

Keokuk did most of the talking on the part of the Sacs and Foxes, and with the spectators was the Cicero of the occasion, and in reply to these philippics of the Sioux, he said: "They tell you that our ears must be bored with sticks, but my father, you could not penetrate their thick skulls in that way, it would require hot iron. They say they would as soon make peace with a child as with us; they know better, for when they make war upon us, they find us men. They tell you that peace has often been made, and that we have broken it. How happens it then that so many of their braves have been slain in our country? I will tell you, they invade us; we never invade them; none of our braves have been killed on their land. We have their scalps and can tell where we took them."

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## THE PIONEERS OF MARION COUNTY.

BY WILLIAM M. DONNEL.

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DRAGOONS—TRADING HOUSES—INDIAN PAYMENTS, AND HOW MADE—INCIDENTS—CHARACTER OF THE TRADERS—THE INDIANS—LANGUAGE OF THE SACS AND FOXES—BRIEF SKETCH OF THEIR HISTORY—BLACK HAWK BEHEADED—INSTALLATION OF KEOKUK AS CHIEF—INDIAN TRAGEDY NEAR RED ROCK—POVERTY—SETTLEMENTS—MARKING OFF CLAIMS—PRIMITIVE HOUSES AND THEIR FURNITURE—FIRST CROP—GRATING CORN FOR MEAL—HOMINY—SAMP.

Soon after the purchase of 1842, or about that time, a garrison of United States dragoons was quartered at Ft. Desmoines, between and at the junction of the Desmoines and Coon Rivers, for the purpose of guarding the Sac and Fox Indians, the late proprietors of the lands, against the warlike encroachment of the Sioux, who had long been known as their most implacable foes; and also to prevent the settlement of those lands by the whites previous to the first day of May, 1843, and the eleventh day of October, 1845, agreeable to the

stipulations of the treaty made at Agency, in the autumn of 1842. There was also a garrison at Agency, whose duty was to guard the agency, and prevent immigrants from crossing the line before the 1st of May, as above stated.

But it is evident that no extraordinary vigilance was exercised by the garrison to enforce this restriction. Many crossed the line, either with or without their knowledge; but with the understanding on the part of the immigrants themselves, that they would be subject to arrest and the seizure of their property by the dragoons, small squads of whom were scouting here and there over the country. Those who thus found their way into the forbidden territory, could do nothing toward making a permanent settlement, except to fix upon some locality that suited their fancy, and be ready to establish a claim upon it at the proper time. They dared not erect a house; and, in some cases, it was found advisable to secrete their wagons and such other property as was likely to betray their intentions to become settlers.

Little was known of the country previous to its actual occupation in 1843. Some hunters and trappers had passed through it, from whom reports were received of its beautiful prairies, luxuriant vegetation and rich soil. A few trading houses had been established at different times and places, mostly along the Des Moines river, on a trail most frequently traversed by the Indians, between Des Moines and Hard Fish, an Indian town located where Eddyville now is, and Agency.

The remains of one of these houses is still visible, near the eastern border of the county, in what is now Lake Prairie Township. It was, perhaps, the first house occupied by white people within the bounds of the county. Another, known as the "Phelps Trading House," stood somewhere near the same locality. The proprietor, William Phelps, previously kept the same kind of an establishment at Farmington, Van Buran County, and moved up when his Indian customers receded before the advance of civilization. At a somewhat later date others were established at and in the neighborhood of the present site of Red Rock. One of these, by a person named

Shaw, stood on the opposite side of the river from the village, and another a short distance above it, was kept by John Jordan. At the last named place was once the scene of a dreadful Indian tragedy, the details of which will be given in another part of this work. About a mile and a half above Red Rock, was another trading house kept by Turner, and north of town about the same distance, was yet another, known as the firm of Gaddis & Nye. Some others who still live in the county, traded much with both the Indians and whites after the settlements commenced, among whom are G. D. Bedell of the village, and G. H. Miksell of the town of Red Rock. Indeed, so far as we can learn, only the three first mentioned establishments existed previously to the date of settlement.

