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An Autobiography and a Reminiscence

Mary Ann Ferrin was born in Vermont in 1824. She married Joseph Carter Davidson in 1842 and in 1846 they moved to Iowa and became the first white settlers in Marshall County. The following is her autobiography. In it she records her experiences as an Iowa settler, as well as the first marriage in the county, the first white baby born, and even the first divorce.

I was born in Ludlow Township, Windsor County, Vermont, August 5, 1824. My father's name was John Ferrin, and my mother's maiden name was Mary S. Davis; and both of them were born in Vermont. My parents had seven children, three sons and four daughters. I was their second child and eldest daughter. My eldest brother died when he was nine years old of scarlet fever; also my second brother aged three died two weeks later of the same disease.

When my father was a young man, he enlisted and served during the war of 1812, which lasted three years. He was in several hard battles, but escaped without being wounded in any of them. My father learned the hatter's trade, but did not follow it, as he preferred farming for a livelihood; therefore, I was brought up to work as other farmer's daughters usually were in those days. I attended school six months of the year, from age of seven until I attained my thirteenth year.

In the fall of 1837, my parents emigrated to the state of Indiana, bought a piece of land and settled on it, three miles south of the town site of Montpelier in Blackford County, fifty miles of Fort Wayne. Blackford and several adjoining counties were then a back-woods country and sparsely settled. Wild animals of most kinds, such as inhabit these western states, were quite numerous; and the report of the huntsman's

gun was often heard throughout the day, and coon-hunters and their dogs could often be heard throughout the fall and winter months. Bears were plentiful in this section of the country. We often saw deer and wild turkeys in large flocks near our premises, and often partook of their delicious meat. Large gray-wolves often howled so near our house that it was terrifying to hear them. Wild bees were plentiful and many gallons of honey were obtained from trees in which it was deposited. There were many sugar orchards in the community, and we had good times eating warm sugar every season in the spring of the year.

Several families from Vermont had come and settled in the vicinity of Montpelier. Mr. Abel Baldwin, a man from Windsor County, Vermont, laid out the town and called it Montpelier. The greater number of inhabitants in this section of the country were Hoosiers, and their mode of talking was quite different from the Yankees which caused no little mirth and observation for both parties.

We often had social gatherings in the neighborhood called chopping parties and sewing bees. The host would have chopping or railsplitting for the men, and the hostess would have quilting or sewing for the women to do. All came early and worked till night; then after partaking of a sumptuous supper they would join in dancing, and seldom dispersed until morning. They did not dance quadrills or round dances, for those had not been introduced in this vicinity at that time; but those kinds which were called contradances—French Four, jigs, etc., and those were danced without being called off.

It was at one of those parties I met and was introduced to Joseph Carper Davidson, a young man twenty-one years old. He was born in Freeport Township, Harrison County, Ohio, December 30, 1819. He was of fair complexion, with blue eyes and goldish hair. We afterward became acquainted and within a year from that time were engaged to be married.

I only attended school four months after we came to Indiana. The summer that I was eighteen, I was employed to teach a three months subscription school (which included

thirteen weeks) in the Greenland district, about four miles from Montpelier. I taught for one dollar a week and board, which was considered good wages in those days for times were very hard.



MARY ANN FERRIN DAVIDSON
1871

The following Christmas, 1842, I was married to Joseph C. Davidson and soon went to housekeeping in a new log cabin which my husband built on a piece of land that we owned adjoining my father's. We lived there until the winter of 1845. We then sold our place and removed to the state of Iowa.

We then had one child, a healthy rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed and golden-haired little boy, one year and a half old. He was my parents' only grandchild, and the first baby that had made my sisters aunts and my brother an uncle; and of course they all thought he was the nicest baby in the land; and it was very grievous for them for us to go so far away as Iowa as they could not see us again soon. Finally the time arrived for us to take our departure, and we bade them all good bye with many tears.

We journeyed by land as far as Cincinnati; and there went on board the "Tobaccoplant", a large and commodious steamboat from the lower Mississippi, and steamed down the Ohio to its mouth; thence, up the Mississippi to St. Louis which was as far as the "Tobaccoplant" went. We then took passage on board the "Boreas," a crazy old packetboat; but it took us safely to Keokuk, which was as far as we wanted to go by water. We were then in Iowa, and as there were no railroads in the state at that time, we employed a teamster to take us to our destination in Washington County, a distance of eighty miles over the beautiful prairies dotted here and there with groves and farmhouses. John Havens, my husband's nephew by marriage, was then living near Richmond in Washington County, and Jonathan S. Davidson, my husband's youngest brother who was then a single man, was living there with them, so we stopped with Havens' six weeks.

