

XXVII. JAMES M. GREER'S RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY TIMES.

James M. Greer, Sr., who came to this county with his parents about the time of the organization of Marshall County, has lived in Bourbon Township and vicinity ever since to the present time, has written several articles for the county newspapers giving his experiences and recollections of his pioneer days, from which the writer of this has permission to make the following extracts. Mr. Greer says:

"I have seen wild deer in the woods where Bourbon now stands. The deer was a great help to the pioneer in settling Marshall County, as he could have venison the year round. I have seen seventeen deer in one drove. They stay behind each other when running, with their hind feet wide apart and tail high in the air. The underside of a deer's tail is white, and as they jump high in running, their tails present quite a picturesque appearance. The young deer (called fawn) is spotted, the spots being about the size of a silver ten-cent piece. The fawn is said to be scentless. It appears that nature has provided them with that defense from ferocious animals. A neighbor told me he went out one moonlight night to his cornfield to watch for deer as they came into the cornfield to eat corn. He said he hid himself there to see what the deer would do when they came into the field. When they came they went to eating, and when they got done they went to playing. They skipped, jumped and ran in a circle, and it looked to him like they were playing some kind of game. He watched them as long as he wanted to; then he shot one of them and that ended the game.

Feeding Cattle.

"Pioneers had a hard time to live and make ends meet. In the spring of the year the stock became poor. I have known men to cut down trees in the spring of the year so their stock could get the swelled buds to eat to keep them from starving until the grass got started. They put a bell on the stoutest one if there was one able to carry it. They would go to the lowland and marshes where the grass had started. They would wade into the marshes to get the grass and mire down. The owners would hunt for them, but couldn't always find them. I recollect one cow that wasn't found until in summer, and then her horns was all that could be seen. In those days some of the marshes would almost mire a cat; there were a good many cows lost in that way. There were a good many cow bones that rotted in the marshes of Marshall County.

Going to Church.

"Going to church in pioneer days was termed "going to meeting". I will tell a narrative of preaching in pioneer days. Stuart Bailey, father of Wellington Bailey, of Plymouth, was a pioneer preacher. He told me that

went in west of Plymouth to a pioneer settlement to preach. He said he got to one of the pioneer dwellings after following a cooked trail through the woods until he was about given out. A boy was dispatched to the pioneers of the neighborhood to let them know the preacher had come and there would be preaching at his father's house that evening. About dusk the pioneers began to come in. The house was soon full. Rev. Stuart Bailey told me there had been pumpkins cut into rings and hung on poles overhead. He said that he took his stand beside a bed and went to preaching. He preached and they sang soul stirring songs. Most all of them got to shouting. He said he was about exhausted and he fell back on the bed and looked at them jumping, shouting and knocking the pumpkin rings high and low. Religion was free in those days. We had it among us without money and without price, and I believe it to have been a far better article .to that in general use among us at this time. The pioneer preachers of Marshall county preached because they were devoted to their religion and also for the love they had for the people, and not for money; they were earnest, honest, industrious men, and practiced what they preached. When my memory reverts to those happy boyhood years my eyes are filled with tears.

Corn Planting.

"The early settlers had to chop all winter to get some ground ready for corn in the spring. There would be fifteen or twenty log rollings in each neighborhood every spring; some men didn't get in more than four or five acres of corn-some ten. When the corn got into roasting ears the black and gray squirrels would go to eating it up. They were in great numbers. The children had to watch the squirrels out of the corn.. At intervals they took the dogs and \vent around the field and drove them into the woods. The early settler had from one to three dogs. I think the county could hardly have been settled without the noble dog. They were all well trained for coon and deer. A good coon dog was considered worth \$50. Some hunters would catch enough coons in one winter to pay for the dog. There was a greater demand for dogs sixty years ago than there is today.

Pioneer Hogs.

"When the early settlers first came to Marshall county they brought hogs with them. They put them in pens and kept them there until they got naturalized to the place, then they would be turned out and taught to come to a feeding place. The sows would stray to the woods after the mast and farrow; the pigs would get to be hogs and before found would be wild. The only way the owner would know the hogs were his was by the mark on the sow; every man had his sows marked. When the mast was good I have known men to kill their hogs off the mast that hadn't had a grain of corn. The meat would be soft and spongy. When the mast was scarce the hogs would be thin. The neighbors would help each other get their hogs up five or six men and that many dogs would go into the woods, catch them, tie them, haul them home, put them in a pen and feed them until they got fat enough to kill. Sometimes they wouldn't fatten; they would act like so many hyenas. They wouldn't eat and would have starved to death. It took a pen eight or ten feet high to hold them; I have known men to let them out because they couldn't be fattened; they were wild hogs for certain. In those days the dog was a great friend to his master and an incalculable benefit.

