

The Blind Hoover Brothers of Union, Ohio
Written by Sue Cummings

REF: *History of Montgomery County*, 1882 by W. H. Beers and newspaper articles and photos donated to the society by relatives of the E. F. Younce and Jenny (Eby) Younce family.

A few years ago, while Glynn and I were walking through the Minnich Cemetery on Phillipsburg-Union Road, we became intrigued with a large, cube-like grave marker with the words "Eli Hoover, 1825-1911 – William Hoover, 1836-1911 – Blind Brothers." We commented that there must be a story behind this tombstone inscription. Recent donations to the society including photos of these brothers and the Hoover homestead have shed light on this mystery.

Eli and William were but two of a family of eleven children born to Daniel and Susan Byrkett Hoover. Daniel Hoover, the father of this remarkable family, was reputed to be the first white child born in Randolph Township. He was born in 1803, the year Ohio was admitted as a state. Five of the children were blind at birth. The eldest girl Hannah (19 Sep 1823 - 22 Nov 1877) and eldest son Eli (20 Sep 1825 - 17 Mar 1911) both were born blind. Hannah lived to age 54 and Eli 86. Neither married. The next four children in order: Lavina, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay and Abraham Anton all were born with sight. James Elliott (01 May 1834 - 27 Mar 1872) and William (11 Aug 1836 - 14 Mar 1911) were born blind. James died at age 38 but William died at age 74 just a few days before Eli. Both became ill together and died of pneumonia. Sarah Ann, the second daughter was born with sight but died when a little over one year old. Charles, the next blind boy (04 Sep 1846 - 1905) married and lived to age 59. The youngest daughter, Eliza Jane, was born with sight and married George W. Eby. Their daughter Jennie married Elias F. Younce (thus the connection to the Younce family).

According to newspaper articles dated March 18, 1911 (probably the *Dayton Journal*) and April 1, 1911 (the *Englewood Enterprise*) Eli and William lived together in Union for many years. The blind boys had been sent to the Institute for the Blind in Columbus, Ohio where they studied music and learned the trades of broom making and carpet weaving which they pursued for over sixty years. All four brothers were talented musicians and William served as professor of music at the blind institute for several years after his graduation. The brothers performed far and wide as a string quartet.