Now, at that time there was a large section of country where the land was yet unclaimed lying along the Iowa River, about one hundred miles above Iowa City, which had not long been purchased from a tribe of Indians called the Musquakeses, belonging to the Sac and Fox tribes. A party of men from Mr. Havens' neighborhood had gone up there to take a look at the country before we arrived. They came back highly pleased with their discovery and set forth its extra advantages in glowing colors.

Mr. Thomas Bennet, a neighbor of Mr. Havens who was one of the party, came and asked us if we would not like to go up there that Spring and select a claim to settle on. He said that the place he liked best was in Marshall County some thirty miles above any white settlement; and as he had a wife and several small children, he was very anxious to have us go up there with them. We told him that we would, for we thought it would be better to go that spring if we went at all, for then we could have first choice of prairie and with timberland adjoining; which would be a great object to us.

Finally the time came for us to go; but we were few in number. Mr. Bennett, brother Jonathan, and my husband were the only men. Bennett had concluded not to take his family that spring as he thought it would be better for him

to go first and build a cabin and do some breaking and then return for his family; so, I was the only woman in the company. I was fond of adventure and preferred to go with my husband and on the 10th of May we started for our future home in Marshall Co., Iowa. The greater part of the way was over a wild and trackless prairie. We forded the streams that was on our route, though one was so deep we had to bridge it before we could cross it.

On the last day of our journey when we were within eight miles of our destination, after having some difficulty crossing quite a large stream that Bennett called Raven Creek . . . He said that one of the party of surveyors shot a raven near the creek and that gave rise to its name. We camped to let our cattle graze and to prepare dinner. Just as we had got our victuals ready to be eaten, Mr. Bennett exclaimed, "See, yonder comes a Musquaquee!" We looked in the direction he pointed, and sure enough, there was "lo, the poor Indian," riding down the creek under cover of bushes, within bowshot of us. I felt rather nervous and asked Mr. B. if he thought the Indian would come to our camp. He replied that he surely would and we would have to ask him to eat with us, and while we were talking the red man of the prairies rode up, dismounted and tied his pony to a sapling nearby. He appeared to be about thirty years old, tall and well-formed. His blanket hung gracefully over his left shoulder, leaving his brawny chest and right arm exposed to view. He came striding up and greeted us by saying, "How-dy-do." Mr. B. returned the salutation, and invited him to dine with us. He replied by saying, "How," which meant yes, and seated himself on the ground near our humble table. Mr. B. asked him a few questions in the Musquaquee tongue which sounded very queer to me. He stayed with us until we were ready to move on again, and then he piloted us for two miles on to the next creek; and after waiting to see our wagons fairly safe across, he laid whip to his pony and soon disappeared in the distance beyond.

This creek we named Indian Creek and it was ever afterward known by that name. After we crossed Indian Creek, we traveled two miles and a half over a level bottom lying

along the Iowa River, then our route led over a hill. When we had arrived at the upper part of this bottom, we were surprised to see a small town of Indian huts and some forty or fifty Indians of all ages running to meet us; some of the younger boys were entirely nude, and nearly all had bows and arrows. I had never seen such wild savages before and my heart palpitated so that I could scarcely speak for I expected that they intended to murder us all right there and then would have our scalps drying around the fire in their council lodge before the next morning; for there was no alternative but to submit to our fate.

They soon approached us, and a stalwart Indian demanded us to stop, and we obeyed at once. He asked in broken English where we were going. Mr. B. told him as well as he could that we were going up the river about three miles from there and was going to build a house, plow up the prairie, and make a farm, and grow corn. They all listened very attentively and seemed to understand what he said; but to our surprise they made no objection. They asked if we had flour and bacon to swap for "sonio" (money). Mr. B. told them we had not. We then moved on and I felt somewhat relieved when we passed out of sight of them and over the hill; but the scene which we had just witnessed had considerably changed my romantic idea of going into a new country into a reality; and I began to feel timid and lonesome for it appeared we had gotten a long ways into the western wilds of America.