These houses were generally mere shanties designed for temporary occupation. That of Gaddis and Nye was but a shelter made of poles, and roofed with bark or brush. The chief business of the proprietors, especially of those of the earliest date, was with the Indians, exchanging whisky, tobacco, pipes, guns, powder and lead, blankets and a few cheap dry goods, for furs, deer skins and such other products of the hunting grounds as were of any commercial value. After their customers began to receive their yearly payments, old Mexican dollars came into circulation, and many of them very aptly found their way into the pockets of the traders. About eighty-four thousand dollars constituted a payment, and one custom was to distribute this sum among the numerous families of the tribes, each head receiving an amount proportioned to the number of his family. But the Indians sometimes adopted a different mode of payment, called "Chief payments," making their chief the recipient and treasurer. This made him a sort of financial agent for his tribe, and, therefore, to some extent, responsible for individual debts frequently contracted with the traders in anticipation of the payments. In most cases such debts were promptly paid, the savages manifesting an honesty in such transactions that seemed in strange contrast with their usually treacherous characters.

On occasion of one of these payments a contest arose between the Indians as to how it should be made. Keokuk, chief of the Sacs, was in favor of an individual payment, contrary to the wishes of other chiefs and their followers. As pay day approached the contest grew so hot that an appeal to arms seemed probable; and when it came, the hostile parties mustered their forces and even rode up in line of battle. But just then, through some agency or other, seen or unseen, the fight was postponed indefinitely. A compromise was effected, and a chief payment decided upon.

This event took place at Ft. Des Moines, but at precisely what date we are not advised, though it must have been in 1844 or 1845. We have the account from an individual who went there to collect money due him for produce and other articles he had sold the Indians on credit. But for some cause he failed to get any, and other traders also lost heavily.

In those days traders were required to obtain a license for their business, though the requirement was not compulsory. Those who chose to do so could sell to the Indians on credit, and when pay-day came, presented their claims to the agent and drew. But those who failed to fortify themselves with this legal authority had to run the risk of being swindled by absconding debtors, or having their claims repudiated altogether.

Not unfrequently these unsophisticated savages, not having the shrewdness to detect a cheat, or to understand the proper value of an article in trade, were made the victims of gross impositions by unscrupulous traders. A little incident that occurred near Red Rock will illustrate this: An Indian traded his blanket for a melon, promising to bring the article within a given time. It was a good one, and apparently made the most of his scanty wardrobe. But he had eaten the melon, and thought it was good enough to be worth the blanket that he did not feel so much the need of then, and true to his promise, paid it over at the time stipulated.

Another incident permit me to relate, illustrative of the reckless improvidence of a race of people that must conse-

quently ere long, degenerate to a mere remnant, in contrast with the wicked shrewdness that seeks to victimize them for the sake of gain : On occasion of one of these chief payments—the last one perhaps—an individual living near Fort Desmoines, who had had extensive intercourse with the Indians, knew their character and spoke their language, conceived a plan to get some of their money on terms that some might call a fair exchange.

On the day following the payment, he sent a polite invitation to the chief and his five braves to come and dine with him. He had made ample preparations for the feast, and among other articles acceptable to the Indian palate, was a good supply of whisky. At the proper time his guests appeared, and were most flatteringly received and entertained. After dinner, when the hearts of his victims had become softened, to a consistency of great liberality, he invited them to an examination of his ponies. Thereupon half a dozen handsomely equipped animals were brought from the stable and paraded before the admiring guests. The next act in the performance was to invite the chief to accept the finest one of the number as a present, which the grateful sovereign readily did. It is said to be a custom among Indians on receiving a present, to return something of supposed proportionate value. Agreeable to this custom, and, perhaps, actuated by an overwhelming sense of gratitude, the chief immediately placed in the hands of his host a box containing *one thousand dollars in gold*, which he had just received from the Government, in behalf of his tribe, for their lands. Then another pony was presented to one of the braves, which was in like manner acknowledged. Then another, and another, till each of the five braves were supplied with a pony, and their white brethren—the traders—had six thousand dollars of their hard cash.

