

**McLean County Museum of History**

**Ella Orendorff Collection**

Processed by  
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**Collection Information**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Boxes
COLLECTION DATES:	1876-1982
PROVENANCE:	Gift
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	None

## Historical Sketch

Brothers William and Thomas Orendorff and their families were among the earliest settlers in what is now McLean County. They came from southern Illinois to the area in 1823, along with the Dawson, Hendrix, Rhodes and Benson families among others. The Orendorffs settled in what was first called Keg's Grove, soon changed to Blooming Grove, southeast of present-day Bloomington.

Both brothers took on civic duties, with William serving as the first justice of the peace and Thomas as coroner and assessor. William worked as an auctioneer; and it was reported that he sold the first lots in the city of Bloomington.

John Lewis Orendorff was a long-lived descendant with the distinction of being the first white child born in this area, born on January 20, 1825 to William and Lovina Sales Orendorff. John Lewis, or "Lute" as he was known, farmed the Orendorff homestead and with wife Susan Hoover Orendorff raised three sets of twins among eight children in all.

Various descendants of William and Thomas were active members of the McLean County Historical Society from its inception in 1892 and continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Scope and Content Note

The Ella Orendorff Collection consists primarily of newspaper clippings about the Orendorff family who were among the first settlers in this area, coming to Blooming Grove in 1823. These clippings recount the lives of brothers Thomas and William Orendorff, who migrated from southern Illinois after having lived in several Appalachian states. There are many clippings about John Lewis Orendorff, born to William and Lovina (Sales) on January 20, 1825. He is considered the first white child born in McLean County (though at that time it was Fayette County). Lovina Orendorff is credited with coming up with the name Blooming Grove after finding Keg's Grove a distasteful appellation.

Much of the early settler history is found in the newspaper accounts of the McLean County Orendorff family reunions. The 1902 article includes a very nice etching of John Lewis Orendorff. There are obituary notices for the Blooming Grove family and descendants, as well as for more distant relatives. An Orendorff cousin laid out the town of Hopedale in Tazewell County in 1852; William J. Orendorff, another cousin, was a partner in the Parlin & Orendorff industrial firm in Canton, Fulton County.

Newspaper clippings of more general historical interest tell of the Dawson, Hendrix and Rhodes families, who were among the other settlers. A 1968 *Pantagraph* full-page photo spread describes how the Clarke Bozarth family is remodeling the John Lewis Orendorff home at RR 2, Bloomington. In two articles, Orendorff descendants describe the family's link to Abraham Lincoln: While in New Salem, he boarded with Mary "Polly" Orendorff Camron, William and Thomas' sister.

The remainder of the collection consists of Mary Orendorff's 1876 diary; memorial cards of a few of the Orendorff and Hale family members and social calling cards.

## **Folder Inventory**

### **Folder 1: Orendorff Articles**

Includes numerous *Daily Pantagraph* and *Daily Bulletin* clippings that provide genealogical information about the William and Thomas Orendorff families. Many are accounts of family reunions that describe how in 1823 the brothers moved from southern Illinois to become two of the earliest settlers in what soon became Blooming Grove. Several clippings are obituaries of John Lewis Orendorff (first white child born in McLean County), his wife Susan (Hoover) and his children and spouses. There is a good description of the couple's 50th wedding anniversary party. Other clippings relate the lives and deaths of Orendorff cousins in Tazewell County, including a multiple murder and a suicide.

### **Folder 2: Local History Articles**

Includes numerous newspaper clippings that are of local historical interest, as well as two linking an Orendorff family member to Abraham Lincoln. The folder includes a newspaper reprint of an essay about the early settlement of what is now McLean County written by a young descendant of the Dawson pioneer family. Another Dawson descendant, Calista Dawson Grim, wrote a lengthy letter to the editor in 1922 about the early years as related to her by her ancestors. This folder has an account of the Rhodes and Ijams families reunion and their role in settling the county. More contemporary clippings are a photo story about the Orendorff homestead in recent years and a photograph of 81-year-old Mrs. Lou Orendorff receiving a permanent from a Bloomington beauty shop operator at the Jessmine Withers Home.

### **Folder 3: Mary Orendorff Diary**

1876 Perpetual Diary that has journal entries as well as a few financial accounts.

### **Folder 4: Memorial Records**

Memorial booklet of O. H. Orendorff, 1868-1927, Farmer City, Illinois. Includes photograph.

Memorial cards for Oliver H. Orendorff (d. 1927), Mary Orendorff (d. 1891), Cora Hale (d. 1906) and Beulah Hale (d. 1895). Postcard with poem titled "The Chapel on the Mountain."

### **Folder 5: Calling Cards**

Eight cards of various people, including Miss Mary Orendorff.

### **Folder 6: Higginsport H.S. Commencement**

Class of 1913 included Ralph Orendorff. [Tazewell County?]