

## XV. THE FIRST WHITE SETTLERS.

When the pioneers came there was nothing here but a wilderness. No evidences of civilization were to be seen anywhere. Telegraphing had not then been discovered, and there wasn't a railroad within a thousand miles in any direction, and at that time there was not even a stage line within, forty miles.

The Indians, their manners and customs and characteristics having been quite fully set forth in these sketches, the inquiry may naturally be made, who were the pioneers who first settled this region and took the places of the Indians after they finally left the country, and what were their habits, manners and customs?

Those who first came here, or their parents, were originally mostly from Pennsylvania, Virginia and the coast states, and were of Scotch, German, Irish, English and French descent. Upon the opening of the great Northwestern Territory, of which this was a part, they began moving westward, and, striking the Ohio River at various points, floated down on rafts and boats of rude construction to various settlements, such as Marietta,



Cincinnati and other points where they both south and north.

The first settlers here were from southern Ohio and Indiana and northern Kentucky. Butler and Preble counties, in Ohio, and Rush, Fayette, Franklin and Union counties, in southern Indiana, furnished nearly the entire emigration the first eight or ten years.

No better class of people could be found any place than were the first settlers in this county. They were the cream of the settlements they had left; resolute and determined; moral, honest, upright and generally of a religious turn of mind, and were social and neighborly in a degree that would put to confusion and shame the average of those who make up the population in these days.

Many of them were fairly well educated and all were endowed with what is commonly known as "good common sense." Everything goes to show that. They laid the foundations of our present county government broad and deep, firm and solid. They began at once to build schoolhouses and provide places of worship; they built a courthouse and other public buildings, and provided an asylum for the helpless poor. They chopped down the forests; plowed and sowed the ground; erected saw mills and grist mills, and brick yards, blacksmith and wagon shops; cut out and bridged, and made the roads passable; established mail routes and stage lines; opened up facilities for trade and reciprocal intercourse with neighboring towns and villages; elected officers who set the legal machinery to work, all of which gave us the start that has brought us on and up to our present advanced stage of civilization.

As we review the past, the forms and faces of these early pioneers- those who "blazed the way" through the almost impassable wilderness "in shadowy design," come up in vivid remembrance, and in their life's history present much that is worthy of admiration and emulation. Leaving their early homes, and the scenes of civilization, with ax and gun, they wended their lonely way through the unexplored wilderness until they reached the place where their future home was to be. Here, among the wild men of the forest that were still here when many of them came, the wolves and wild beasts of prey that infested the Country, a wigwam of brush and poles was erected, a campfire built, and "the ax laid at the root of the tree." There, in the lonely woods, away from friends and family, the original pioneer labored, day in and day out, clearing a little "patch" of ground and preparing a rude log cabin for the reception of his wife and little ones. Finally they came, thinly clad in "home spun," sick and weary from weeks of traveling with ox teams, over roads that had to be made as they went, breaking an axle here, a tongue there; sleeping on the ground in the night air; fighting myriads of mosquito's and braving the storms that overtook them on their journey.

Here, and in this way, was the battle of life again renewed; and right manfully was it pressed to a glorious victory. How the memory of their hardships looms up, as the past, like a panorama, is spread out before us!

It is well those who are living here now, gathering the fruits of the toil of those early pioneers, cannot realize the suffering and deprivation they passed through in forming and handing down the blessed heritage we now enjoy.



Those were days that tested true friendship. The question was never: "Who is my Neighbor?" All were neighbors. All were friends. And let us hope that the friendships formed under so many trying circumstances, in those early days, may serve to cement the rising generation with the past, and that it may continue for all time to come.

When the Northwestern Territory was declared opened for settlement, about 1800, most of them made their way in boats down the Ohio river as far as where Cincinnati now stands and settled in Hamilton, Butler and adjoining counties, and from there gradually found their way into southern Indiana, settling in the river counties.

Emigration from southern Indiana to Marshall County began in 1835, but it did not commence in earnest until 1836. In the spring of that year, in the vicinity of Maxinkuckee Lake and farther north and east in the direction of Plymouth, the Logans, Voreises, Morrisises, Thompsons, Dicksons, McDonalds, Brownlees, Houghtons, Blakeleys, Lawsons, and others, arrived and made a permanent settlement. From this on, the settlement of this region was rapid and permanent. Except that portion of Union township known as the: Burr Oak Flats," the land was thickly timbered and full of undergrowth.