We are not informed whether the matter terminated thus, or whether the embezzlement was discovered to the tribe and the unworthy chief tried and punished, as he should have been. If not, it was no fault of the tribe, who were usually not slow to bring judgment upon offenders.

Most of the trading houses were abandoned soon after the Indians left the country, which was upwards of a year after settlement commenced. What became of all the traders can only be conjectured. Jordon went to California, but returned and is now supposed to be in Missouri. Shaw died at Red Rock, many years ago; Gaddis and Nye expressed their intention of following the Indians, and the last known of them they were descending the Desmoines in a canoe, and it is possible that their success in trade induced a majority of those who left the country about that time to follow their old customers.

In speaking of the character of these traders, perhaps all that we ought to say might be said in palliation of the truth: Isolation from the surroundings and restraints of civilization was by no means calculated to improve their morals. If, in some respects they resembled the savages, the fact must be attributed to association. Yet in one particular they were as wholly distinct from the savages as other men; they had a specific object in life, a business upon which was founded anticipations of pecuniary advancement. Not scrupulous as to the means, so the end might be attained, they adopted a calling condemned by the better sentiment of all mankind, as degrading and tending to evil results. Away from the restraints of law and the beneficent effects of reformatory agitations, they were free to indulge their cupidity in debauching the simple savages with adulterated whisky, and cheating them in trade. We might here particularize, but there is no need of it. We have made these statements as matters of history that, perhaps, some to whom they apply, might be willing to forget. The traders have had their day, and their victims are no more.\*

Enough has been written upon the manners and customs of that somewhat mysterious race of people, the Indians, so that we shall not introduce the subject here, except as it oc-

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\* NOTE.—The statements made in the above paragraph are not intended to apply to all persons who traded with the Indians, but to the majority of those whose only business was that of traders. There are some good citizens still living in the county, who dealt more or less with the natives, but not exclusively as traders.

curs in the reminiscences related from time to time. Indian life is so uniform that what relates to one tribe is mainly applicable to the whole nation, for the similarity of complexion, language and habits of the numerous tribes lead us to believe they belong to the same nationality as much as did the twelve tribes of Israel. It is true that there are some differences, but these are not materially distinct, and may be attributed to differences of climate and country. Various causes may have divided the nation into so many tribes, but the most probable cause was the same that operates to divide civilized nations into clans and communities—conflicting interest and quarrels—since which they have maintained the separation under separate leaders. Most of the tribes are noted for their warlike propensity, and if their history could be written, it might show a succession of wars as full of romance and adventure as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. From this cause some tribes, once powerful and much dreaded, were reduced to mere remnants or totally extinguished. We venture to say that if it had not been for these divisions into tribes, and the failure of some of their most noted chiefs to unite many of them against a common enemy, our success in subduing them would have been far more difficult.

The Sacs and Foxes who occupied the country included in the purchase of 1842, were enough alike in all general respects to constitute but one tribe. We are told that they occupied the same districts, hunted upon the same hunting grounds, intermarried, and spoke the same language, with but slight difference, no more, probably, than what occurs between eastern and western people in their use of English.

As a matter of some curiosity, as well as useful instruction, we here give the translation of a few words of Indian, as spoken by these tribes, as nearly as English letters can be made to convey the somewhat difficult articulation.

Horse, nack-a-tock-a-shaw; hog, cocasho; ox or cow, nan-noos; Desmoines river, koasauqua sepe; White Breast river, waupeka sepe; Skunk river, shecauqua sepe; \* e-nock-eno-

\* This word, we are told by good authority, does not apply exclusively to *skunk*, but means anything that has a strong or offensive smell. The head waters of Skunk river were once noted for the vast quantities of wild onions that grew there. Hence Chicago, is the same word a little differently spelled and pronounced.

qua, to-day I am going; Ku-che-pen-oach-ne-och-e-pe-i-ale, came a long distance; war, necanty; one, nacote; two, nigh; three, ness; four, neane; five, neollen; six, cantwassick; seven, nawhick; eight, swaussick; nine, sauk; ten, mataus or sweech; twenty, nishswanpetuck; thirty, nessswanpetuck; forty, neaneswanpetuck; fifty, shi-can-e-collah; sixty, nessswassick-ete-swaup-etuck; one hundred, nagenetauk; one thousand, mataus-nagnetauk.

