

XIV.

A PIONEER EXPLORING PARTY.

In the summer of 1835 an exploring expedition was formed in the southern part of the state for the purpose of visiting the country north of the Wabash river, and if they were pleased with "the lay of the land" it was understood they were to make selections of homes for themselves and neighbors who had determined to change their place of abode, and make the proper entry in the land office, which was at that time at La Porte. The currency of the realm at that time was mostly the good old-fashioned silver dollar of the daddies, and it required but ninety of them to purchase the best eighty-acre lot of land in Marshall County. These dollars were generally sewed up in a belt of cotton shirting, or some goods of that sort, or put into an Indian

belt made of tanned deerskin, and Worn around the waist, underneath the coat and vest or "wamus," as the case might be.

These primitive explorers, of course, were provided with rifles with - which to protect themselves, and also for the purpose of providing game for / food. These rifles were generally of the flintlock pattern-"percussion caps" not having at that time made their appearance this far west. A part of the outfit was a pair of bullet molds made of iron. Bar lead was a necessary article of merchandise, and with a wooden laddle to melt it in and pour it into the molds a sufficient number of bullets could be made in a short time to last several days. If, however, a long journey was to be taken, the molds and lead were carried along for use in case of emergency. A gun pouch made of dressed deerskin with the hair on, with a turnover flap at the top, was adjusted over the right shoulder and carried at the side under the left arm. Ox or cow horns were used to carry powder in. Some of these horns were made by the Indians and were really quite artistic. Pictures, rude though they might be, of various animals were cut on the horns, and frequently they were inlaid with silver.

Having selected the lands they wished to enter, one of the number would be delegated to go to the land office and transact the business for himself and all the others, in order to save the time and expense of making the trip.

The land office was afterwards removed to Winamac, for what particular reason the general public never found out, and Amzi L. Wheeler of Plymouth appointed receiver. During most of the time Johnson Brownlee was employed by Mr. Wheeler as clerk and messenger. All the money received for entries of land was either gold or silver coins, mostly silver dollars. This money the receiver was required to deposit in a designated bank at Chicago, Ill., and as there were no railroads or express lines it had to be sent by special messenger, and it fell to the lot of Mr. Brownlee to perform that hazardous duty. As fast as three or four thousand dollars were received they would be put up in square boxes containing \$500 and \$1,000 each of silver and double that amount of gold. The boxes were securely fastened with screws and plainly directed to the government depository at Chicago. Mr. Brownlee had been previously sent to the southern part of the state, into Fayette and Rush counties, where he had formerly lived, to purchase a team of horses to haul the money between the points. It was a fine team of chestnut sorrels that was secured for the service. A light Covered wagon was also procured as a part of the outfit. The receiver was allowed \$150 for each trip in the delivery of the money, and, as there was considerable profit in that part of the perquisites, the loads were quite numerous for that reason, and for the further reason that if the messenger should be met by highway robbers and the money taken away from him the loss would not be so great. During the time Mr. Brownlee was connected with the land office at Winamac he said he must have made as many as fifty trips to Chicago with money. His route was by way of Maxinkuckee Lake, through the "prairie" as it was then called, where "Uncle Platt Dickson" and others lived, southwest of where Wolf Creek Hills formerly were. That neighborhood was generally his stopping place the first night out. The next day he would reach La Porte, where he would stay all night with Capt. Ely, who was an old-time personal friend of the receiver. When Mr. Brownlee retired to bed at night he pulled the money boxes up in his room, or under his bed if others slept in

the room with him. The next day he would reach Michigan City by noon, and a place now called Miller's station on the Michigan Central railroad, half way between Michigan City and Chicago, was reached for the night. The next day would take him into Chicago, where he deposited his boxes with the bank and drove to his hotel. After the money was counted the next morning and he had procured a receipt for the same he started on the return trip. In all the numerous trips he made over that very sparsely settled country he never met with an accident and was never molested in any particular.

Chicago became a village of whites in 1833. In 1837 an unofficial census showed a population of about 4,000. The official census of 1840 showed, however, a population of 4,853, so that about the period of Mr. Brownlee's first visits there the population was not far from 10,000. Old Fort Dearborn was still standing at that time, and the Chicago of today, "the zenith city of the unsalted seas," a city of more than two million inhabitants, was a typical Ind. frontier town. It was reached by the lake by small sailing vessels, and overland by stagecoaches, etc. There was not at that time a railroad pointing in that direction. The telegraph had not been invented; steamboat navigation; was an experiment; such things as reapers and mowers, sewing machines and the numerous labor-saving machines that have come into use as if by magic, and electricity and all the marvelous uses to which it has been applied were not then dreamed of. No other three score and ten years since the world began has witnessed such marvelous inventions and such astounding progress in discoveries and the arts and sciences, in civilization, education and all that tends to advance civilization. As the poet has well said:

We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling ---
To be living is sublime.