

INTERESTING EARLY HISTORY

The following is from Mrs. L. P. Brock, chairman of the Historical Committee, Hall-Fowler Memorial Library, Ionia, Mich., on some of the history connected with the Indian tribes in this state.

"As a member of the State Historical Society, I attended their semi-annual meeting at Grand Rapids the last of August and heard Chief Madoka—present chief of the Pottawattomie Indians now in Michigan—and he said in the day before white settlement, that Michigan was divided by the tribes into three principle parts. The Chippewas had the Upper Peninsula, the Ottawas from Mackinac Straits to Grand River, and the Potawattomies the land south of that, though there was some intervening.

The dividing line between the Ottawas and the Pottawattomies was the middle of Grand River, and if any questions came up between those tribes or persons of the tribes, they met in the middle of the river "to have it out".

SARANAC IN 1849

By J. F. Proctor

My father bought and moved onto what is now known as the Stevens place, two and one-half miles north of Saranac, in the fall of 1849. I was then a boy of fifteen years.

Some time in November of that year my cousin, Joe Monks, son of James Monks, and I, visited Saranac. We had to cross the river in a canoe, as there was no bridge there at that time. There was only a few buildings there then. Ammon Wilson kept a few goods and Indian trinkets in a little wooden shack, about fifty rods down the river from what is now known as Bridge street, and Sam Wilson kept a tavern in a wood-colored building on the northeast corner of Bridge and Main streets. There was only a few buildings east of these, one of which was occupied by the Chipman family.

The first bridge across Grand river at that place was built in 1850. It was a wooden bridge, and the road from the north came down the hill on the place now occupied by old Mr. Green and his son-in-law, Benec Kimble, and then followed the bank of the river to the bridge. At times when the water was high it was impossible to get to the bridge. Footmen could get over by climbing logs, and sometimes that was risky business. At the time the bridge was built, the bridge crew would sometimes make things lively, for by that time one or two saloons had gotten started, besides the bar in Wilson's tavern. I remember on the Fourth of July they had a big time and "painted the town red". They would go from one drinking place to another and make every man in the room sing a song or tell a story; they were a happy lot.

About this time Barnum and Armstrong put in a large stock of goods into a new building on the southwest corner of Bridge and Main streets. This was the first trading place of any importance in Saranac and was appreciated by all who lived in that part of the country.

Ammon Wilson built a fine hotel on the northwest corner of Bridge and Main streets in 1853 or 1854. It was a great place for the young people to gather, for he had the best room for dancing in that part of Ionia county; he put in a spring floor in the dance hall,

which was known for its easy movement. I, being somewhat of a fiddler in those days, will be remembered by a few of the old gray heads left as giving them music at those dances.

There are but few left of my companions at this time, nearly all having gone. Many were left on the battle fields of the Civil War. I was there and saw the Saranac boys under command of M. B. Houghton take the cars for the South, and heard the parting address given by Richard Vosper while they stood in line beside the railroad track.

At the time I left the town of Keene in 1855, there were but a few frame buildings, nearly all being built of logs. Nearly the first frame house in Keene was built by John Butterfield on the Aaron Pratt farm, two and one-half miles north of Saranac. What happy gatherings we used to have at his home and in his sugar bush in the spring, going there to eat sugar and hear him sing songs. His father was the first settler in Keene. I remember being at Sam Wilson's tavern one time when Place Post, of Ionia, and a companion, both riding Indian ponies, came and rode right into the bar room and called for drinks without getting off their ponies. After getting their drinks, they continued on their way to Lowell, called Flat River at that time.

I was married in the fall of 1855 to the eldest daughter of A. C. Smith, a well known farmer of Keene, and moved that winter to Crystal Lake in the eastern part of Montcalm county, where my brother and I took up some state land, where the village of Crystal is now located. We had to cut a road to our land, and suffer all the trials of new settlers. Our trading place was Ionia, and our only team, oxen. It took us four days to make the trip. We went to my wife's father's place, eight miles west of Ionia, and stayed over night. I remember one time when driving to father Smith's place, when about a mile west of Ionia (it was all woods there and covered with oak grubs), I heard someone singing at the top of his voice, making the woods ring: "Wait for the wagon, the old lumber wagon, the squeaking lumber wagon, and we'll all take a ride". In looking up, the singer I found him to be my old friend, Ben Covert, who was picking up a load of wood, poles, limbs, etc., and to think this was the one-time-to-be mayor of the city of Ionia. Yes, it was good, genial old Ben, always happy. We had a good chat and I drove on. The place where I found Ben was very near where the state house of correction now stands. It was a wild looking spot then.

