

## Recollection Of The Early Settlement Of Putnam County

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I located in Greencastle in September 1826. Some of my early impressions of the country remain very distinct. In the autumn of the same. I visited Col. Piercy, who lived about one mile north of Bainbridge, or about ten miles north of Greencastle. Along the path way that I traveled at that time, there were but two houses—on on the south bank of Walnut, owned by Samuel Rogers, the other on the top [of the hill on the north side of that same stream, owned by A. Hillis, about three miles from Greencastle.

From there the path wound through a dense forest, and y impression was that this would never be settled. Its extent was almost incomprehensible, when I looked to the north and to the west—an unbounded wilderness, never to be reclaimed and improved. But this was on of my mistakes, not the only one by any mean, but on e of my greatest. Continuous farms now occupy this whole space, and it is in a very high state of cultivation and improvement.

Of this forest I would say it was the beautiful that I had ever seen the beauty, probably could not be surpassed in any part of the world. The trees were tall and straight—exhibiting a degree of health and vigor unsurpassed. Here grew side by side the majestic popular, the walnut and oak—the sugar maple and beech and hickory. These beautiful trees were not distributed with strict uniformity, but in some localities one kind prevailed, while in another place another kind predominated. Here the sugar maple prevails, --there beech--- and again black walnut, --and here a forest of beautiful poplars. These trees seem to have been possessed in instinct at least, if not of reason. For the predominance of any one kind was evidence of a different peculiarity of soil—each tree selecting a location with soil to suit.

The sugar maple selecting the dry limestone, soil, to be shared largely with the walnut, and to some extent with the popular. The

cold, wet lands were selected by the hickory and water oak while the high bluffs of creeks and the white oaks selected rivers.

Beneath this forest was an undergrowth of the most luxuriant spice bush with pervades and wild grasses, still beneath, forerun unceasing pasturage. The soil was remarkable loose and rich, and was like the tread of the richest carpet—the feet might with ease, in many places be sunk above the shoe vamps in the rich and mellow soil. The settlers, by cutting out the smaller trees succeeded in raising fine crops, so productive was the soil at this early day and this was the character of nearly the whole county. The creek bottoms (of which there is quite a large number in the county) were still more beautiful than the uplands. It is quiet impossible to convey a proper idea of their primeval beauty. In early spring they were especially attractive. Vegetation of all kinds was a week or two earlier than on the uplands.

The whole bottom were covered with a species of wild onions called 'ramp'. This had a blade of an inch or more in width and from four to six inches in heights. As soon as the frost was out of the ground, the entire bottoms were green with "ramp" resembling the most luxurious field of the richest grass.

Herds of cattle collected from the adjoining neighborhood often their earliest ... and the music of the cowbells was most enchanting. Xx the xxxgry cows plied themselves from early morn till noon, and from non till late at night, bell answered bell—little bells and big bells—bells of all caliber's and of every variety of tones---most delightful music without harmony. Nor can I pass on, without reference to the silent streams that were gently flowing through the most enchanting bottoms. When I say the waters wee transparent. I do not mean that they were then as they are now, after having washed innumerable plowed field, but they were almost as clear as glass, and their tiny inhabitants could be distinctly seen in water of man feet in depth as you would see through a glass window. The waters were first filtered through immeasurable fields of wild grasses on the uplands. And again through the clear sands of these extensive bottoms, and were received into the streams in a state of

most perfect purity. At this early day these streams were full of the finest fish which were taken with ease by the grabhook.

But I must pass to a brief notice of the early settlers of the county. They were generally young married people or, at least persons with young families. Old or infirm people were rarely seen. Such new choosing to emigrants to so knew a country. This made the population physically, a good one. A more healthy and vigorous population is rarely found anywhere, and the manly exertise that they were compelled to practice—such as chopping wood, rolling logs and building houses—added greatly to their natural vigor. They were made up of the more hardy and adventurous of several of the adjoining States. Kentucky was largely represented, East Tennessee had a good representation of hardy vigorous men, North Carolina was also fully represented by a vigorous set of men and of rather more honesty then could in all cases claimed of others—North Carolinians generally paid their debts.

The moral character of those early settlers was generally good. The aspect of the new settlement was interesting. New cabins were raising in all directions, covered with new boards, and the walls' "xcutched" with the broadaxe, while the floors were made of wide puocheous. The chimneys of wood and mortar looked clean and new—everything was lovely and added, was a new rail fence around the farm; also a new field of luxuriant corn, pumpkins, beans and potatoes. At the door of the cabin lay the faithful dog, and just beyond the new yard fence stood the quiet cow, by smoking chunks to protest her from flies, making sweet melody with the cowbell.

