus finding the surname there in census records. The first major breakthrough in locating Paulmer came in the summer of 1991.

The courthouse in DeKalb County, Indiana, has a large county map hanging on its second floor as a wall display. The map was printed

in 1863, and highlighted each of the county's townships. Several of the more populated townships were accompanied by a brief business directory for that township. Richland Township in western DeKalb County had such a directory containing several names along with a few occupations. There in tiny print was a listing for "Jacob S. Paulmer, Gun Smith, Sec. 15." The Richland Township plat also showed the Paulmer property, with a dot indicating Paulmer's home and another his gun shop. This listing was the first documentation of where Paulmer had lived and worked for at least one period of his life. The discovery fueled an intensive search of local records, resulting in the piecing together of most of Paulmer's life.

#### Jacob Paulmer's Childhood and Apprenticeship Days:

Jacob Paulmer was born in Stark County, Ohio on December 10th 1810, to parents John Paulmer and Margaret (Swihart or Swinehart) Paulmer. His parents were from Pennsylvania originally, and when the War of 1812 broke out, John Paulmer moved his family back to Washington County, Pennsylvania, to leave them with his wife's parents while he enlisted in the war. Shortly after his enlistment, John Paulmer became ill, and five days later he died. While it is not known whether the entire family stayed with the mother's parents, it is known that son Jacob S. Paulmer stayed and lived with his grandparents until reaching maturity. His grandfather was Peter Swihart or Swinehart, a gunsmith by trade.

Peter Swihart/Swinehart was an early gunmaker of Washington County, Pennsylvania, working in West Bethlehem township from at least 1788 until 1828 based on county tax records. He was listed in the 1790 census with his household having one (1) adult male, five (5) females, and three (3) minor males. Peter undoubtedly played some role in the develop-

ment of the National Road patchbox, since it originated in that area of the Monongahela Valley during his working period. Unfortunately, no guns by Peter Swinehart are known to help establish how significant his work was, or how much his style influenced grandson Jacob S. Paulmer. However, based on the quality of Paulmer's later work, his grandfather and teacher, Peter Swinehart, must have been an accomplished gunmaker.

Jacob Paulmer was raised by his grandfather Peter, who in addition to being a gunsmith was also a farmer. Jacob learned both gunsmithing and farming from his grandfather and practiced them jointly throughout most of his life. He was also reasonably well educated, being taught in the subscription schools of the day. Paulmer completed his formal gunsmith training in 1831 when twenty-one years old. He probably reached journeyman status before April 5th of that year, because on that date he married Susan Tiger, a local Pennsylvania woman. Paulmer remained in Pennsylvania and worked as a journeyman gunsmith for the years between 1831 and 1833, presumably in or near Washington County. In 1833, he decided to pack up his tools and move west.

#### The Ohio Period:

In 1833 Paulmer left Pennsylvania and moved west to Ohio, where he continued to work as a journeyman gunsmith until 1836 when he opened his own shop. His working location in Ohio is uncertain for the years between 1833 and 1850. Census records don't clearly identify Jacob S. Paulmer or his location; however, one particular 1840 listing may refer to the gunsmith. In that year a Jacob Palmer and wife were listed in Stark County, Canton Township, with two small children under five years old. The census age brackets are correct for Jacob and his wife, and the occupation listed was

"farmer," for which Jacob was also trained and worked at throughout much of his life. It is reasonable to assume that Jacob would return to the county in Ohio where his parents had first settled and where he was born years before, i.e. Stark County. Thus meager evidence implies Jacob probably worked in Stark County during his time in Ohio.

#### Following The Frontier To Indiana:

Late in 1850, Jacob Paulmer left Ohio and moved to DeKalb County, Indiana. He arrived in Auburn, the small county seat, on September 6th of that year. Northeastern Indiana was sparsely settled in those days, its population growth being restricted by the large "Black Swamp" that lay just to the east and covered most of northwestern Ohio at that time. The huge expanse of marshy low lands, covered with brackish standing water virtually all year long, had proven a formidable obstacle to the westward flow of settlers for many years. But in 1850 the announcement of a new railroad line running from Toledo, Ohio across northern Indiana to Chicago brought almost overnight growth and development along its expected route. The line, called the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad (later known as the New York Central and today as Penn Central), cut through the center of DeKalb County, Jacob saw the potential for new business as people rushed in to open up and settle the last "frontier" in Indiana. As had been the calling of American gunsmiths for generations before him, Jacob must have felt compelled to follow the movement of the frontier to where guns and gunsmithing were still a staple of life, despite the ever conquering and rapidly closing-in march of civilization.

