

THE LIFE OF RILEY
RILEY O. LAUGHNER BORN OCTOBER 12, 1868 DIED DECEMBER 25, 1969

If your spirits are at a low ebb and you want a boost in life, you should have had the privilege of meeting one of Boone County's most inspirational and remarkable men. Riley Laughner.

All his life he farmed. He retired as a "clodhopper" at 85. When he started housekeeping in Worth Township, he had \$65.00. He paid \$12.00 for his wedding suit, with Prince Albert coat with satin lapels. Farming was great and good to him. Of course, like others he had it rough during the depression and was hit doubly hard with the death of his wife in 1930. She was the former Lulu L. Ottinger, also a Booneite, who was 54 when she died, leaving Riley with three children to raise, the youngest being a freshman in high school. Sadness also struck again in 1962 when a son, Verner, died.

When reflecting on the past, he recalled vividly dates, happenings and people, he said that he use to walk "these roads knee deep in mud," pointing to the now busy highway in front of the home he shared with his daughter, Mrs. Charles Kouns. We would shuck corn by hand in the field until the first school bell rang at 8 a.m. and then walk one mile to school. It was one of those one room schools and his teacher was Mrs. Culley, who he remembered as being very strict. Although his advantages of an education were limited, there being no high school, by diligent study and perseverance, he prepared himself for a rigorous and fruitfull life.

He recalled whe he and his father went to Lebanon, when he was only 10, to get a barrel of salt. The roadbeds were almost gone and we didn't think we could get through with the horses, but they did. They bought 10 cents worth of cheese and crackers for lunch. There were no restaurants, no jail and no hospital, we didn't need any, he said. It took all day to go to Lebanon. He remembered suits his mother made, spinning the wool from the sheep his father raised. He remarked, "we didn't waste anything like they do now.

His grandparents came to the Indian and wild animal infested lands of Indiana in the early 1800's from Pennsylvania, via Tennessee, over the old Indian trail and finally settled in 1849 in the vicinity of Whitestown. He was one of 11 children of Roanna (Nease) and Ambrose M. Laughner. He sang in the church choir for years and was in a quartet and played in the old Whitestown Band along with brothers and other relatives.

When Riley Laughner was 91 years old, he kept a promise he'd made more than half a century ago. He paid \$100.00 to the first boy from the former high school church school class he taught who entered the ministry. And he taught a lot of classes during 85 years, of active membership, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, in Whitestown. When he was celebrating his 100 birthday, that "boy" was a guest of honor. He is the Rev. Lewis Westenbarger, then pastor of Calvary, Cromwell, Indiana.

Mr. Laughner, whose appearance and quick answers defied his 100 years, it was just wonderful to have a minister come out of one of his Sunday school classes. But then Riley Laughner had a wonderful attitude about life in general. The greatest virtue of this unforgettable person can possibly be assessed in his phrase, "What a wonderful world we live in."

(Material furnished by Mrs. Charles Kouns)