It would hardly be proper to close this account of early life without some references to the Indians, who were numerous at that time. It was customary for them to leave their reservation at Lowell to make sugar in different localities. One of their favorite sugar places was on the river bottom where the little creek empties into Grand river near what is now known as Cucumber Bend, a fine forest of maple trees covering the flats here. This was the favorite sugar camp for old Col-mo-sa, chief of the Flat River Indians. Every spring he and his family would come here to make sugar. One Sunday several of us concluded we wanted some warm sugar to eat, so we started for the Indian camp. One of the camps was occupied by Bad Manitou, better known as "Col-mo-sa's devil". When in sight of the boiling place back of the wigwams, we saw three or four little papooses bathing in the big trough where the sap was stored. It was a warm day near the closing of the season, and they were having a big time. We didn't want any warm sugar then. Another time when my cousin, Phil

Monks, and I, visited them in one of their wigwams, a young squaw came to get help to cut down a 'coon tree. Our young Indian friends ask us to go with them, knowing we were good choppers. It was not far to go and we soon had the tree down. It was a big elm and hollow. Four 'coons sprang from the top. The young Indian and I followed one, the old Indian another, and the dog another. Phil and the young squaw got a good start on the fourth, the squaw in the lead. She had not gone far when her foot caught in a limb and down she went, Phil on top of her. She was the first up and soon had the 'coon treed, but the young Indian and I lost ours, for we had to stop and laugh at Phil and the squaw. The old Indian shot his and the dog treed his, so they got three of the four. This was the kind of pastime we youngsters had in those days, but it was as good as attending a theatre.

Speaking of "Col-mo-sa's devil" put me in mind of an instance that happened a year or two before we came to Keene. My uncle, Jim Monks, lived on the place where Albert Wells lived when I last visited Keene, in a log house near the center of the forty which he owned at that time. It was quite a camping ground for the Indians then. One day a lot of them were camped there and old "Col's devil" was among them, full of whiskey. He was always ugly when in liquor. He came to the house and asked my Aunt Mariah to give him some bread. She told him she had none, but would let him have some when it was baked; he asked again and when she refused again he walked up and kicked her. Old Grandfather Monks, Uncle Jim's father, was there. He was over seventy-five years old and lame, but when the Indian kicked her he jumped and grabbed him and, the door being open, threw him out, but as they passed through the door the Indian struck at him with his knife, but missed him, the point going into the door jamb.

FIRST SCHOOL IN BOSTON TOWNSHIP

The first school in Boston township was taught in Timothy White's house in the summer of 1838 by Sarah Alden, sister to Timothy White's wife.

The first school house was built in November, 1838, on section 20. It occupied land owned by James Hutchinson, then an absentee, and in it the first school was taught by Susan Ann Church, who later became Mrs. Elbridge Williams. School was held in that structure until 1840, when Edison English, then a newcomer to Boston, bought the Hutchinson place, and no title to the school house site having been issued to the town, Mr. English naturally claimed possession of it. He moved his family into the school house, occupying it as his first residence in Boston. After he took possession, however, he built at his own expense, an addition, in which school and meetings were held for some time.

While it was used by the town the old log school house was also the temple wherein the people gathered for worship on the sabbath. Methodist and Baptist met there whenever they could secure preaching.

FIRST SCHOOL IN KEENE TOWNSHIP

The exact time when the first school in Keene township opened is not known, but it is thought probably not until 1842. According to records, there were no children of school age in the township until that year. In 1845 the people of the township concluded to use the annual appropriation on behalf of public education, for other purposes and voted to raise no money for the support of public schools.

The first meeting of the inspectors was held on April 12, 1842, at the home of Allen Day, when after the appointment of Simon Heath as chairman, the board adjourned. The annual report of the school inspectors dated October 11, 1845, gave the following: District No. 4, fifty-eight children; district No 5, forty children. In district No. 4, Samuel Case was the teacher and received \$10.94 for one month's teaching. Thomas Congdon taught six months in district No. 5 and received \$50.

District No. 6, formed on January 21, 1846, included the west half of section 36, the whole of section 35, the east half of section 34, the southwest quarter of section 34, the south half of section 33, the south half of section 26 and the southeast quarter of section 27, in town 7, and the north half of section 4 and the northwest quarter of section 3, in town 6.

On May 2, 1846, the school inspectors recorded district No. 1 as containing sections 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24 and 25, the northeast quarter of section 26, the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of section 26; No. 2 as containing the territory ascribed to No. 1, formed on April 11, 1844, and No. 4 the west half of section 36, the whole of section 35, the east half of section 34, the southwest quarter of section 34, the south half of section 33, and the east half of the east half of section 26.

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