Jacob worked only briefly in Auburn, from September of 1850 until the spring of 1851. He never purchased a town property in Auburn, probably because it was only a temporary situation until he could purchase farm land

in the surrounding countryside. In the spring of 1851 he reportedly purchased a farm about eight miles northwest of Auburn in Richland Township of DeKalb County, Indiana. The land transaction was recorded in Auburn, and stated that the farm contained fifty acres and was located just south of a small town in Richland Township named Corunna, which also had recently sprung up along the new railroad route. The deed was dated and recorded on September 13, 1858. The later date was due to the fact that such transactions usually were not legally recorded until the buyer had paid the price in full, and in Paulmer's case he was probably making payments over several years. The seller warranted the title, but took exception to any land taxes and encumbrances that might be due, stating they were Paulmer's obligation. Paulmer had undoubtedly been living on the land and was responsible for its taxes for some time, probably "owning" it by agreement until the recorded deed recognized payment in full and finalized the transaction.

A deed dated September of 1860 shows that Jacob Paulmer purchased lot #37 in the nearby town of Corunna. The lot cost \$31.50 and contained one-sixth of an acre. The low cost presumably indicated an undeveloped lot. A second deed two years later in March of 1862 shows Jacob and his wife Susan selling the lot for \$350.00. The substantial increase in value would indicate that Paulmer had developed the lot, probably building a house and perhaps a gunshop in the town of Corunna, although the second deed does not specify what if any structures existed on the lot when resold.

On March 10th, 1866, Jacob's wife Susan died, leaving him with five children, who in order of ages were Margaret, John, Maria, Caroline and Eli. One historical source reports that Jacob remarried in 1867, but marriage records for DeKalb

County show that he actually re-married on September 13, 1866, to Mrs. Abigail Baird, with Minister W. Teeters performing the service. Mrs. Baird had been previously married and widowed, and brought several children of her own to the Paulmer marriage based on 1870 census information plus a specific step-son being mentioned by Jacob in his will. The rapidness of Jacob's second marriage is understandable when it is remembered he was left with five children to take care of, in addition to carrying on his gunsmithing business and farming. Jacob was fifty-six when he remarried; his second wife Abigail was thirty-one. During the course of their marriage five additional children were added to the Paulmer family; they were Amon, Sabina, Annie May, David L. and Marion Edwin.

In the mid 1900's an old citizen of Corunna, a Mr. Nessel, recalled the early days of Richland Township for a local publication. One of his recollections involved Jacob Paulmer, and while his memory can't be assumed foolproof, he provided additional "facts" about Paulmer's lifestyle and gunmaking business that add interest and character to our subject. Mr. Nessel recalled that "...on the highway from Garrett to Corunna, just before the curves... just east of Frank's (Frank Pickard) and past Carey Rufner's place in the hollow south of Lintz Lake, there was a trapper and his wife, Jacob and Abergale Palmer lived. Mr. Palmer was known for miles around as a genius with guns and people would come from all over the county to get their guns repaired."

#### Later Years:

During his life, Jacob Paulmer was a reasonably successful man, based on his accumulated estate. He served as an early trustee of Richland Township, was a Democrat in politics, and a member of the German Baptist Church. The old Corunna Baptist Church which he probably attended was a log structure that stood across from the

Corunna Town Cemetery about a half mile south of town. The church was destroyed during Jacob's life, and he apparently then joined a nearby Lutheran church. His grave can be found in the small cemetery associated with the present Zion Sixteen Lutheran Church, located about a mile south of the Corunna Town Cemetery. The church, in use during Paulmer's later years, is close to Paulmer's farm, being located about a quarter mile west of his property and along the same road that ran by his house and gun shop.

#### Will of Jacob S. Paulmer

In the name of the Benevolent Father of all. I Jacob S. Paulmer of the Township of Richland County of DeKalb and state of Indiana do make and publish this as my last will and testament.

1st I desire that my just debts first be paid and for that purpose I direct that all my personal property (not specially bequeathed hereinafter mentioned and the money applied to that purpose) and if it should not be sufficient then ten acres of my land on which I now reside out of the south west corner shall be sold for that purpose to be taken out so as to injure the remainder as little as possible.

2nd I give and bequeath unto my wife Abigail Paulmer all my household goods of all kinds such as beds, bedding, stoves, chairs, clocks, pails.

3rd I give and bequeath unto my wife Abigail Paulmer during her natural life time provided she remains my widow and keeps my name the farm on which we now reside to wit, fifty acres off of the west side of SE qr. of section fifteen Township thirty four north of range twelve east in DeKalb County and state of Indiana, excepting the ten acres above mentioned provided it be necessary to sell it to pay debts, and provided further that my wife in no case permit her son Beard to

make his home on said land neither with her or otherwise (excepting he make her a short visit occasionally).