A Den of Wolves.

"The timber wolf was of a dark color; they didn't do much harm. I could hear them howling at night in the woods. The dogs kept them away, the sheep were always shut up at night. Some men split slabs out of logs and set them in the ground and made a kind of fort for their sheep. There was a wolf called a prairie wolf; it was smaller than the timber wolf and about the color of a fox. They lived in the ground. My father found a den of them and I was with him when he dug them out. The old wolves were absent. There were five young ones in the den about as large as a tomcat. The county paid \$3 each in county orders for wolf scalps. They would pay taxes. A wolf scalp is the skin off the top of the head with the two ears attached. There were wild cats also; their heads were shaped like a bulldog's; they were of a gray color and had a short thick tail. There was also an animal called a porcupine. Its body was covered with quills; they were very hard and tapered to a sharp point; when disturbed they would turn the sharp points out from the body and when in quietude they lay flat on the body. I have known dogs to kill them, but I never knew a dog to kill one that didn't have to be made fast and the quills pulled out of his mouth with a pair of pincers.

Beaver Dams.

"There was also beaver in Marshall County. One day, I don't know when, I saw large trees growing on what is said to be a beaver dam. It is said the beaver used his tail for a trowel. There were otters here, it is said.

I never saw one, as they are hard to see. They are an aquatic animal. There were plenty of mink here in an early day; they were sought for their fur. There are some here yet. There were plenty of wild turkeys here when this county was first settled. I have seen good sized droves of them. When I was big enough to handle a gun it was hard to get a shot at a turkey or deer. I got to shoot the black and gray squirrels. They finally became extinct and the red squirrel and the fox squirrel took their place. The red and fox squirrels are more of a domestic nature. When the first settlers came here they cut the timber down on a spot of ground big enough that the trees wouldn't reach the house. Then they built the house and moved into it. They didn't have to haul any wood for a long time. The wild turkey hens not being aware of their new neighbors, would stroll up within a few rods of the house with a drove of small turkeys. If you would catch the little turkeys, the hen would go through all kinds of monkey shins. She showed to be in distress.

"In the settling of Marshall County the prairie chickens were plentiful. They hatched in the marshes; they were speckled and about the size of a pheasant. I don't think they were as plentiful, though as the quail around Moses' Israelite camp.

An Indian Doctor.

"In the early settling of Marshall County snakes, frogs and mosquitoes were beyond enumeration. People and stock were bitten by the rattlesnakes

were two kinds of rattlers, a big yellow one and a smaller one-a brown. A man got bitten by One of these reptiles. They went for an doctor, and when he came he sat and looked at the sufferer and do anything. The wife said to the doctor, 'Why don't you do something for him ?' The doctor said, 'I want pay .' They soon got the spondulix and then the old Indian went to work. The Indians claimed there was an herb that grew in the woods for every ill that man was heir to. I am inclined to believe the Indians had some botanical instinct. There is no doubt but what the Indians could stop the effect of rattlesnake virus, but how extensive their knowledge was I don't know.

Pioneer Ague.

" Ague was prevalent among the early settlers; sometimes half the population would have the ague. It wasn't considered .dangerous. When a man took the ague he would have a chill; when the chill went off he would have a high fever and vomit everything out that was in him. His head would ache like it would burst. This occurred every other day until broken up; quinine was the best remedy. known to break it up, but in some cases it appeared that nothing would do it. I have known men to have it over a year before they could get clear of it. In those days quinine fluctuated; it was \$4 per ounce at one time; many people were not able to buy it at any price. I think the ditching and driven wells had much to do with the obliteration of the ague.

Buck Ague.

"There was another kind of ague that was called buck ague. It would come on a man when he was about to get a shot at a buck---a deer, I mean. When a man got it bad he would shake so bad he could hardly hold his gun ; there was never any fever after the chill went off .In this kind of an ague the man that got it didn't get any venison, as a rule.

Boot Makers, Etc.