Before we had got half-way to where we wished to stop, the sun had set, and the gloomy shades of night were fast surrounding us; but Mr. B. knew the course we wished to travel, and we trusted all to him. We slowly rolled along, and at last we drove down into a bend close to the river and stopped on a sandy bank near a beautiful grove. Mr. B. said that was the grove he had told us of, and that it was the best place for the present to camp.

The oxen were soon released from the wagons and turned out to graze, a fire was made, and a pail of water brought from the river; the supper was prepared of which we all partook with a good relish, and then we retired to our wagons

to sleep. But it was some time before I could close my eyes to sleep for fear of the Indians; and as I lay awake I listened to hear any strange noise; but I heard nothing except an owl hooting in the distance, and the gentle murmuring of the stream.

The next morning was delightful. The sun shone resplendently over the eastern hills. The groves were clothed in green, and the birds cheered us with their various songs. The beautiful rolling prairies covered with luxurious grass lay stretched to the south and west of us as far as eye could reach, with here and there a belt of timber which marked some watercourse meandering to the river. All was unmarred by the avaricious white man, and, therefore, appeared the more lovely to us.

We were well pleased with the country where we were, both in regards to prairie and the nice grove of timber which lay joining it on the west; and there was no need of looking further for a better situation for a home in Marshall County. So there we stuck our stakes on the 16th day of May, 1846, one mile north of where the town of LeGrand is now situated. Mr. Bennett took his claim at the next grove, one mile and a half west from our claim, and brother Jonathan took a claim adjoining ours on the west in Tama County.

The following day we selected a building site, and my husband and his brother went to work preparing logs to build a cabin; and Bennet began breaking prairie for us.

The next day after our arrival eight or ten stalwart Indians came to our camp and stayed quite awhile. They looked sullen and did not have much to say; and we were glad when they mounted their ponies and rode away. We were not annoyed by having any more visits from them for several days. But before we had got our cabin made, six grim looking warriors came riding up and dismounted. Their faces were painted in various colors, and their heads were ornamented with feathers and carved bones. We saw by their looks and manners that they were greatly displeased. They came striding up and seated themselves upon the ground close to our camp; then one of them—probably their best orator—began speaking in a loud authoritative style, making gestures and marking lines on the ground with his knife. Mr. Bennett

looked chopfallen. We asked him what the trouble was; he replied that the Indian said we were trespassing upon their grounds; that the white man's land was eight miles down the river near Raven Creek, and that we must go away immediately. Now we were satisfied that what the Indian said was not true for Marshall County had been surveyed and sectionized; so we told them plainly we would not go away from there, for this land belonged to the white man. Finally when they saw they did not scare us much, they said we might stay and raise corn and oats for their ponies to eat; but no more white people should settle there.

We proceeded with our work and soon had our cabin rolled up as high as we conveniently could for want of more help and covered with clapboards, bound on by weight of poles; and we were glad to take shelter within its rough walls, without having a chimney or floor made in it; for there came a heavy rain storm that lasted nearly a week. A few days after the rain subsided brother Jonathan returned to Washington County where business called him; then our number was one less and we felt pretty lonely; but within a few days after brother left us, two men came from Bear Creek thirty miles below where we were living. They had two stout breaking teams and were going across Iowa River to take up claims and do some breaking for themselves which was not far from where Freedonia is now situated. But the river was out of its banks caused by the recent rains and they could not cross it with their teams, so we employed them to break twenty acres of prairie for us. We then had thirty acres broken up, and part of it planted in corn, pumpkins and watermelons which grew to perfection. We had mellons enough to supply the Musquaquee tribe. They carried them away by pony-loads in sacks.

Mr. Bennett, to be doubly sure of not trespassing upon Indian grounds, left his claim and went back two miles beyond Raven Creek and took up another claim on a small creek in Tama County, broke a few acres of prairie and then went home to bring his family out. We named that creek Bennet's Creek and we believe the name has been perpetuated.

The river still remained so high that those (Bear Creek)

men could not cross with their teams after they had finished breaking for us, so they went down to Raven Creek and took some claims, did some breaking and then went home.

We then were left alone, to the mercy of our Musquaquee neighbors, thirty miles beyond any white settlement; and thus we remained five weeks without seeing or hearing from any white person; though, not withstanding our lonely position, we enjoyed ourselves very well for awhile. Nearly every day we would take a stroll to view the picturesque scenery, for the landscape was new and pleasing to us; the verdant groves and the magnificent rolling prairies adorned with grass and brilliant flowers of various colors waving to the breeze one swell after another till lost from view like the placid waves of the ocean, were delightful to behold; and all was untrampled and unmolested, save by a few Indian ponies that could be seen grazing here and there, or their owners galloping in the distance in search of them when needed.