#### The Home of the Hardy Pioneer

Cabins of the roughest kind of logs were erected and covered with clapboards, "rived" with an implement called a "fro," out of red oak timber, which were held to their places by logs fastened on the laps. Chimneys were built of small poles, and the cracks in the cabin and chimney were "daubed" with a very inferior quality of mud. If it was desirable to have a window, part of a log was taken out and a rough frame covered with white paper greased would be put in. The furniture, except such portions as had been transported by wagons when the movers came, was of the most primitive Workmanship.

At that time there were no white people nearer than the Michigan road, and few there. The Indians outnumbered the whites two to one, and



It was uncertain whether the treaty entered into between them and the government, by which they were to leave the country, could be carried out. The average Indian that inhabited this region at that period could hardly be made to see the justice of being forced to leave his hunting grounds, for the accommodation of those he looked upon as being only a few white adventurers, and until those untutored savages were driven away two years later they were the imaginary terror of timid men, women and children. They were peaceable, however, and the anticipations of danger were never, in a single instance, realized. No disturbance of any kind ever occurred.

There were no roads or bridges in those days, and he who did the milling for the neighborhood blazed his way as he went, and if he succeeded in making the trip to Delphi or Logansport, the nearest grist mills, and return in a week or ten days he was applauded as having accomplished a great feat. Sometimes he would break his wagon, frequently his oxen would get stuck in the mire, and other unforeseen accidents would befall him by which he would be delayed. Then the rations would run short, and those dependent upon his return for bread would have to crack corn with such appliances as were at hand, live on lye hominy made out of Indian corn, and such wild game as the hunters of the neighborhood could procure.

If the fire went out at night, which was not an uncommon occurrence, a chunk of fire had to be brought from the nearest neighbor, or a jack knife and a piece of "punk" attached to a flint stone had to be brought into requisition. In those days these articles were considered essential in all well regulated families. People then knew nothing about friction matches, nor did they enjoy the luxury of tea, coffee, pepper, spices or anything of that kind. They were not to be had, and if they could have been bought there was no money to buy them with. There were no churches then, and no schoolhouses, no country stores, no shoe shops, no blacksmith shops, no wagon shops, in fact nothing that the people needed. Homespun flax pants and shirts of a little finer material, the sleeves and collars fastened with a needle and thread, an inferior straw hat made by hand of oats or rye straw and boots or shoes made by the shoemaker of the neighborhood, generally badly worn, constituted the average Sunday outfit at that period and for some time afterwards.

The country was full of swamps and wet places, and the malaria that arose there from in the spring and summer was sufficient to prostrate more than half the population. Such a time with bilious fever, "ager," and other bilious diseases as prevailed for several years was never known before nor since. The proper remedies were to be had for love or money, and many died for want of care and proper medical attention. Dr. Thomas Logan, who came with those who arrived in 1836, was the first doctor who practiced his profession in that section of the county. He was sent far and wide and saved many lives and did much to alleviate the suffering that was everywhere prevalent.

People of these days often wonder how it happened that the earliest settlers found their way into Marshall County and into this section of the state, which was at that time a howling wilderness inhabited only by Indians and wild animals, and what induced them to leave the scenes of their early



childhood and settle in the woods to labor and toil in building up homes for themselves and children away from their friends and the influences of civilized society ? It would be difficult to tell what influenced those who first came to locate permanently here.

Treaties had been made with the Indians by which they were to give up their lands and hunting grounds to the whites. Gangs of government surveyors had been sent here; the lands had been surveyed and platted, and opened to entry by the government at \$1.25 per acre. Through these government surveyors, axmen and chainmen, it soon became noised abroad that a most delightful and productive country had been found, with beautiful lakes and water courses, and every kind of fish and wild game, fruits and nuts and roots in abundance.

ed Prior to the treaty ceding the lands to the United States by the Pottawattomie Indians, a scheme had been entered into by some speculators III looking to the building of a great national thoroughfare between Lake Michigan and the Ohio river, through the center of Indiana, which was, in the course of time, built and named by the legislature, "The Michigan Road."

It was this Michigan road that probably induced many of the early settlers to come here; in fact, otherwise they could hardly have found their way through the wilderness. Nearly all the pioneers that settled in the county up to 1840 came from the south on the line of that road, especially the large colony that settled in Union township in the region of Maxinkuckee Lake.

