

### XXX. PRIMITIVE SAW MILLS-WIGWAMS AND HOW INDIANS LIVED.

The splendidly cultivated farms, the substantial brick and frame houses with their elegant and comfortable furnishings, the large and well filled bank barns, with sheds and buildings in which all kinds of farm machinery is housed ready for use when wanted, are in striking contrast with the dwellings and general outfit of the pioneers who were at the beginning of the settlement of the county and for many years afterwards.

Prior to 1850 there was probably not, outside of Plymouth, half a dozen houses built of any other material than logs. Up to that time, at least, there was no steam saw mills, and only two or three water mills where lumber was sawed. There was one of these mills at Wolf creek and one at Plymouth. This latter mill was located on Yellow river about half way between Zehner's flouring mill and the dam a short distance above. Evidences of the old dam and race are still visible. Milburn Coe was the pioneer who had the courage to establish this early enterprise. Each of these mills was operated with a single upright saw, and the amount of lumber manufactured did not begin to supply the demand for doors window frames, floors, etc., and was too expensive to put into houses.

The water power by which these mills were operated was very uncertain. The dams were constructed of brush, limbs and logs, dirt and stone and for many years, every time there was a freshet these dams would generally go out with a rush and a roar. In 1850 a heavy rain and sudden rise of water in Wolf creek carried away the dam. Robert C. Bliven, who happened to be out about the center of the dam, was caught in the break carried off in the great rush of water and drowned. It took a long time to repair broken dams, and in the meantime the mills stood idle, often for many months, and so the supply of lumber was at no time for many years equal to the demand.

Before these mills were built there was some lumber sawed with what was called "whip saws," and the first sawed boards the writer ever remembers to have seen were manufactured in this way. It was a very slow process, this cutting lumber with a whip saw, but it supplied boards for doors, sash, casings, etc., and therefore was a step in advance of the broad axe. A platform ten or twelve feet high was erected, on to which small poplar logs were "skidded" up poles placed in a slanting position. The saw was about six feet in length, with long handles, and was operated by two men, one on top of the platform, and the other underneath, on the ground. The top man pulled the saw up and the man on the ground, with a bandanna tied over his eyes to keep the sawdust out pulled it down. It was very slow and very hard work, and beyond the actual wants for the purposes named, no lumber was sawed. The size of the boards was very irregular. If, when the saw started in, the board was an inch and a quarter, or an inch and a half, there was no telling what it would be in the middle, or at the end when it came out. When the saw got a start in one direction it was hard to get it turned back, and then it was likely to go as far the other way before it could be checked and brought into the line marked out for it to follow. If any of these boards are still in existence they ought to be preserved as relics of the beginning of our civilization. They would be a great curiosity to the present generation.

There being no lumber, brick, or other materials out of which houses could be built, the next best thing was to construct them out of logs. But before attempting a description of these early cabins, it will be interesting to many to give a brief pen picture of the Indians found here, their Wigwams, and the mode of living at the time the first white settlement was made. The Indians that were here then, estimated to be about 1,500 in the entire county, lived in what is generally known as "wigwams." They were

made out of poles set in the ground some distance apart, and coming together five or six feet at the top where they were securely tied together with strings made of rawhide, hickory or other bark. They were enclosed with limbs and brush, outside of which was a covering of hides of deer, fox, and other animals to shed the rain and snow, and to keep out the cold in winters. In front of the wigwam was an opening for passage in and out, which had for a door skins of animals fastened together, and tied to the poles at the top, from which it hung loose to the bottom.

The furnishings of these primitive dwellings were very few, plain, and simple. They had no chairs, stands, bedsteads, tables, cupboards or bureaus. The beds were of grass, leaves and mosses spread out on the ground and covered with the skins of animals dressed with the hair on. These hides were also sometimes used for covering, but the principal article of covering, however, was coarse woolen, or partly woolen colored blankets, furnished by the government, or purchased of traders who early found their way among the Indians in this part of the country. These wigwams were generally located near the lakes and water courses, so that those who lived in them could easily supply themselves with water for drinking and cooking purposes, and fish, frogs and water fowl for food. They were supplied with very few cooking utensils, and, as a consequence, the provisions on which they lived well mostly eaten without cooking. Venison, fowl and fish were broiled over fires made of logs and limbs. They were cut into convenient pieces and held over the fire on the end of short sticks. They had no salt or pepper and their food was prepared without seasoning. During the spring and summer the squaws cultivated small patches of ground with sharp sticks, stone shovels, and small iron hoes and picks, on which they raised Indian corn, potatoes, and other vegetables in small quantities. The male Indians supplied the wigwams with wild meats and fish, and this constituted the food supply of these early inhabitants.

Except in the winter season, when the weather was very cold, they wore a very scanty supply of clothing. Their footgear was moccasins made of soft tanned deer skin, and some of them were ornamented with a variety of colored beads worked into them in fantastic shapes, and they were otherwise adorned with colored ribbons, etc. Their shirts and trousers, as we call them, were made of tanned buckskin sewed together with strings made of hides, and were ornamented in various ways with fringes, beads, shells and other things to attract the eye of the beholder. All were provided with blankets which they wore over their shoulders, folded in their arms tightly around their bodies.

Very few of them wore any sort of head dress. They had no use for hats and caps. Their heads were covered with a heavy mass of coarse black hair, which, as they never had it cut, was all the protection they needed. The big Indians, the chiefs, and High-muck-a-mucks, of course, wore feathered headgear to distinguish themselves from the common everyday Indian. It is somewhat remarkable that the oldest inhabitant does not remember ever having seen an Indian with a bald head, or one with a full beard. As a race, they seem to have had an aversion to the beard, and occupied their leisure time, of which they had more than they knew what to do with, pulling out by the roots the thinly scattered hairs that showed themselves on their copper colored physiognomies.