The Indians more or less of both sexes came nearly every day to our house and the most of them were friendly. We had learned a few of their words so we could talk some with them which helped to pass away the monotonous hours through the day; and the hum and stings of millions of musquatoes and the shrill notes of the whippowils, bore us company through the night.

At last we were visited by that terrible Foe, chills and fever, which attacked ourselves and baby Lucien every day with grim vengeance; and as we had no one to wait upon us, our suffering and loneliness was hard to bear. The fever which raged very high scarcely left us from one chill to another; nevertheless, we had to rally ourselves every evening to prepare some little refreshments and milk our two cows. Our nearest access to water was the river and our best way to get there was three-quarters of a mile from our cabin; and as we could not get along without water, my husband was obliged to go that distance every evening for a pail of water. He was so weak that he had to lie down several times to rest himself by the way-side before reaching home.

Thus the time passed for two weeks. Finally my husband was taken dangerously ill of a sinking chill; baby and I were

sick in bed. I heard him say, "Oh, I'm so sick I fear I cannot live!" He was then vomiting very hard. I got up immediately and prepared some hot teas which he drank to no avail; he still continued vomiting and purging, and was becoming very weak. I did all I could to help him, but nothing seemed to relieve him that I could give him for we had no doctor's medicine in the house. I was greatly alarmed. Night was fast setting in and a terrible thunderstorm was approaching from the northeast; and ere long the rain was pouring down, accompanied by heavy winds. The fire was about to be put out by the rain—we had no stove at the time—and there was no wood in the house nor none in the yard to replenish it. What was now to be done? I must not let the fire go out; for the only way I could keep my husband alive was by giving him something warm to drink. I quickly thought of the hickory-pole bedstead that the men had occupied while they were stopping with us, chopped it to pieces and placed some of them on the fire and covered them with bake-kettle lids, and by that way I managed to keep the fire from being put out by the rain.

The vivid flashes of lightning and the loud peals of thunder were terrifying, and the rain poured down as if the heavens were opened. The wind and rain blew through the crevices of the cabin so hard that I could not keep a light burning; but the room was illuminated by flashes of lightning most of the time. Our baby being sick and frightened cried so hard, that I had to hold him in my arms a long time before I could get him composed to sleep.

The storm raged till after midnight. My husband had become so sick and weak that he could not be moved without fainting and could not speak above a low whisper. His limbs were cold and his visage wore the aspect of death. At last, he was taken with the cramp; I then thought he was dying and redoubled my efforts to save him. I rubbed his limbs with all my might and applied hot flannels wrung out of strong mint tea to his stomach and bowels. I also continued giving him ginger tea to drink; but he threw it up immediately after swallowing it, though it seemed to be the only thing that kept him alive for it warmed his stomach. The rain

sprinkled his face where he lay and helped to keep him from fainting. Four hours I anxiously watched over him expecting every minute he would breathe his last. About three o'clock in the morning his sickness took a turn for the better; he rested easier and went into a doze of sleep.

Thus I went through that dreadful night all alone, with no one to speak a sympathizing word to me, no one to call on for redress in that lonely cabin, thirty miles from any white person, and not even an Indian within three miles of us, of whose company I should have been more than thankful.

Daylight came at last and I rejoiced that my husband was still alive; but if he had been dead he could not have looked more like a corpse than he did that morning. While he rested and our baby was asleep, I hastened to the river for some water which we were obliged to have.

After all that I had gone through during the night, I expected to have a very hard chill by ten o'clock, as that was the usual time for my chill to come on; but was happily surprised by not having a symptom of a chill that day. Probably it was the shock my system had undergone during the night that had broken the chills on me, for I did not have another chill that season.

My husband gradually gained strength and in a few days he was able to be around, for his chills were also broken up.

We remained alone about ten days longer, when one morning our longing eyes beheld a covered wagon coming over Indian Town hill two miles away; and our joy can better be imagined than described when we saw as it came nearer, that it was brother Jonathan's. The cause of his long absence was that he too had been sick of a bilious fever; and as soon as he became able to drive he started for our place with a load of provisions, which if we had not been sick we should have been out of before, for we had no way of obtaining any.