4th I also give unto my said wife Abigail Paulmer, all provisions on hand for the use of the farm and including the wheat, corn, wheat in ground, potatoes, fruit. After the death of my wife I request that the land so said be sold and that the proceeds thereof be equally divided among my children share and share alike.

5th I give unto my son John Paulmer my gun smith and saddlers tools, to wit, hand vise, leads.

6th I hereby appoint Gilbert J. Patterson executor of this last will testament, given under my hand and seal this second day of October.

Jacob S. Paulmer

signed in our presence,

James Barton

L. D. Britton

G. J. Patterson

Jacob Paulmer died on July 12th, 1892, when 81 years old. He was buried in the Zion Sixteen Lutheran Cemetery just west of his farm. The setting is beautiful, being a small, heavily wooded knoll. Paulmer's gravestone is among the largest and most ornate in the small burying ground. It is made of carved limestone in the shape of a large tree trunk about seven feet in height. Across the base in block letters is "PAULMER," and near the middle on a scroll is "Jacob S. Paulmer, Died July 12, 1892, 81 Y. 7M. 1D." Immediately to the south lies a small red granite stone marking the grave of his second wife, Abigail. She was 25 years younger and lived until 1915; her stone is inscribed "MOTHER, Abigail Palmer (sic), 1835-1915." No other Paulmers or Palmers are buried in the small family plot.

Throughout Paulmer's life his name would frequently be misspelled by others as "Palmer," but Jacob personally retained the older German spelling of Paulmer until his last day. Other family members, includ-

ing most of his children and his second wife, all changed to the simpler and more common Palmer spelling. Jacob also consistently used the middle initial "S" whenever signing documents; his full middle name doesn't appear on any existing records to indicate what the letter "S" might stand for.

The Paulmer Farm:

Paulmer's farm in Richland Township, about two and a half miles south and slightly east of Corunna, can still be located on modern plat maps, despite no longer existing as the simple fifty acre rectangle it once was. The land is found by driving south out of Corunna on S.R. 327. About one and three-quarters miles out the road takes a sharp turn to the left, or east. Not more than a hundred yards beyond the curve is "Sixteen Cemetery," the final resting place of Jacob S. Paulmer and his second wife Abigail. Just east of the cemetery stands Zion Sixteen Lutheran Church, where the Paulmers attended after their old Baptist Church was gone.

Continuing on past Zion Sixteen Lutheran Church on S.R. 327, the road takes a sharp turn back to the right, or south, as it meets County Road (C.R.) #11 which runs north and south. The old Paulmer farm lies about a half mile directly east of the intersection of S.R. 327 and C.R. 11, on a well used gravel road. The gravel road has two slight curves, first to the right and then about an eighth of a mile later back to the left. The eastern half of the stretch between the two curves runs through the old Paulmer farm, cutting it almost in half. Paulmer's home sat on the north side of the road on a small piece of elevated land at the second, or more eastern, curve based on an 1863 township plat map. His gunshop was on the south side of the road across from the house and perhaps fifty feet further east. The typography of the land is such that the original locations of the house

and gunshop can be identified, although neither structure exists today.

The house site is a small piece of high ground obviously leveled at one time for a dwelling. Today the land is on the D. Birdsong farm and a house trailer sits on the site, with the only visible remnant of the Paulmer homestead being a scraggly old apple tree that may have once stood in the Paulmers' yard to the east of their house. While the land to the west of the house site is relatively level and drained, to the north and east it falls away quickly into a shallow bottom. The gunshop location is now part of a cultivated field across the road from the house on the E. M. Foote farm. No leveling is visible to indicate where the foundation may have once stood, but the higher piece of land the house sat on runs south across the road and tapers to a rounded point. The shop would have sat on this small raised area across the road and slightly to the east of the house; the land falls quickly away to the south and east of the shop location, and slopes gently away to the west before it levels out, thus marking the high, drained area where the shop stood.

Paulmer's farm lay just southwest of and almost touching the largest lake in Richland Township, Lintz Lake, which covers about twenty acres. The lake still exists, although hidden from view by trees during most of the year. Paulmer was reported to have been a trapper in addition to a gunsmith and farmer; his land was well located to support trapping around the shores of Lintz Lake and in the low bottoms below the lake and along the eastern side of his property. The location also provided good hunting and the chance to test new rifles without complaints, both of which a gunsmith would have relished.