The history of these tribes may be traced back to a period as early as 1767, the year in which Black Hawk was born. They then occupied the country now known as the state of Wisconsin. At an early age, this celebrated warrior, Black Hawk, by his prowess and skill in war against the Osages, between whom and the Sacs and Foxes a long standing grudge had existed, raised himself to some eminence as a leader and gave these tribes a notoriety in military history.

From the time that the government came into possession of the north-western territory, by purchase from the Spanish Government, these Indians did not seem favorable to the change, and conceived a dislike to the new proprietors. The treaty of 1804, was not calculated to remove this prejudice, inasmuch as it was made without the general authority of the Indians. Soon after this treaty, the whites began to erect forts and trading posts along the Mississippi, in the disputed territory, which caused a war that continued, with occasional intermissions or truces, brought about by renewed treaties, till the capture of Black Hawk, in 1833.

This renowned warrior spent a pleasant captivity in traveling through the eastern part of the United States, at the expense of the government, during which time he visited Washington, and had an interview with President Jackson. After having seen much of the magnitude of the government against which he had been from time to time long and vigorously contending for what he conceived to be the just rights of his people, and had thereby an opportunity to judge of its power, he, with his son and one or two of his braves who had accompanied him, returned to the west, and was released at



Ft. Armstrong—now Rock Island—and immediately retired to private life, from which he no more emerged in hostile array against the whites. His death occurred in 1839, near Fairfield, Jefferson County. Soon after his death his head was severed from his body and conveyed to St. Louis. The object of this mutilation history does not state, but we may conjecture that it was either to preserve it in spirits or obtain from it a bust or painted likeness of the great chief. We have reason to suppose that the government had no cognizance of an act so unlike her wonted treatment of fallen foes. Our informant thinks that the head may be at St. Louis to this day. But this is not so very probable, for when the Indians discovered this mutilation of the body of their venerated chief, they threatened serious trouble, which nothing could avert but the return of the head, accordingly it, or some other head *was* returned, but it is not likely that the Indians could have been easily deceived in the identity of a face they had so long been familiar with. At all events they became pacified.

After the capture of Black Hawk, and at the treaty that followed, Keokuk was made chief of both the Sacs and Foxes. This chief, little less renowned than Black Hawk for bravery and cunning in war, was yet quite a contrast to the latter in person and in his relations with the whites. Black Hawk was a person of small stature, while Keokuk was a portly Indian, weighing, probably, over two hundred pounds. Whilst Black Hawk was pursuing his hostile attempts to check the encroachments of the whites, Keokuk remained either neutral or friendly to the latter. In this he had many adherents, which prevented Black Hawk from bringing a much larger force into the field, as a strong partizan leader he had desired to do. For this reason, and in order to insure permanent peace with the Indians, the government, through its agents, obtained the appointment of Keokuk to the chieftainship of both tribes.

We have on file a number of sketches illustrative of the character and customs of these people, that occurred during their residence in this county, after its first settlement, but

which, for want of room in this chapter, we shall reserve for the miscellaneous department of the work.

We shall, however, take occasion here to relate an event that transpired near Red Rock, early in the fall of 1844, and which, on account of its horrible details, is still fresh to the memory of those who witnessed it, or lived in the neighborhood at the time.

It is said to have been an occasional custom with the Indians (or at least with those who were thus disposed) to take criminal liberties with such squaws as should happen to be found abroad, unattended by any other person. Any squaw thus found alone was presumed to be not virtuous, and was therefore subject to the licentious attacks of any bad man who, under these circumstances, was not subject to punishment for the crime. The assault was called a *feast*.

