

XL. TWO OF THE EARLIEST PIONEERS.

Amzi L. Wheeler was born and spent his early boyhood in New York state, and in the early '30's settled in LaPorte County, where he taught a country school two or three winters. In 1835 he came to Marshall County, and determining to locate permanently, purchased lot No. 1 in

Plymouth, upon which he erected a small frame building for a storeroom. Early in the spring of 1836 he brought his family and a small stock of dry goods and groceries and became a permanent resident of Plymouth. Thomas McDonald also came from southern Indiana in the fall of 1835 and bought a piece of land near Maxinkuckee lake, upon which he built a log cabin, and in the spring of 1836 brought his family and began the labor of a pioneer in a new country. These men soon became acquainted and in time became warmly attached to each other. They were both democrats in politics and worked together in making the new county democratic. Not only in politics did they work together, but in furthering the organization of the county on lines that would make it one of the best in the state. Mr. Wheeler was very fond of the game of politics, and as he had in W. G. Pomeroy and others representing the Whig party antagonists worthy of his "steel," the game was more fascinating than it otherwise would have been. In the beginning of the organization of the county Mr. Wheeler was accorded the leadership of the democratic party without a dissenting voice. Naturally he was made the candidate of his party for representative in the state legislature in the early days, was elected several terms, and when a constitutional convention was called in 1850 he was chosen as the democratic delegate to represent Marshall county and was elected. During his services in the constitutional convention frequent correspondence was kept up between these two pioneers, among which the following, found among the papers of Mr. McDonald after his death, is worthy of reproduction here as containing much of historical interest :

Indianapolis, Nov. 13, 1850.

Dear Mae:

I have thought it my duty for some time to advise you of the doings of this grave body. You have doubtless kept yourself posted up to the present time by reading the newspapers, but to realize it fully you must be present; for I assure you in all sincerity that some of the speeches you read in the papers are made by the ----- in this convention and are then revised and improved by some one having a little more brains.

We are now six weeks in the session, and if we make a calculation by the rule of three, we will not be able to complete the labor for which we were sent here before the Fourth of July, 1851. Indeed, I think that would be too early.

The following section is now under consideration, and, judging from the feeling manifested, it can be carried through without much, if any, alteration:

"The general assembly at its first session under the amended constitution, shall pass laws prohibiting Negroes and mulattos from coming into or settling in this state ; and prohibit any negro or mulatto from purchasing, or otherwise acquiring, real estate hereafter."

This section has only been under debate half a day, yet during that short debate we have had a foretaste of what may be expected before it is closed. It may become necessary, and I shall be very much mistaken if it does not become necessary, to read the riot act every morning, instead of calling in a minister of the gospel to pray for us!

The section above I look upon as an outrage, because the negro would never have been here if we had not stolen his father and brought him here, but the words, otherwise acquiring', I regard as the climax of this outrage and unworthy of its distinguished author, Robert Dale Owen. If that is ingrafted in our constitution, you will observe that negro children could not hold the real estate their father died possessed of.

A portion OF this convention (respectable in point of numbers as well as talent) do certainly entertain sentiments on this subject that would make a South Carolinian blush. I hope it will be made more acceptable, but I doubt it.

The state bank paying are more numerous than I expected to find them; only about twenty-five or thirty who will vote the true democratic doctrine no bank at all.

The cholera is again in this city, and two deaths have already occurred in one house, and one of our members --- Vanbenthusen, from Shelby – is not expected to live another day. The citizens generally deny that it is cholera, but physicians who are not interested in the prosperity of this wooden-legged city declare that it is.

I am homesick as a dog, and I am not certain but I may take it into my head to leave this mob and go home. From thirty to fifty are gone all the time, and I am not certain that we would not be just as well off if they would stay away until we adjourn. If I could be certain that the vote would not be taken on any very important measure, such as the bank or grand jury, I would certainly go home.

Thomas, I would like to pay five cents for a letter from you. Give my compliments to Mrs. Mae and family, and believe me to be
Truly your friend, A. L. Wheeler.

Since the above letter was written, the writer of it and the one to whom it was written, have both died and their bodies have turned into dust from whence they came. Mr. McDonald was taken with gangrene of the foot in the year 1875 and after lingering in great pain about six months died in that year. About 1883 Mr. Wheeler was stricken with paralysis of his entire right side, rendering him almost entirely helpless and affecting his vocal organs so he was unable to speak. After lying in this condition three years he suffered another stroke of paralysis, from which he died almost instantly.