Brother informed us that Mr. Bennett and his family were sick of the chills and fever and concluded not to move up to their claim until the next spring.

Fall came and we were anxious to save our crop of corn which we had raised that summer, so we could winter our

stock, for we intended to stay there. My husband overworked himself in cutting the corn fodder, and was taken very sick again of a fever. For eight days he did not taste food, and it seemed doubtful if he ever would recover, but finally he became a little better and could eat some very light food but we gave up the absurd idea of trying to winter there, so far from the settlement and late in October as soon as my husband was able to be moved, we bade good bye to our home in Marshall County where we had lived five months without seeing a white woman and not but a few white men—and returned to Washington County to spend the winter.

My husband remained ill all winter; he had the third day ague and was not able to chop our firewood. In the spring he gradually regained his health, and on the 11th day of May 1847 we started again to our home in Marshall County, accompanied by Mr. Bennett and family, brother Jonathan and Samuel Davidson, my husband's nephew, who was a single man 19 years old and had lately arrived from Blackford County, Indiana. Bennett stopped on his claim in Tama County, and we proceeded on to ours ten miles further on up the river.

We found our cabin as we had left it, but a party of surveyors who had camped there a few weeks in the winter, had used up five or six bushels of our potatoes which we carefully buried for seed, and had fed nearly all of our corn that we left stacked and nicely covered with prairie hay to their horses, which was quite a loss for us being so far from any settlement.

That spring soon after our return, there were three families by the name of Asher who came to Marshall County from Flint River, Henry County, Iowa, and took up claims on Lynn Creek (Linn), ten miles west of us and went to farming. Samuel Davidson took a claim one mile and half southwest of us, on what is now called Davidson Creek, and got five acres broken up that spring. He took his claim for his father, William Davidson, my husband's eldest brother, who was then living in Indiana.

We got along very well that season, although we were sick a good deal during the summer of chills and fever. We

raised about eight hundred bushels of corn, some potatoes, and a good many garden vegetables that season so we had plenty to live on through the winter, besides having some corn to sell to our neighbors.

The Musquakee Indians kept coming back from their reservation in Missouri till there were five or six hundred congregated in and around their town that summer. Some of them were saucy and impudent and all were more or less troublesome. There was scarcely a day for several months without some of them being at our house; and their ponies molested our cornfields a good deal, for sickness had prevented us from getting our field enclosed. But fortunately for us those Indians all went away from that section of the country long before winter set in, as it was customary for them to do every fall, and go where they could get provisions more plentifully; but returned early the next spring to make sugar, and prepare their patches of ground for growing corn and beans.

In the month of July brother Jonathan and Samuel Davidson went back to Washington County for a load of provisions and we were left alone for three weeks, but we did not feel nearly so lonely as we did the first summer, for now we had white neighbors within ten miles of us.

Bennett's folks were sick a good deal of the time that summer with the ague. One day while our boys were gone, an Indian informed us that Bennett and all of his family were very sick, and my husband went down to see how they were getting along; he found them so sick he remained over night with them and did not get home until afternoon of the next day. I stayed alone within three miles of six hundred Indians, except our little baby and the dog. I felt rather lonesome but no harm happened to me.

During that summer we dug a well 46 feet deep and obtained good water which proved to be lasting; and made our cabin comfortable for the winter.

Mr. Bennett and wife became so discouraged that they moved back to Washington County that fall, and left their claim for all time. In November brother Jonathan and Samuel Davidson also went back to Washington County to spend the

winter where they could get work to do, as they needed the money to help them along. So we were left alone to pass the winter the best way we could, isolated so far from white people.

The Mr. Ashers came a few times during the winter to buy corn and would stay all night with us. Brother Jonathan came once during the winter, and brought us some pork and groceries, but he only stayed a few days; and the rest of the time we spent alone. But as we had pretty good health and the winter was mild, we got along well; although we experienced a good many lonely hours.

Mrs. Bennett was the only white woman that we saw for fifteen months and I only saw her while she stayed here, excepting Mrs. Booker. She and her husband were going on a visit to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Asher, and stopped over night with us. Mrs. Booker had flaxen hair and blue eyes. Our little boy asked me why that woman had "blue" hair. He had never seen a woman that had light colored hair, since he could remember. Mrs. Bennett and myself had black hair and eyes.