On the occasion of which we speak, a Winnebago brave and his wife, a likely young squaw, of the Sac or Fox tribes, had come down the Des Moines river on a trading expedition, and were camped near Jordan's trading house that stood, as we stated in the preceding chapter, on the south side of the river, some distance above the ferry landing. About this time two Indians, named Wan-pep-cah-coh and Poc-a-tuke, chanced to be prowling in the neighborhood, and discovered the lady alone in the woods. They thereupon deemed her a fit subject for a "feast," but she escaped and returned to camp. Toward evening of that day, or the next, these Indians were at Red Rock, from which they could observe the movements of their intended victim at the camp. At about dark they made their appearance at the trading house and attacked the squaw again, as she was preparing to light the camp fire, when she took refuge in the house. Her husband, who was absent at the time, on his return asked her why she had not lighted the fire. She then told him how she had been followed and persecuted by the two bad Indians, who were still without, intending to camp on the ground. Hearing this, Gordon permitted the brave and his wife to remain in-doors that night.

But the Winnebago was not content to merely escape, for the time being, the unwelcome presence of those "sons of Babel"—his honor had been compromised in that of his wife. He was deeply incensed, and nothing but a bloody revenge could heal the wound. With this feeling he rose and announced his purpose to go out and kill them. On accosting them angry words followed, and they both assaulted him, probably not knowing that he was armed. He resisted the assault with his hunting knife. Wan-pep-coh-cah, received eleven mortal stabs, and Pac-a-tuke, one across the abdomen, letting out his bowels, which he caught and supported with his hands as they fell, and as he sank to the ground in an agonizing death.

This took place about nine o'clock at night. None but the actors witnessed the deed, but the strokes of the knife were distinctly heard within, and the scene next morning was such as to warrant the truth of the above narration.

Next morning several white men collected at the scene of the tragedy, and sent a report of it to a chief named Pashapaho,\* who, with his party of about three hundred, had been down the day before, but returned and camped on what is now called Starks' Island, two or three miles above Red Rock. Pashapaho, on hearing the news, immediately sent one of his braves down with peremptory orders to kill the murderer. Apparently no thought was entertained of giving him a trial for his life, nor even inquiring as to how far he might have been justified in the commission of the deed. The order was to kill him.

The Winnebago remained at the place, apparently trusting in the justification of the act to shield him from the punishment of a common murderer, or else desirous of seeing what action would be taken in his case. But when he saw Pashapaho's agent approaching, he comprehended at a glance his intended doom, and made an attempt to escape. But too late. The fleet-footed Fox was too near him when the flight began, and after a chase of only about one hundred and fifty yards,

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\*Stabbing chief.

he was overtaken, and by the assistance of another Indian, who had just come into the action, apparently as a sort of reinforcement, was overpowered, led back to the house, and his legs bound together above the knees.

The inquiry now was, what they meant to do with him. The reply was that they would kill him. Against this the white men who were present did not feel called upon to interfere, either by command or persuasion, nor, so far as we have been able to learn, by representing the facts of the case to the Indians. They only protested against the execution being performed there, and insisted that the prisoner should be taken to his own country for that purpose. But this protest was not heeded; the Indian who had come to carry out the orders of his chief, walked into the house, seized a hatchet that belonged to the place, and, as he stepped out again by his victim, who was seated near the door, struck him a heavy blow across the back of his neck, burying the edge of the weapon in the bone. The stroke felled him, but did not render him insensible nor even speechless; and, as it was not followed immediately by others, as though it was the purpose of his executioner to prolong his agony, he partly rose upon his hands and pleadingly said: "Strike me again, friends." Then the other Indian who stood by actuated either by a sense of pity or an eager desire to see the bloody work go on, said to the executioner in a tone as threatening as his words: "Kill that Indian or I'll kill you!" In another moment the head of the prostrate victim was nearly severed from the body. This done the Indians went their way, leaving the bodies where they had fallen, either not caring what disposition was made of them, or else taking it for granted that the whites would see to their burial. Messrs. Jordan, Bedell and a few others, when they saw that the savages would have nothing to do in the matter, proceeded to make some arrangements for the interment. Whilst this was going on, the poor woman who had witnessed the last act of the tragedy, the murderer of her husband, with what feelings we are not sufficiently advised to describe, performed with her own hands

