

THE ORIGIN AND INTERPRETATION OF THE NAMES OF THE RIVERS AND STREAMS OF CLAYTON COUNTY.

BY ELIPHALET PRICE.

[Continued from page 759.]

Our last communication having closed with the origin of the name of Carlin Creek, we find upon resuming the subject that we have reached the waters of Cedar Creek, a stream rising on the high land prairie in the vicinity of the town of Garnavillo, and flowing southward until it reaches the waters of the Turkey, distant about ten miles from the source of the creek. For several miles this stream flows through a narrow valley bounded upon each side by high mountainous hills, covered with a dense growth of timber. It received its name from John Finley, who in the summer of 1834, made an exploration of the stream with a view to a discovery of its manufacturing powers; finding the sides and craggy summits of its high hills canopied by a luxuriant growth of the red cedar, he gave to the stream the name of Cedar Creek. There is a tributary of this stream known by the name of Read's Branch; this stream received its name from Robert R. Read, who settled upon the prairie at the head waters of the branch in 1839. Capt. Read will long be remembered as the popular clerk (for many years) of the Board of County Commissioners, when that power was in existence, and subsequently for many years clerk of the District Court. In consideration of his many years of faithful official service, the Hon. Judge Williams, when defining the boundaries of the civil townships of the county, bestowed upon the most central one of them the name of "Read Township." Capt. Read was an Englishman by birth, and for many years a resident of the frontier; he had seen the march of civilization approach him from the east, and heard the first echoes of the woodman's axe reverberate among the forest solitudes of Iowa "as westward it took its way." He died a few years since at Garnavillo and was honored with the masonic rites of burial, being a member of that fraternity.

About three miles above the mouth of Cedar Creek, the Wayman Branch coming from the south unites its waters with the Turkey. This stream received its name from Col. William W. Wayman, who was the first white man that settled in the county of Clayton. He was a native of New Hampshire, a man of liberal education and polished manners; in his habits and in the expression of his face, it was easy to detect one of those freaks of human nature that occasionally appears among the descendents of the Pilgrims of New England disturbing the purity of the Saxon blood, by portraying in every lineament the American characteristics of the Nar-a-gan-set or the Wam-pa-noag. Among white men he was reticent, watchful and restless. In the society of the Indian, he was authoritative, stern and commanding. He never performed any manual labor other than that which pertained to the indoor affairs of his house. The Indian, the half-breed and the hunter, regarded him as a mysterious being; they would toil and labor for him without any other reward than the pleasure of being near his person. The largest portion of his lifetime had been spent upon the frontier in the society of the Indian and the hunter, and yet he could never be prevailed upon to give any information concerning the Indians, their manners and customs, or traditions. The intimacy and social intercourse that we had had with him for a number of years on the border, only seemed to render more impenetrable the shield of mystery that he had woven around the events of his life. He was the father of a half-breed daughter, whom he educated.

To detail the discoveries that we made in after years concerning the history of this person, would be too voluminous and romantic for the historical columns of the Annals.

In the fall of 1845, about the midnight hour of a dreary day, we received from the hands of an Indian runner, the following communication:

“Come quick, I am dying. Ann will give you my keys.
W. W. WAYMAN.”

We hastened to him, but he was dead when we reached his residence. The keys unlocked, in part, the history of a strange adventurous life, and told us that his name was "William Wallace Hutcherson," a descendent of the "Mayflower."

About a mile above the Wayman Branch the waters of Elk Creek after flowing in a northerly direction about eight miles, empty into the Turkey. This stream received its name from Louis Reynolds, who in the summer of 1834, while exploring the creek in search of a mill site, came upon a herd of elk that were mousing in its waters, from which circumstance he named the stream Elk Creek. Reynolds was a bachelor of a romantic turn of mind, who manifested on all social occasions, the most extravagant politeness. His educational attainments seemed to centre in a knowledge of "Gœthe's Sorrows of Werter," a small volume of which he constantly carried about his person, and which had been so liberally saturated with coon's oil and deer's tallow, that much of its contents had become wholly obliterated. Enough, however, remained to enable him, as he believed, to triumph in discussion, no matter what the subject might be. In the fall of 1835, near the close of a day's hunt, we came upon his cabin situated upon the Blue Belt, and was invited to place our rifle on the gun rack. During the early part of the evening an Indian came in with a ham of venison which he wished to exchange for corn meal. Reynolds had just succeeded in extracting a splinter from beneath the nail of one of his fingers, which had become located there while in the act of scraping from the bottom of his meal barrel material sufficient to make a dodger for two, and accordingly the Indian could not be accommodated. But as Reynolds stood in need of the venison, it occurred to him that he could satisfy the Indian by reading to him a page or two from his inexhaustible book, the "Sorrows of Werter." Accordingly he took the ham, hung it up, and after seating the Indian upon a keg, squatted himself down in the chimney corner, where, by leaning in a sideling manner towards the blaze of the fire, he was enabled to read from the Teutonic volume, occasion-

ally pausing to explain and gesticulate away the difficulties that seemed to obscure the latent beauties of some flowing passage. The Indian who could understand nothing, had fixed his eyes intently upon the fire, while his mind seemingly in its efforts to grasp the subject, had plunged into the most profound thought upon some other theme. Reynolds after having amply paid for the ham, as he believed, arose, and taking the Indian by the arm led him to the door, where, with a profuse display of politeness, he thanked him for the venison. The Indian after casting a sorrowful glance back in the direction of the meat, departed.