In April 1848, Brother Jonathan came up to see us and brought some more groceries and flour, but did not stay long; being a single man he had concluded to give up his claim and return to Richmond, Washington County and work at cabinet making, which trade he had been learning the past winter; and Sam Davidson had also concluded to stop near Richmond and work at the nursery business.

So we were left alone again, but there were a good many white men who stopped with us that season, as they were out looking for claims in Marshall County to settle on.

We plowed and planted over twenty acres that spring, and raised a fine crop of corn, potatoes and beans, besides lots of turnips, pumpkins, and a good garden. We did all the work ourselves, with only one yoke of young oxen, and as they were not used to plowing I had to drive them, for there were neither man nor boy that we could hire in the county.

That summer there were fully twelve hundred Indians in and around Musquaquee—several hundred of the Winnebago and Pottawatamie tribes had come the Musquaquees that sea-

son, and we were annoyed a great deal by them for as many as sixty on an average came to our house nearly every day; but the most of them were friendly to us. There were two men by the name of Haskel and Abbot came and stopped with us for several weeks that summer and sold provisions, tobacco and calico to those Indians, which made them still more troublesome; for these men kept their goods in our house, and they would flock in by the dozens.

In June 1848, there was born to the wife of Isaac Asher a son, and on the 19th of October of the same year, we were presented with a little daughter, and they were the first white children born in Marshall County.

The winter of 48-49 was very severe. Snow fell on the 22nd and 23rd of December to the depth of two feet, and it snowed several other times during the winter to the depth of six or eight inches in a single night, and the ground was not entirely bare until the 10th of April. There was no travel in the section of the country for two months excepting on snowshoes. We were five weeks and two days at one time without seeing a white person. Our white neighbors as well as ourselves had to do without bread except what we pounded corn to make. It was next July before we had bread because the high water prevented us from going to a mill as the streams were not bridged.

A few families of the Winnebagoes were camped for the winter near the mouth of Timber Creek, which was about three miles west from our place; and some of them came to our house nearly every day to buy corn; and as we could talk with them, they helped to pass away some of our lonely hours.

One day that winter my husband had an altercation with a bad-tempered Indian, which ended in a frightful scuffle. He was a tall stalwart Indian, about thirty-five years old, and much superior in size and strength to my husband, besides my husband was quite lame of rheumatism in his shoulders. He came with his squaw and several other Indians, to "swap" some buckskins for corn. We traded satisfactorily with them and all tied up their sacks and went away excepting this one Indian. His squaw asked him to tie up his sack; he said, "No",

and then told my husband to give him some more corn for his buckskin; he told him plainly that he would not. The Indian then snatched the skin, and said he would take it and the corn too. My husband seized hold of the skin at the same time, and each tried to jerk it from the other; the Indian became so exasperated that he soon relinquished the buckskin and seized hold of my husband's hair and jerked him down onto his knees with great violence upon the floor. I was much frightened, and stood motionless for a few seconds; but presently became roused to action. Seizing a large wooden poking stick I aimed a blow at his head; but the scoundrel saw me and warded off the blow. At the same time he threw his big arm around me, clinched hold of my hair and held me tight as a vise against his left side; still holding his grip on my husband's hair, and keeping him bent down nearly to the floor; so it was impossible for him to defend himself in such a situation. And a furious struggle ensued; for the savage was trying to hold us both, so we could not get away from him, and we were trying to disengage ourselves from his iron embrace, so we could defend ourselves if possible. I still held the stick in my hand and managed to strike his head several times; but he soon managed to stamp the stick out of my hand. I then began to scratch his face and eyes but he quickly put a stop to that fun, for he managed to catch hold of my hand with his teeth and hold it tightly. He bit my hand so hard that the scars remained for some time. I then could do nothing but submit to my fate. Presently my husband succeeded in grasping the poking stick firmly with both hands and soon would have broken the Indian's legs with it, but he saw his danger and immediately let go his grip from both our heads, and jumped backwards a few feet, and stood watching our movements like a panther. We then expected that he would kill us all, for he had a large knife sticking in his belt; but to our happy surprise he made no further attempt to injure us, neither did he demand any more corn; but stood there looking at us, and appeared to regret that he had pulled so much hair from my head; for presently he said he would bring me a pair of moccasins. We told him we did not want any of his moccasins and bade him to take his sack and leave the house,

which he did without any further hesitation, and never came into our house afterwards. His squaw was waiting outside the door for him, and they quickly disappeared out of our sight over the hill.