the last sad rites it was the custom of her people to bestow upon the dead in preparation for the funeral. Having procured some red paint commonly used by Indians to decorate their faces, she painted their cheeks, eye-lids and lips very nicely and carefully, and then made an impression of her open hand on each cheek. This service she performed with equal care upon each, foe as well as friend. The three bodies were put into one grave near where the upper ford now is. Since then they have been washed away with the bank that has caved in more or less with the annual freshets, and what remains of this most tragic event may now be scattered and deeply embedded in the sands at the bottom of the Des Moines. The woman who was the innocent cause of this affair, went to Red Rock. Hearing that the Indians intended to murder her also, she took refuge in the house of Robert D. Russell, where she remained secreted for upwards of a month. By that time the Indians had so far learned the facts of the case that she was finally deemed innocent, and was permitted to come forth and go west with her friends.\*

The settlement of Marion County was begun at a period of some financial depression.† The monetary crash of 1837 was still felt, and those who came early were by no means rich. They were literally poor men, seeking homes and independence that could not be acquired in a country where real estate was beyond the reach of the day laborer. An opportunity was now granted to those who would brave the privations of frontier life to possess themselves of an estate that might, if rightly improved, insure independence and even wealth.

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\*NOTE.—Another version of this story is to the effect that two drunken Indians murdered the son of a prophet, and, after being arrested, were tried and sentenced to death, the oldest squaw of the tribe being selected to execute the sentence with a tomahawk. Also that the Indians were so much incensed at the traders for supplying the murderers with whisky, that they sat twenty days in council discussing the propriety of punishing them, but were finally pacified by those who could speak their language. But the foregoing details being from an eye-witness to the last act of the tragedy, may be deemed correct.

† The "tightness" of money matters at that period may be conceived by the fact that property, compared to present prices, was remarkably cheap. Twenty-five or thirty dollars would buy a good yoke of cattle, and forty-five would buy a number one horse.

During the first year (1843) about seventy families from various parts of the east and south, settled in the county. These immigrants mostly came in companies,—families acquainted or connected,—and settled in neighborhoods that eventually formed the nucleus of what were called “settlements.” These settlements were mostly designated by names derived from some leading member thereof, or from their locality, such as the English settlement, the Tong settlement, the Buffington settlement, the White Breast settlement, and the Red Rock settlement. The first division of the county into election precincts, to be hereafter described, seems to have been intended to accommodate these settlements, and will show their localities. These settlements were not only the result of the social tendency of mankind to drift into communities, but in a country so wild, and where mutual dependence upon each other was so much felt, wisdom demanded such combinations. In time these settlements were so expanded by additions as to unite with others, and thereby lost their distinction, but some of them are still known by their old names.

But these settlements were not always so compact as circumstances seemed to require. Settlers were disposed to suit themselves with a location, though it might be at a remote distance from neighbors, and families within two or three miles of each other were neighbors. Occasionally a lonely cabin was to be met with so far from any other as to be apparently out of range of any settlement.

The first business of a settler on reaching the place where he intended to settle, was to select his claim and mark it off as nearly as he could without a compass. This was done by stepping and staking or blazing the lines as he went. The absence of section lines rendered it necessary to take the sun at noon and at evening as a guide by which to run these claim lines. So many steps each way counted three hundred and twenty acres, more or less, the legal area of a claim. It may be readily supposed that these lines were far from correct, but they answered all necessary claim purposes,

for it was understood among the settlers that when the lands came to be surveyed and entered, all inequalities should be righted. Thus, if a surveyed line should happen to run between adjoining claims, cutting off more or less of one or the other, the fraction was to be added to whichever lot required equalizing, yet without robbing the one from which it was taken, for an equal amount would be added to it in some other place.

