

Mrs. Keeler joined the Beloit Chapter D. A. R. December 6, 1897. She is now 85 years of age, our oldest surviving member. Until the infirmities of her age pressed upon her, she was active in Church and social affairs. She is a liberal dispenser of bounty.

She is passing the days of her declining years in her beautiful home, tenderly cared for. Her husband has passed on before.

ABIGAIL AUSTIN DOTY
Author—Mrs. Charles Fifield
Janesville

Abigail Austin Doty was one of the pioneer women of Rock County, Wisconsin.

Abigail Austin, daughter of Ira and Permelia Austin, was born at Lee Corners, Ontario County, New York, September 6, 1832. Later the family moved to the town of Canadaigua.

Mrs. Austin died in 1843, leaving Abigail, aged 11, and another daughter, Ann Eliza, aged nine years. A Captain and Mrs. Pratt of the same town, having decided to locate in the West, persuaded Mr. Austin to take his two little girls and to move westward also. They started overland in a covered wagon, stopping at taverns at night and after several weeks of tedious travel, finally reached Janesville, in the Fall of 1843. Their household goods were shipped by boat from Buffalo to Chicago. Mr. Austin and his daughters decided to remain in Janesville, but Captain and Mrs. Pratt continued their journey and located at Whitewater, Wisconsin.

The first winter at Janesville was a trying ordeal for the Austin family. Houses being very scarce they were obliged to be satisfied with the second floor of a small frame dwelling on South Main Street, where the Cullen Apartments now stand. They suffered with the extreme cold of that year—the house being so poorly built that one was able to see the outside light through the cracks between the boards.

Abigail Austin, at the age of eleven years, kept house for her father and sister and with the help and advice of the neighbors, was able to make bread and attend to all the household duties. In the summer, she, with the rest of the village women had to go to the banks of Rock River to do the family washing, as there were no cisterns at that time, and rain barrels were at a premium.

The second winter, Mr. Austin and daughters, together with another family, moved into a new stone house built by Judge Bailey. This house was so very new that the walls were not even plastered but the winter was milder than the preceding one and no discomforts were noticeable unless it might be the fact that two families were living in a six room house. In 1924, this house still stands as originally built—opposite the Court House park on St. Lawrence Avenue—probably the oldest house in Janesville.

At the time of the lynching of Maybury, near the old Court House, the Austin girls were eye witnesses.

Janesville in an early day was very gay—socially, especially during the winter months and many were the bob-rides to Johnstown to attend the dances given weekly at the old Johnstown hostelry.

In 1847 Abigail Austin was married to Ezra Philo Doty, also of Janesville and was a resident of Janesville until her death, January 2, 1916. Mr. Doty died in 1869. Mrs. Doty, left with a family of five young children to bring up, proved herself a most loving and dutiful parent. Of the five children, Edward Philo Doty and Mrs. Charles L. Fifield, of Janesville survive.