When the Indian seized hold of my husband, his squaw ran to him and plucked him by the coat, and said something in an excited manner; but he heeded her not. She then ran out of the house and halloed for the other Indians to come back; but they had gone out of hearing.

Our little baby girl was lying asleep in a rocking chair pretty close to the fire near where we were scuffling and the chair came very nearly being turned over several times. The squaw seeing that the child was in danger, moved the chair to the back part of the room. Probably our baby would have been killed had it not been for this kind-hearted squaw. Our little boy, who was then four years and a half old, screamed and cried, still he had presence of mind, for during the fracas he took the fire shovel and struck the Indian on the back several times with it. He said that he did not want to hurt him very much, but he wanted him to let papa and mama alone.

We did not see another Indian for several days; finally, there was quite a crowd of them came, and among them were some of the oldest men in their camp. We felt rather discouraged at seeing them for we thought, probably, they had come down to make us some more trouble, and perhaps they would take possession of our corn crib. But we soon saw they did not intend to be uncivil toward us, and they spoke very indignantly of the Indian who had so badly misused us, and said he was a bad Indian, and often quarreled and fought with his own people.

They asked if we would sell them some corn; and when we told them that we would, they were much pleased and said they were afraid that we would not "swap" any more corn to them, since that bad Indian fought with us. Ever after that the most of them treated us kindly as long as they stayed there. We had had several quarrels with other Indians since we had been living there; but none so fearful as this one.

Thus we passed that long, cold and dreary winter, a winter ever to be remembered by us. But spring came at last, and

we rejoiced to hear the birds sing and see the prairies covered with green grass once more. But as the streams remained high, there was but very little travel until July; therefore, we did not see many white people until late in the season.

In June, 1849, brother William Davidson arrived at our place with his family. They stopped several weeks with us until they could get some corn planted and a cabin built on the claim that their son Samuel had taken for them in the spring of 1847.

There were several other families that came and settled in Marshall County that season; but none nearer than Timber Creek, seven miles above us.

In the fall of 1849, Mr. Isaac Asher and family, left their claim and came down and settled on the claim that brother Jonathan had left in Tama County. They had two grown daughters still living at home with them. Frances the elder was twenty years of age and Ann the younger was eighteen. They were both nice girls and were a great deal of company for us, as they often visited at our house, and often assisted me about my work; so the time passed quite pleasantly with us that winter.

Now in the progress of time, Samuel Davidson and Miss Ann Asher became acquainted with each other. Their love was reciprocal and they were married on the 18th of July, 1850. Their marriage was the first one consummated in Marshall County.

We were not troubled by the Indians during the winter of 1849-50, for they all went away in the fall but returned in the spring as usual to grow corn and beans. They were civil toward the white people and gave no cause whatever to frighten them in regard to taking their lives and plundering their houses; however, the people who were living on Timber Creek and Linn Creek became very much alarmed; for someone of their neighbors had seen an Indian with his face painted black and they considered that was a sure sign of war; so they set to work at once to build a temporary fort on Timber Creek and while the fort was being built, they heard that a party of Indians were encamped on Iowa River, only a few miles above them, and several families became panic-

stricken, and said it would not be safe for them to stay there longer. So they threw their heaviest cooking utensils into the hazel brush so as to hide them from the Indians — and where, it was said, they could not find all of them after they returned—and loaded up their wagons with their lightest household effects and made tracks as fast as possible for the settlement(s) on Skunk River.

One man suggested that someone ought to let Davidson's know of their impending danger; another replied that there was no time to lose; for this was a case of life and death, and everyone must look out for himself. Though the next day after the panic, a young man from Timber Creek came to our house and requested my husband to go with him to the Indian village and have a talk with the Indians. My husband complied with his request, and saw no signs whatsoever of hostility. They all appeared just as friendly as usual; and when he spoke of the alarm among the people of Timber Creek, they were perfectly surprised and said the white men were "heap mean" to raise such a lie on them. Nevertheless, those people who were living on Timber Creek that had courage enough to stay molded bullets, and finished building the fort and moved into it, and stayed there ten days. Finally as no Indian warriors had made their appearance, they concluded that it was a false alarm; so they left the fort, returned to their homes, well satisfied that there had been no bloodshed, although they had had several quarrels among themselves.