The next important business of a settler was to build a house. Till this was done some had to camp on the ground or live in their wagons, perhaps the only shelter they had known for several weeks, so that the prospect of a house of some kind that could be called a home, produced a thrill of pleasure that could hardly be comprehended by those who have never suffered the same privation. To the home-loving unadventurous female, this thought must be specially applicable.

But such a house! The poor settler has neither the means nor the help to erect a palace. So far from it, the best he can do, in most instances, is to fix up the cheapest thing imaginable that could be called a house. Some of the most primitive constructions of the kind were half-faced, or, as they were sometimes called, "cat-faced" sheds or "wickeups," the Indian term for house or tent. But a claim cabin was a little more in the shape of a human habitation, made of round logs light enough for two or three men to lay up; about fourteen feet square, perhaps a little larger or smaller, roofed with bark or clapboards, and floored with puncheons (logs split into slabs), or earth. For a fire place, a wall of stone and earth—frequently the latter only when stone was not convenient—was made in the best practicable shape for the purpose, in an opening in one end of the building, extending outward, and planked on the outside by batts of wood notched together to stay it. Frequently a fire-place of this kind was made so capacious as to occupy nearly the whole width of the house. In cold weather, when much fuel was needed to keep the temperature of such a room above the freezing point,

large logs were piled up in the yawning space. To protect the crumbling back-wall against the effects of fire, two "back logs" were placed against it, one upon the other. Sometimes these back logs were so large as to require horse-power to draw them into the house, the horse entering at one door and going out at the other, leaving the log where it could be rolled into the fire-place. For a chimney any contrivance that would conduct the smoke upwards, would do. Some were made of sods plastered inside with clay, others—the more common perhaps—were the kind we occasionally see in use now, clay and sticks, or "cat in clay," as they were sometimes called. For doors and windows, the most simple contrivances that would serve the purposes were brought into requisition. The door was not always immediately provided with a shutter, in which case a quilt or some other cloth might be spared to hang over it. As soon as convenient, however, some boards were split and put together for a shutter, hung upon wooden hinges and held shut by a wooden pin inserted in an auger hole. As substitutes for window glass, greased paper pasted over sticks crossed in the shape of a sash, was sometimes used. It admitted the light and excluded the air nearly equal to a glass window, but of course, lacked the transparency.

In regard to the furniture of such a house, our inventory must necessarily be as brief as our description of its architecture, unless in such instances where the settlers may have brought with them their old household supply, which, owing to the distance most of them had come, was very seldom. It may be readily understood by the reader that whatever articles could be made to substitute tables and chairs, were used for them. A table could be as easily made as a door shutter, and of the same kind of material. Indeed we have heard of instances of the door shutter being taken down and used for a table, and re-hanged again after meals. Benches and stools supplied the place of chairs. But perhaps the most important of the few domestic comforts that could be crowded into so small a space, was a bedstead or two. Any family who had been bred to the customs and conveniences of civilization



could hardly accommodate themselves to the simple mode of repose in use among the savages, that of stretching themselves upon the earth. Something softer than the bosom of mother earth, and a little more elevating, was deemed indispensable, if it could be obtained. Therefore the nearest approach to a real bedstead, that could be extemporised in a hurry and with the fewest tools, was done in this wise: A forked stake was driven into the ground at a proper distance diagonally from a corner of the room, upon which poles, reaching from each wall, were laid. The wall ends of the poles may have rested in the openings between the logs or been driven into auger holes. Bark or boards were made to substitute cords. Upon this cheap article of furniture the pains-taking housewife could spread her bedding so as to hide every bit of its deformity; then hang up some sheets behind it, and thus give the sleeping corner of the homely habitation a tasty and wide-awake appearance. It was generally called the "prairie bedstead," and by some, the "prairie rascal," though for what reason the latter term was applied to it does not appear, for it is difficult to conceive of anything more honest in construction or use.