#### How They Came.

The first settlers about the lake came in 1836. Several heads of families d came in 1835 and entered lands, and early in the following spring built log o cabins, cleared off little patches of ground, planted corn, potatoes, etc., and early in the summer returned to bring their families and take up their permanent residences in Marshall county. They came in a caravan from southern Indiana in wagons drawn by ox teams, on horseback and on foot.

They started on their long and tiresome journey on the twelfth of July, and arrived on the east side of Maxinkuckee lake July 26, 1836, just six days after the county had been organized and the county seat located at Plymouth, which occurred July 20, 1836. At that time there were only about 600 white people in the county and about 1,500 Pottawattomie Indians. The household goods of the members of the caravan were carefully packed away in the wagons, leaving room for the women and children and the supply of eatables prepared for the journey. The wagons were covered with sheeting for protection against rain and the hot rays of the sun. Fourteen days were occupied in making the journey. The roads most of the way were through swamps and over log bridges, and much of the way was but little better than Indian trails. From Indianapolis the Michigan road was followed. At that time it had only just been opened through this part of the state, and that only to such an extent as to make it passable by cutting down the trees and bushes along the line and bridging over the worst places with brush, poles and logs. The country through which the road ran at that time was for the most part thickly timbered, and all along was an abundance of wild game and



fruits of all kinds, which the hunters of the little band brought into camp. The lack of pure water to drink was the most serious difficulty they had to contend with. There were seldom any springs along the way and the water for drinking and cooking purposes was mostly from stagnant ponds and small streams which were not much better. Every night on the way they camped wherever darkness overtook them, slept in the wagons and under the trees, the cattle and horses browsing about the camp and resting from the day's toil as best they could. The mosquitoes and flies were terrible pests, much more so than people nowadays can imagine.

It was late in the afternoon of July 26, 1836, when the tired and worn out caravan obtained the first sight of the ever-beautiful Maxinkuckee Lake. The glorious sun was just making its golden setting, "and by the track of his fiery car, gave token of a goodly day tomorrow." It was indeed, as our own "Hoosier Poet" has so beautifully expressed it, a picture that no painter has the coloring to mock." A sunset on Maxinkuckee is always beautiful, and, no matter how often seen never loses its charm to the beholder. None of them had ever seen a lake before, and the beauty of the scene, the rippling water, the rays of the golden sunset, and the shore lines, with their "etchings of forest and prairie," left a picture on their memory that lasted during life. The final stop was made not far east of the lake, near the residence of the late David R. Voreis. It was twilight then. A signal of their arrival in the neighborhood had been agreed upon before they started, and as the ox teams were halted at the end of the journey, a long; loud blast was given on a conch shell, which resounded and echoed and re-echoed through the trees and over the hills for miles in every direction. The night birds began to carol their sweetest melodies and sing their glad songs of welcome. And then the weary travelers listened eagerly for the response. It soon came from the residence of Vincent Brownlee, a short distance farther away in the wilderness. The echo of that response still rings loud and clear in the ears of the few still living who heard it. It was in one sense a most joyous occasion. The women who had borne the burden and heat of the long and wearisome days and were well nigh exhausted cried for joy, and even the stalwart men of the party let fall a silent tear that the hardships of the journey to the new country were at an end. Less than half a dozen who came at that time are known to be living. All the others have "gone to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

#### Mill Dams – Grist and Saw Mills.

The same year that white settlers came, they set about devising ways and means by which they could secure the establishing of mills by which they could get their corn "cracked" at home, and the little lumber they needed for doors and floors to their cabins without being compelled to drive their ox-wagons thirty or forty miles arid back to procure it. Such a thing as steam boilers or steam gristmills were not known then. Mill sites were numerous and all that could be desired, but it was hard to find one close by a dam-site! There were few rivers or streams that could be dammed so as to hold the necessary amount of water, and with fall sufficient to furnish power to run the machinery. The first effort at dam building was across the outlet of the lower Twin lake and the erection of a small mill known as "Barber's Mill," now known as "Zehner's Mill." It was built about 1836,



Timothy Barber and others. It proved to be a great convenience all central, southern and western part of the county in the grinding of corn, there being no wheat until several years later. The dam was quite substantially built, and as the Twin Lakes were not affected by the heavy rains and floods as were the rivers, the owner was not annoyed by the dam washing out every time the heavy rains and flood came. A dam was built across Pine creek in Polk Township, not far from where Tyner is now located, and a sawmill built there, also about 1836. It furnished lumber for the neighborhood round about when there was a sufficient water to keep the mill running, but when there was a dry season there was not enough water to run the mill. It went into retirement more than half a century ago.