"The pioneers, as a rule, made their own shoes. John Gibson, grand- father of Mrs. Broda Parks, tanned leather for the pioneers for a number of years. His son-in-law, Stephen Staley, bought the tannery and tanned leather for the pioneers for a number of years. A great many of the pioneers owned looms, and they made some beautiful blue cloth with a wool front and a cotton back. They wove some flannel cloth, took it to South Bend and had it fulled and called it full cloth. I have seen my mother spin sewing thread on a little wheel; she spun it from flax. I said the pioneers made their own shoes; it has been said that necessity is the mother of invention; I believe that is what invented so many shoemakers.

"James O. Parks settled on land now owned by Jennie Weaver and Ada Parks in 1836 and cleared several farms. He was elected to the legislature twice. His first opponent was John L. Westervelt, of Plymouth, and his second C. H. Reeve, of Plymouth. " James Miner settled on the land now owned by Eli Shafer. The first ten acres of land he cleared and fenced he split the rails and carried them on his shoulder and built an eight-rail fence around the ten acres. He didn't own any team. He was a bachelor at that time, but he was not invincible, for Sallie. Burnett wooed and won him.

"Andrew Bearinger's house stood on a knoll on the east side of the 'road from Graham Rose's. He had a son, David, who became enthused with a girl. He had a rival. The girl was pivotal the one who got there first had an option on her company. One Sunday there was a church in a log schoolhouse. David's rival got around first and got the girl's consent to let him walk home with her. David walked along behind them for a hundred yards or so until he became so jealous that he couldn't stand it any longer. He struck his rival, when they went into a dog fight. Some of the old pioneers not far off hurried to the scene of the fracas and separated them.

"William Elder settled on the land now owned by Ebed Huffer. He was an industrious and an honest man and a fine rail splitter. He wore a knit cap the year round and was so badly tanned that he had a complexion like the red man of the forest. He would occasionally imbibe a little of the extract of Corn. He said he didn't like the taste of it, but liked the funny effects it had on him. "There were three of the Taylor brothers: Joseph, William and George. They were stout men. Joseph started one morning before day- light to help one of his neighbors plant corn. While passing through a woods he was attacked by two wolves. He heard them coming and backed up against a tree and fought them until daylight, when they left him. He was wet with sweat keeping them at bay with an eye hoe, or a 'nigger hoe,' as they were sometimes called. James O. Parks and Solomon Linn went to the woods one day to locate some land. When night came on they had to climb trees and stay there till morning to protect themselves from the wolves. I am inclined to think they got lost and couldn't find the road home."

Getting Lost in the Woods.

In one of his articles Mr. Greer incorporates a letter which he had received from one of the early pioneers, commending his efforts in preserving some of the early history of the county that otherwise would have been lost. That part of the letter giving some additional historical information is here with reproduced as follows:

"My Dear Sir: I have been very much interested in reading your sketches of the early pioneers of the eastern portion of the county, and I want to thank you for the work you have done in preserving much useful and interesting historical matter which otherwise would have been lost to future generations. Your sketches are worthy of preservation, and the next history of the county, whenever it shall be written, will not be complete without at least a portion of them. "I remember nearly all the pioneers you name, but until I read your articles many of them had been forgotten. I had a little experience in the region of country traversed by you in your sketches that came back to me vividly as I read the names of many who were living there then and still in the prime of early manhood. It was on the day of the August election in 1849 that it happened. The county politically was quite evenly divided between the Whigs and Democrats, and while the Democrats had a little the best of it they did not have a sure thing by any means. There was considerable local interest as to the outcome, and messengers were sent to the several polling places in the county to get the vote and carry it to the

County seat. I was a boy then, and was selected by the Democrats to go Town and bring back the returns of the election with all possible I was furnished with a horse to ride and an untanned sheepskin in place of a saddle. As you may well remember, the roads were little and at best were but an elaboration of the Indian trails of those the trees being blazed along the route to guide the weary traveler on his way. I passed through Lycurgus, but I do not remember whether your father or you lived there then or not. I think there was a blacksmith shop there but who 'the village blacksmith' was I do not remember .