From the young families to the present population mostly made up. But there in one other characteristic that serves special notice and that is the religion character of the settlers. In 1826 the Methodist built their first church in Greencastle—a log house covered with boards. The Baptist had a Society that worshipped just west of town at Michael's Wilson's near were the toll gage now stands. The Presbyterians established a church pretty soon afterwards under the charge of the Rev. Mr. Shields.

The Methodist church had many active and zealous men. Among them were Benjamin Jones, James Talbott, E. Dickison . R. Hardxxx . Amaos Robinson, Willima Talbott, Issace Beck, John Mercer, William Duckworth, Joesph Warford, Reubon Smith, John Johnson, james Montgomery. Col. Farrow, Henry Foster, and a host of others too numerous to name. These good men gave an impressed to this county that is visible yet. They sowed a good seed ---many the generation to come reap the rich profits.

It is much to be regretted that whiskey was but too common a beverage at this period. It was thought a necessity at log rolling, and house raising, and as is always the case did mischief. Benjamin Jones, knowing it mischievous tendencies, determined that he would not procure it for his rolling, and his whisky loving neighbors threatened that they would not roll his logs in consequence. But Jones, like a brave man and Christian, stuck to his determination, and when the time came his logs were all rolled, but not without some grumbling. Others, sooner or later, followed his example, until finally Benjamin Jones had the satisfaction of seeing this evil practice universally abandoned.

To the high moral, temperate and religious principles established by these worthy pioneers, is much of the prosperity and greatness of the country indebted. Their work may never be fully appreciated. The historian many never be able to find material with which to make a record, but their work has, nevertheless been an important one. Early conditions of society are difficult to change. The character of the community, once established remains often generation after generation. Certain street in our xxx entity xxx the habitlitantouse of thieves gamblers and contains and remain so from age to age. It is so to a great extent in the country. Certain localities become famed from vice and they are apt; to remain so. This character deters good men, and draws bad ones, and with the evil is perpetuated. On the other hand the good draw to them those of a like character and a high moral and religious condition once established is apt to remain.



The College at this place is the finest of the good men who settled her. The religious and moral character that they established was the first, and the funds, which they contributed, the second cause of its location and establishment among us. The invisible impress of Jones, Talbott, Matkins, and Montgomery, is upon all the good that is resulting from this institution. The Alumni of the College is carrying the silent influence of these good men, and their associates to all parts of the broad land. Whether in the Pulpit proclaiming the ordinance of God or at the Bar expounding the states of the country, or other more abstruse principles, of common law; or in the counting room, the halls of legislation or in the ordinary walk of life, those now invisible and almost forgotten influences were there.

I will conclude by noticing one other early influence. That made a very marked impression upon the agricultural conditions of the county. This county was settled largely from Kentucky, Shelby County furnishing a large number, who located themselves about Greencastle and east of the County. They were by no means the only settlers, but they constituted a considerable proportion. Shelby had at this time done little in cattle raising and grazing. They brought with them such practice in agriculture, as was common at the place whence they come. Montgomery and Bourbon, and neighborhoods sent their quota also. Clark and Bourbon Counties of Kentucky, are known to have engaged at an early period in cattle grazing and feeding and their fine bluegrass pasture had long been proverbial. Those emigrants from this quarter brought with them bluegrass seed as one of the essentials, and many of them brought a better class of cattle than had before reached this country.

Preparations were at once made for the sowing and cultivation of this grass. Aaron Hensley early sowed forty acres, Daniel Harrah sowed about the same forty acres, each claiming to have produced the first bluegrass. It has probably never been well settled which of the two was entitled to this credit. It is now probable that several others from the same section of the country, sowed about the same time. These people settled mainly the county-seat, from four to ten miles, many of them in Monroe Township, and some of them in the adjoining township. This grass grew finely on these rich new lands it would acre

three feet height. The fields of Hensely and Harrah are very distinctly remembered. Their appearance was picturesque indeed. The seed from these field and others was carefullgathered annually, and field after field was added until this section of the country become comparative la a great bluegrass pasture.

Cattle here became a staple, the Darn,, Bridges, and Lockridges leading in this business. But bluegrass and its opponents. Man are of the aprid tic could run the county ant ha it get set their waoudl no spreadint for the production of other crops. No these objection have finally changed opinions, and bluegrass has triumphed and is now sought by all in every part of the county. There is one effect worthy of note: Those townships that early adopted grass and the raisin of cattle are now the most valuable lands in the County. They have retained there fertility, and now possess a beauty no where else to be found, and are bringing more money per acre. In those section of the county where grain has been the leading staple, with hogs the land have been greatly impoverished and are consequently now far less bountiful and are bringing less money.