The mill dam across Wolf Creek, six miles southwest of Plymouth, was built about 1840, by Clark Bliven. Wolf Creek was a very small stream at that time being fed by the drainage of the swamplands through which it meandered. A small gristmill was erected on the south side of the dam, and later a sawmill was built on the north side. At this mill, the lumber for the second courthouse was sawed. It was here, too, about 1850, when the creek was overflowed by the high water, that Mr. Bliven, the owner of the property, in attempting to save the dam from washing out lost his footing, was washed out with the dam and drowned. In backing up the water the dam caused much valuable land to be overflowed, and for many years, on this account and because it was a breeder of malaria, efforts had been made to have the dam removed. Proceedings, were instituted in court at various times, but "the law's delay" suffered it to remain until the early part of 1907, when the court ordered the dam to be taken out and the channel of the creek dredged, which was done, and this historic spot is now only a memory. No wonder it had such a checkered history. The Pottawatomies called it "Katam-wah-see-te-wah", the Indian name for Black Wolf.

In the late '40s a dam was built across the Tippecanoe River at what was afterwards and is now, Tippecanoe Town. There was considerable opposition to the dam from the first, and as the country became more and more thickly settled, the feeling that the dam ought to be removed grew stronger and stronger. No effort being made to remove it, one night in 1878 the wooden mill was set fire to and burned to the ground. An attempt was made to burn the gristmill, but it failed. Finally the dam went out, and no one has since had the courage to rebuild it, and it is now also a thing of the past.

A dam was built across Yellow River, and a saw mill erected nearby. The dam was not substantially built, and every time there came a freshet, which was about every time it rained, the dam either went out or was damaged so it had to be repaired. Traces of this old dam are still visible, and especially the location of the circular mill race, a few hundred feet to the northeast of the present Zehner's gristmill. It was not long after this dam and mill was abandoned until the present dam, some distance above, was commenced on a larger and more substantial scale by Austin Fuller and others. This was probably in the later '40s or the early '50s. Notwithstanding the dam had been built solidly of large stones, trees and brush, and every sort of material to make it permanent, the high water frequently tore it out, and damaged it, and it was many years before it solidified itself so that the high water had no effect on it. The mills were burned down two or three

times, and several efforts have been made to compel the owners to remove the dam, as it is claimed that the backwater damages by overflow large quantities of land. A case looking to this end is now pending in the court of Marshall County. This dam and surroundings are also historical. Below the dam, and between the race and the river proper to where they untie, is a beautiful little park of two or three acres, on which has been sunk a flowing well fourteen inches in diameter, from which flows a continuous stream of clear, pure water. In this little park, have been held numerous picnics, old settler's society's meetings, soldier's campfires, and political meetings. Some of the great men of Indiana and elsewhere have walked through this beautiful park, and laved their thirst at the flowing well fountain; and it is only the truth to say that many a "Robert Burns and his Highland Mary," or a "Romeo and Juliet" have sauntered through these most delightful grounds under the shade of the umbrageous trees, and by the light of the pale and inconstant moon, listening to the music of the flowing well and the gentle murmur of the water as it fell in gentle cadences over "The Old Mill Dam."

It was here that the poet was inspired to write the following:

THE OLD MILL DAM  
(To An Imaginary Sweetheart)

Do you remember the old mill dam,  
And the path where we went roaming;  
Where at even-tide when all was calm  
We wandered along in the gloaming?

When the hawthorn bush with ivy clinging,  
Furnished shade from the noonday sun,  
As we listened to music the birds were singing,  
While our own loving hearts beat as one?

Do you remember the old flowing well  
'Neath the willow tree's long bending boughs,  
Where our story of love we oft did tell,  
And we plighted our marital vows?

And the dear little park near the old mill race,  
Where we wandered by the light of the moon,  
Where you "loved me" you said, with a smile on your face,  
And vowed you would be mine alone?

Alas; that "imaginary sweetheart of mine,"  
Disappeared like the mist from the stream,  
For when the old town clock was just striking nine  
I awoke – it was only a dream!