"I reached Bourbon sometime in the afternoon, and I thought it was the most dreary-looking place I ever saw. There were but a few log houses there then, and, they stood in the midst of a wilderness of tall and stately forest trees. I remember one of the houses was built of logs and stood on the corner where is now the Matchette drug store. It was kept, I believe by Robert Cornwall as a general store of small proportions. The only man I remember now of seeing was James O. Parks. He was the big man of the town at that time and for many years afterwards. I remember he directed me how to find my way to Tip Town. I got through all right, but owing to the 'red tape' method of the election board I did not get the returns until 7 o'clock. I started on the return trip as fast as I could go, but darkness soon came upon me. I lost the main road and was going I did not know where. I could hear the barking of many wolves in the distance in almost every direction, and what to do I did not know. I kept going, however, and finally came in sight of the smoke from a chimney in the woods. I hurried on, and when I reached it I found it was the old Perrin homestead. I told the family that I had missed the road to Plymouth and wished to be directed how I could find it. They told me it would be dangerous to attempt to go any farther in the 'pitch darkness' through the woods, and it did not take a great deal of coaxing to persuade me to put up my horse and stay all night. I did not sleep much that night. The excitement of the day and evening, the strangeness of the surroundings, the yelping of the wolves and the hooting of the night owls, and the thousands of mosquitoes that insisted on presenting their bills made sleep almost impossible. I was up and out by break of day next morning, and after traversing the woods and Indian trails I brought up at the cabin of the elder Elliott, 'The Pilgrim,' as he called himself, some place in the region of Inwood. He made hickory chairs, I believe, and called his place 'Pilgrim's Rest.' He directed me how I could find Plymouth, and I hurried on, arriving there about noon, much to my own relief and to the relief of my parents and friends, who imagined all sorts of calamities had befallen me. Before I arrived home the returns already in showed that the Democratic ticket was elected, and thus ended my first experience in practical politics."

Ramps.

"There was a plant that grew in the thick woods in Marshall county that covered the ground all over and was called ramps; some people called them leeks. The cows would eat them and the butter couldn't be used. A cow's breath would almost vomit a man if he got a full blast of it. The wild turkeys would eat them and when a man killed a turkey that was rampy it was thrown away. I think the hog was the agent that caused the

Ramps to become extinct; I think the ramp belongs to the onion or garlic family; they grew early in the spring and died in June, I believe. Wild onions grew in Marshall County; I have gathered them; they grew up slender and the part that grew in the ground was about the size of a lead pencil.

How They Cooked.

"The pioneers had no cook stoves; they cooked in front of the fireplace in ovens, skillets, pots and on boards, and they baked what they called a John-a-cake on a board in front of the fireplaces; they had what they called a reflector, made of tin, and one side was open; it had an inclined top and a grate in it, and they would set a pan of biscuits on the grate, set the reflector in front of the fire and the heat would strike the inclined top and reflect on the biscuits and cause them to bake. They were good too.

Cleaning Wheat.

I have seen my father and two other men blow the chaff out of wheat with a sheet. One man would pour the wheat down in a small stream, the other two would furnish the wind with a sheet. That beat having no biscuits. Years ago there was a porous substance that grew on decayed trees; it was known as sweet knot; it has a fine odor, and could be scented, when the wind was favorable, for a considerable distance. This know was inhabited by small insects which made the perfume, so it was said by those who claimed to know.

"George H. Thayer settled on the land now owned by Milton Martin. He erected buildings, cleared the land and did blacksmithing. He also preached the gospel and was a talented and good man.

"John Greer settled on land half a mile south. He was a violinist. When I was a small boy I heard him play a piece he called "Sugar in the Gourd". I thought it was delightful. It might have been the sugar that made it sound so well. Some of the old pioneers used to keep sugar in a gourd. I suppose that is what the song started from. It went something like this:

Sugar in the gourd,
Sugar all about;
It's hard to get it in
And its hard to get it out.

"Samuel R. Coons settled on lands that are now owned by Mrs. Vernet. He was somewhat of a politician and wanted to be sheriff, but never got there. J.B. McFarlin was a very sociable man and loved to sing. He compiled the books of the Old and New Testament into song. I have heard him sing it. It sounded pretty well.

"North and northwest of Bourbon John Greer built a house in June 1836 on the land where the Bourbon Schoolhouse now stands. He moved into it in September and lived there six weeks before a white man came into the territory to live. Solomon Linn settled on land half a mile north of the main corners of Bourbon on the west side of the road. The front is now mostly covered with town. He came here in 1836, erected buildings, cleared a good farm, lived there many years, and there he died."