Few of these houses yet remain as monuments of the past. The writer has seen two or three foundation logs of one of the first, where it stood. Their appearance is quite antiquarian, rotten and sunken into the earth, but still bearing some marks of their ancient use. One or two cabins of a somewhat later date, still stand, or did a year since, on the premises of J. M. Brous, an old settler in Perry township. They are in tolerable preservation, considering their age. But a majority of these old cabins have passed away, as well as some of their builders and original occupants; not, however, without first serving the purposes of stables, sheds, cribs, &c., till at last too frail for even these uses, they have been reduced to fuel, and their ashes returned to the earth that first produced the living tree.

The next important duty of the settler was to prepare some ground and plant what he could at that advanced season for

cropping. This was generally done in the edge of the timber, where most of the very earliest settlers located. Here the sod was easily broken, not requiring the heavy teams and plows needed to break the prairie sod. Perhaps we might safely add, as another reason for first settling in and about the timber, convenience to fuel and building timber. It may be supposed that the timber afforded some protection against those terrible conflagrations that occasionally swept across the prairies. Though they often passed through the groves, it was not with the same destructive force. By these fires much of the young timber was killed from time to time, and the forests kept thin and shrubless. Since these fires have been kept out, our timber lands have become thickly set with a new growth.

The first year's farming generally consisted of a "truck patch" planted in corn, potatoes, turnips, &c. But one man in the county planted any considerable crop of "sod corn," and this was Jas. Price, of Summit township. He broke nine acres of prairie the first year, where he still lives, and from it produced considerable more corn than he needed for his own consumption. But generally, the first year's crop fell far short of supplying even the most rigid economy of food. Most of the settlers had brought with them such provisions as were indispensable to frugal living for some time, such as flour or meal, bacon, and coffee or tea. But these supplies, unlike the poor widow's barrel of meal and cruise of oil, were not inexhaustible. A long winter must come and go before another crop could be raised. At times game was plentiful, and the skillful huntsman could supply his table with venison. When corn could be obtained, the absence or inconvenience of mills for grinding it, forced the necessity of grating it on an implement made by punching small holes through a piece of tin or sheet-iron and fastening it on a board in a concave shape, with the rough side out. Upon this implement the ear was rubbed to produce meal. But grating could not be done when the corn becomes so dry as to shell off when rubbed. Some even used a coffee mill for grinding corn. But a very

common substitute for bread was hominy, a palatable and wholesome diet, made by boiling corn in weak lye till the hull or bran peals off, after which it was well washed to cleanse it of the lye, then boiled again to soften it, when it was ready for use as occasion required, by frying and seasoning it to suit the taste. Another mode of preparing hominy, was by pestling. A mortar was made by burning a bowl-shaped cavity in the even end of an upright block of wood. After thoroughly clearing it of the charcoal, the corn could be put in, hot water teemed upon it, and subjected to a severe pestling by a club of sufficient length and thickness, in the larger end of which was inserted an iron wedge banded to keep it there. The hot water would soften the corn and loosen the hull, and the pestle would crush it.

Another preparation of corn diet, called "samp," was made by cracking the kernels in a tan-bark mill, then boiling it like rice.

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## HISTORY OF MAHASKA COUNTY.

BY CAPT. W. A. HUNTER, OF OSKALOOSA HERALD.

[Continued from page 185.]

Every county constitutes an integral portion of the State, so that what interests the people in a part, interests them in the success and prosperity of the whole. If the State of Iowa is one of the best in the Union, and we believe it to be, and Mahaska County is one of the very best counties in the State, it follows as a deduction, that it must be a good county in every aspect of the case. We have frequently, in conversation, said, that so far as our observation extended, we regarded the tier of counties from east to west, in which Mahaska is located, as the best in the State, all things considered; and observation and study have satisfied us that Mahaska is, all things taken into the account, the best county in this tier. The reader may be ready to conclude, after what we have said, that it is our opinion, that we are living in as good, if not the

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