The writer spent a warm fall afternoon driving country roads while reading old plat maps in order to locate the Paulmer homestead and gunshop sites. The endeavor

was both enjoyable and successful, and when Paulmer's land was finally viewed and his long forgotten home and shop visualized for the first time, the stark lack of remaining evidence brought to mind the old adage that no one ever really owns the land; rather, they are but caretakers for awhile. Jacob Paulmer, an important midwest gunsmith, had lived and worked where the writer stood, walked on the same soil and viewed the same rolling countryside, yet almost nothing remains today. Nor has anything been located in the way of family items or photographs to add a face or more personal understanding to the man. But several of his products have survived, and in studying those few remaining examples of his workmanship and artistic abilities, it is possible to begin to gain a feel for the man and his creative abilities.

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This article will conclude next issue with a pictorial essay on the work of Jacob S. Paulmer.

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# Joshua Zartman



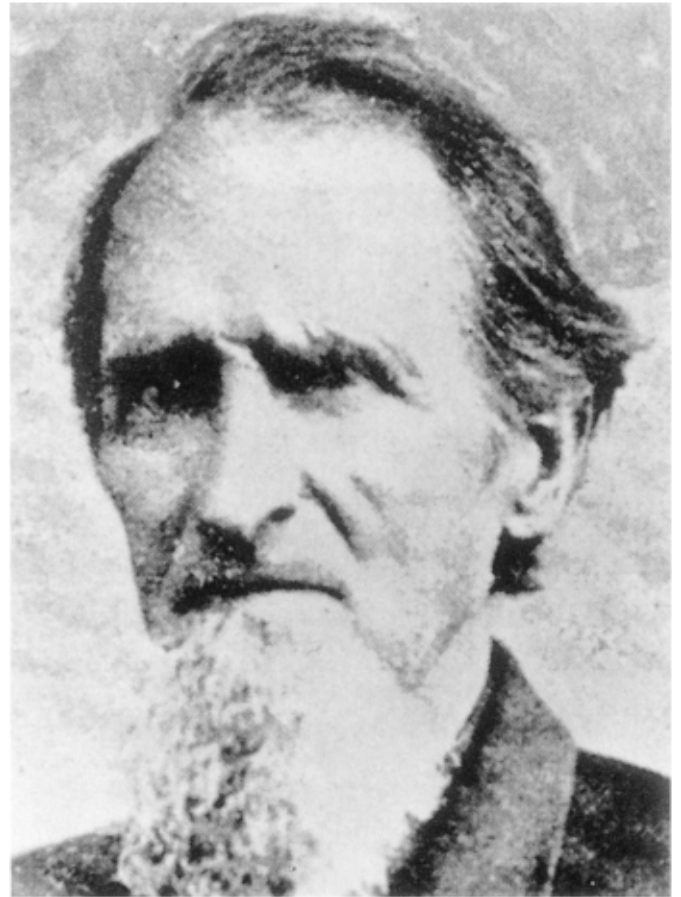
by

Paul L. Zeiher

Joshua Zartman's ancestors were some of the first to settle in this country. His great-great-grandfather, Alexander Zartman, came to America from Germany in 1728. He settled at Brickerville, Pennsylvania (Lancaster County). Joshua's father married Salome Koble and soon after moved to Perry County, Ohio. Joshua, born on the 10th of May, 1816, was the son of Alexander and Salome Koble Zartman.

Joshua was raised on a farm near Somerset in Perry County. At the same time he was learning the gunsmith trade which it's believed today he learned from Humberger. Joshua married Lydia Klingler whose parents were Adam and Eve (Fidler) Klingler were originally from Pennsylvania but spent most of their life in Perry County. Her parents owned large farms devoted to farming and stock raising.

Joshua and Lydia came to Licking County around 1841 and settled on a farm southwest of Newark. They lived there for a few years and then moved to Newark where he started his gunsmith business. The family's home was at 77 North Fifth Street at the corner of Locust Street. His business address was 28  $\frac{1}{2}$  West Main Street. Today the Saint Paul's Lutheran Church is on the lot where their home stood. A parking lot and drive through bank now covers the ground where Joshua operated his business. Joshua and Lydia had eight children. Alexander died at 9 years of age, Adam passed away after 14 years, Joshua and Aaron became farmers, David became



a pharmacist and settled in Butler, Ohio, Elizabeth became the wife of D. E. Stephens and resided in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Mary became the wife of Reverend J. D. Neff and lived in Hartville, Ohio. Joshua's son Jacob served in Company I, One Hundred and Twenty Ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. After his enlistment was up he returned to Newark. According to the 1869-1870 directory he was working as a clerk for McCure and Brothers which was a retail/wholesale dealer in hardware and agriculture implements.

