

# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## ABOLITIONIST MERLIN MEAD

Merlin Mead was born to Clark and Lois Mead in 1794. He married Polly Clark and they relocated to New York City. There they opened a school for poor boys. However, after ten years Polly's health was affected by the unsanitary conditions in the city. The Meads moved to Franklinville joined his sister Laura and her husband Seth Ely to run a public house. It was located on Elm Street and in later years it was known as Ten Broeck House.

In 1833, Merlin attended a meeting of the American Temperance Society in Arcade, New York. Merlin wrote, "Returning late in the evening I found I could not sleep. I woke my wife and told her about the meeting. I said that I am going to roll out of the cellar all the barrels of liquor I have, knock in their heads and stop the sale thereafter. She agreed. We never had anything to do with alcohol again."

The Meads were very strict Presbyterians, belonging to the First Presbyterian Church in Franklinville. Their gift of communion vessels can still be seen there today. Merlin served as Elder, Superintendent and Clerk of Sessions. If the pastor was absent, Merlin would read selections from his own library. Their family attendance was so regular that one day their horse started out for church without them.

In 1841, the family moved to Cadiz and lived in the Howe-Prescott House before building a larger home nearby. Merlin always had a keen interest in public affairs. He was an ardent "Apostle of Freedom" when the term "Abolitionist" was disdained and subjected its owner to all sorts of petty persecutions. The Mead house was recognized as being involved with the Underground Railroad.

During the Civil War Merlin discovered that a neighbor's son was unable to get a pair of boots he had requested from home. The reason? There was no express company located in the region where the young man served. Merlin wrote to his Congressman and complained about the situation. His Congressman introduced a bill in Congress authorizing the carrying of packages to soldiers by mail. This was promptly acted upon and the boy got his boots. This bill benefited all the soldiers. Eventually this led to the present parcel post system.



Merlin Mead, son Eddie, and wife Polly

Polly and Merlin led a long, happy life. One of their most joyous occasions was their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary when all their children returned home and the family was reunited. He died and was [buried](#) at Mount Prospect Cemetery next to his wife [Polly](#).

Submitted by: Maggie Fredrickson, Village of Franklinville Historian