That same spring and summer, there were about twelve hundred Indians living in Indian town and vicinity, and we were all becoming tired of them; for they were damaging the timber. They chopped the sugar trees, and peeled the bark off valuable trees to make their wickiups, and were a nuisance in many other respects; besides they were preventing the country from being settled near their town, as most white women were afraid of them, and could not bear the idea of living in that vicinity.

So the white people petitioned the Government to have them removed; and in the latter part of July the Dragoons came and took them away to their reservation in Missouri.

In the year of 1850 there was a Post Office established at Timber Creek; before that time we had no Post Office closer than thirty miles.

In 1851, people began to settle up Marshall and Tama County very rapidly, and in a short time town sites were located, flouring mills and saw-mills built, bridges built across the Iowa River and minor smaller streams; churches and school-houses erected and the prairies were broken up and disrobed of their natural beauty. There was a good flouring-mill built on the Iowa river, within a quarter of a mile of our place; so we no longer had to pound corn to make our bread.

Brother Jonathon Davidson named our home in Marshall county "Mooshane" which is an Indian name signifying "Morning Sun," and it was a very appropriate name, for our place lay sloping to the East and there was a beautiful grove above on the West side.

We lived at Mooshane thirteen years, then sold our place to Mr. Ami Willett, a neighbor of ours, and on the 15th day of May 1859, we bade adieu to Mooshane, and started on our long journey across the plains for the Willamette Valley in western Oregon.

We had five children, four sons and one daughter. Their names are respectively as follows. Lucien Middleton, Isola Aleria, Aluard Kilgore, LeRoy Sunderland, and Courtney Nichols. Our eldest son was then in his fifteenth year, and our youngest son was three years and eight months old. We had no very bad sickness nor ill luck during our six months journey.

We arrived at Portland, Oregon, on the 5th day of November, all alive and well. In the spring of 1860, we bought a piece of timber land lying on the west side of Willamette River, one mile and a quarter from the steamboat landing at Oswego, and eight miles south of Portland, there we resided thirty years at Mountain View, which was the name of our home in Oregon. The scenery was vast and delightful.

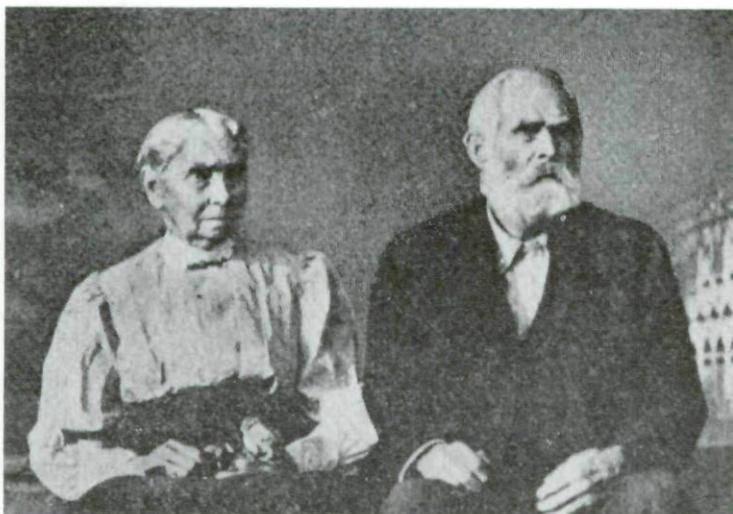
In the fall of 1890, we sold out and moved away from Mountain View, and located in Woodland, Washington, where we still reside. Woodland is a small town situated on Lewis River about thirty miles below Portland.

All of our children are yet living, and have settled near us. We have seventeen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren now living. We are both well up in years. My husband is past 82, and I am past 77; but we hope we may live a few years longer in this beautiful world, and enjoy the society of our children and grandchildren and friends.

Woodland, Washington

Mary A. Davidson

April 5, 1902



MARY ANN AND JOSEPH CARPER DAVIDSON

The Davidsons lived in Woodland until their deaths. Joseph died on January 12, 1909. Mary Ann died on January 21, just a few days later.

An obituary written for both of them at the time read in part: "He (Joseph Davidson) contracted a cold about two weeks before his death, from which, on account of old age, he was not able to rally.

"Mrs. Davidson had been afflicted with asthma for about two years, but nevertheless she was able to do the cooking and light household work. The worry and bereavement caused by her husband's illness and demise, with her failing health, was more than she could bear . . . and was the immediate cause of her death."

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