The hardships and possible sickness he incurred while in service may have led to his death at the early age of thirty-five. Jacob is buried at the Cedar Hill Cemetery in the Zartman family plot.

In 1846 the German Episcopal Church was organized on Fourth Street south of the canal which today is Canal Street. Joshua and his family were some of the original members of this church. Later in 1850 the church decided to organize a Sunday school and Joshua was made the first superintendent.

According to Hustlers Gunsmiths of Ohio he had two apprentices working for him in 1850. They were David Smith and John Hetrick. There are several David Smiths listed as gunsmiths but I believe David moved to Utica, Ohio. After his apprenticeship John Hetrick chose to go into business for himself. The 1858 city directory has John listed as a gunsmith at 29½ North Fourth Street. The 1850 industrial census lists Joshua as having \$900.00 invested with four employees at a cost of \$100.00 per month.

For the year ending June 1, 1850, Joshua purchased 100 barrels at \$225.00 and other materials at \$375.00. His total production of guns was valued at \$2,180.00.

Along with his gunsmith business Joshua was a very active real estate speculator. From 1839 to 1877 he purchased and sold some 15 pieces of property. On April 1, 1850, he sold William and Nancy Glover lot number 306 in the Samuel D. Roles addition. He held the first mortgage on this for \$300.00 until April 1, 1852. A copy of the release with his signature is below (Deed book 56 page 312). He had purchased this property March 26, 1849 from Daniel and Hester Connett (Deed book 56 page 253).

Joshua made full stock and half stock rifles. I also know of one target rifle with a false muzzle

### JOSHUA ZARTMAN

**Dies This Morning at the Advanced Age of Seventy-Five Years.**

An old landmark has gone. An aged citizen has departed. Like grain ripe unto the harvest he has yielded to the keen sickle. Full of years and with brow crowned with the snows of many winters he has at last yielded to the final summons.

Joshua Zartman, well-known as one of Newark's leading and substantial business men died this morning at 2:45 o'clock after a brief illness. Mr. Zartman was born on the 10th of May 1816 near Somerset in Perry county, Ohio. He spent his early days upon a farm and at the same time learned the trade of a gunsmith. Removing to Newark when he was about 25 years of age he purchased a farm just southwest of the city limits, where he resided a few years with his wife and then removed to the city to ply his trade. Honesty, industry and perseverance enabled him in a few years time to gain quite a competence and he has since been recognized as one of the most reliable and trustworthy business men of the city. Eight children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Zartman, five of whom are living. There are three sons and two daughters, the youngest of whom, Libby, has lived with, cared for, and has been the constant companion of her father in his declining years.

Mr. Zartman has lived a devoted and consistent Christian life, having been a member of the German Methodist church since its institution in this city. Death came to him as a welcome messenger of peace to one who was ready. Five years have elapsed since the death of his faithful wife.

The funeral will take place Sunday at 2 p. m. from the First M. E. church. It was the request of the deceased that if possible the services should be conducted by Rev. Treuschel of the German Methodist church of Columbus and also that the choir of the same church should participate in the services.

and hooded front sight, and of a Long Tom on display at the Campus Martius Museum in Marietta, Ohio. He signed his rifles several different ways:

J. Zartman	in script
Joshua Zartman	in script
J. Zartman Newark, Ohio	in script
Joshua Zartman Newark, Ohio	in script
J ZARTMAN	stamped



He was a master craftsman at his trade. The design and architecture of his rifles are very appealing to the eye and the workmanship is as fine as any maker.

Joshua's wife, Lydia, died June 8, 1887, and Joshua's death came on December 11, 1891 after a short illness. Joshua had been active in his business up until three days before his death. The cause of his death was peritonitis which is an acute inflammation of the membranes that lined the abdominal wall. He is buried in section number one, northeast  $\frac{1}{4}$  lot, number 161 at the Cedar Hill Cemetery in Newark, Ohio.

Illustrated is Joshua's obituary as it appeared in the Newark Advocate December 11, 1891. Also an article that appeared in the Newark Weekly American December 17, 1891 referring to his funeral.



Fullstock Rifle  
By Joshua Zartman



**THE LAST RITES.**  
Sorrowfully the Remains of Joseph Zartman Are Laid Away.  
Yesterday afternoon at two o'clock the Funeral of the late Joseph Zartman, Newark's esteemed and respected citizen took place from the First M. E. church. The large edifice was filled with sorrowing friends who had known deceased so long, and who had gathered to pay the last tribute of respect to his memory. The services were conducted by Rev. L. L. Magee, pastor of the church, and Rev. Trenschel, pastor of the German Methodist church, Columbus.