Now Reynolds, had but one shirt in the world, a calico garment with an ample display of ruffles running perpendicularly through the centre of its bosom, and having learned that a family would locate in his neighborhood in a few days, among which, there was a female of an attractive character, he at once determined to be ready to receive them; accordingly he had just completed the washing of his shirt in the creek and had hung it upon a bush to dry,—in the morning the garment was gone. The few mockasin tracks in the vicinity of the bush, bespoke the visitation of an Indian, incapable of appreciating the "Sorrows of Werter." Reynolds soon after left the country.

There is a tributary of the Elk known as "Wolf Creek," it received its name from Dennis Quigley, who was the first settler upon the stream. During the first evening of his residence here, a surprise party of wolves called upon the few sheep that he had brought with him, and welcomed them to their new home. From which circumstance he honored the creek with the name of its inhabitants.

About a mile above the Elk, Volga River unites its waters with the Turkey. This stream, which is about thirty-five miles in length, rises in the centre of Fayette County. During the early settlement of the country it was known by the name of the South fork of Turkey. In 1836 when M. Lyon established by survey the township lines of northern Iowa, he bestowed upon it the name of Volga River, which was

adopted by the settlers of the county. It is one of the most beautiful streams of northern Iowa. There are a number of towns and villages situated upon its banks, among which none more prominent than the town of Fayette in Fayette County. It is here that the "North Iowa University" is situated. The stream is sometimes called Classic Volga, from the following literary incident. A student from Wisconsin attending the University, had prepared a poem to be delivered at the closing exhibition of the institute. His fellow students who had manifested some skepticism as to the arcadian qualities of the people of Wisconsin, stood all on envious tip-toe, eager to hear its sentiment and delivery, while Professor Brush who had just been inaugurated, felt that the fame of his University was soon to sweep through the moaning pine forests of Wisconsin, pausing for a time to recuperate among the ample fisheries of the State, that it might take its way with wider, loftier flight through town and hamlet,—westward ho. The Badger Boy, proud of his native State, self-poised and confident, ascended the rostrum and commenced his poetic essay as follows:

" There where the classic Volga goes
With logs and sticks and overflows,
And in the farm-house runs its nose—"

Here the professor commenced coughing so loud and incessant that nothing more of the poem could be heard. Sufficient however was preserved to secure for our beautiful Volga the proud literary prefix, "Classic."

A short distance from the mouth of the Volga, there is a tributary known as Bear Creek; it received its name from the following hunting incident. Missouri Dixon and his brother Samuel having started a large bear in the timber of Turkey River in the winter of 1838, followed its foot prints in the snow until they reached the vicinity of this stream, where they separated, Missouri following the trail and his brother making a circuit in the hope of meeting the bear. Soon after they parted Missouri came up with the animal, which had coiled down to sleep beneath an overhanging ledge

of rock. He fired, and wounding the bear, it immediately turned upon him, when he fled in the direction of the creek. Dixon was wont to tell the adventure thus: "For a half mile there was something more than daylight between us, and if Sam had'nt fired just as I was crossing the creek, there would have been an old bear hunter spoilt."

A short distance above Bear Creek, Doe Creek unites its waters with the Volga. This stream received its name from Benjamin Smith, an experienced hunter, who during his first hunting visit to the stream, killed a doe while in the act of leaping across it; this incident gave to the creek the name it bears.

Two miles further up, the Volga receives the waters of Honey Creek. Dennis Quigley who abandoned a brief home upon Wolf Creek, in consequence of the hostility of its inhabitants to the wool-growing business, established his permanent home upon this stream, where he still resides. The great quantity of honey found in the forest trees adjacent to the creek prompted him to bestow upon it the name of Honey Creek. Dennis, who is a genuine Yankee, disguised under an Hibernian cognomen, has held many official positions with credit to himself and the county. The young swarm that has gone forth from his apiary, have settled around the old gum, and are waxing rich in worldly possessions, as well as acting their part with credit to the parent hive.

A little further on, we hear the rippling sound of Hewet's Creek as it comes through the forest to swell the waters of the Volga. This stream received its name from Joseph Hewet, who settled upon its headwaters in 1839. At the time of his settlement here, the nearest resident to him was distant about eighteen miles. Hewet was born and raised upon the frontier of Missouri, and was a hunter in the full and rounded acceptation of the word. We knew him early and well. Among the many hunters of the border with whom we have been acquainted, he alone could have stood forth as the representative of Cooper's ideal hero of the pioneers. He would often say to us with a dejected expression of the

face: "The country will soon be overrun with settlers and all the game driven towards the west." As the settlements drew nearer to him, he listened for a time to the distant tinkling of the cow-bell, and then mournfully shouldering his rifle, turned towards the setting sun, calling to his companions, "Here pups, away dogs, ye'll be foot sore afore ye see the ind of your journey."

A short distance above this stream we meet the waters of Nagel's Branch, which receives its name from John Nagle, who located here about the year 1841, being the first settler in that part of the county. Mr. Nagle is still in the occupancy of his early location here, and has been eminently successful as a practical farmer. The little stream that bears his name, will preserve to posterity many pleasing reminiscences of one of Clayton's earliest pioneers.

Mink Creek, after winding its way through a liberal portion of the county of Fayette, plunges into the Volga within the limits of Clayton, a few yards from the boundary, the largest portion of this stream being in the county of Fayette. The origin of its name cannot be traced outside of the archives of that county, which are securely kept in an iron chest.

We now return to the mouth of the Volga, to resume our way along the windings of the Turkey. Should we communicate with THE ANNALS again, it will be to conclude the origin of the names of the streams of Clayton, that we may yield to other correspondents the space that we have occupied in recounting a few of the remembrances of other days.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.