

Leon Journal Reporter - 1933

INTERESTING CHARACTERS OF PIONEER DAYS IN COUNTY;
Hermit of Dickerson Branch - JONATHAN STANLEY - COL. POMUTZ

By MRS. LELA KIRK PARKER.

As there have been some requests by the younger folk for more Indian stories of the early days, it seems a timely coincidence that this week two letters should arrive offering to relate just such tales for us. So in an early issue MR. B.E. AKERS of Denver, Colo., and MR. F.A. GARBER of Leon will tell us some thrilling tales of Indian days in Decatur County.

To continue this week with stories concerning early Decatur County pioneers, we will begin by telling you of the hermit of Dickerson Branch.

Many years ago, back in Kensington, Conn., there lived a young man whose name was WYLLYS DICKERSON. He came of a wealthy family and had been given exceptional educational advantages. He was a cousin of the poet Percival and a nephew of Mrs. Willard, the same who kept a seminary for girls in New York City and who was hostess to Lafayette when he visited the United States. She later, so it is said, returned his visit in his home in France.

As he grew to manhood, WYLLYS DICKERSON had every promise of a useful, happy life. Then he fell in love. But for some reason the girl of his choice chose another and it so embittered him that he lost all interest in life and wanted only to get far away from everything he ever knew.

His family tried in every way to shake his determination. His father offered to invest thousands in his interests, but he would have none of it, and ended by coming out to the frontier, as far from civilization as he could get. He arrived in the territory of what is now Decatur County in 1839, eight years before Iowa was admitted as a state. He pitched his camp on a wooded creek (which runs between Davis City and Lamoni) and finally decided to build a cabin and make his home there.

He hewed the logs and erected the walls, but because he hated darkness of the average pioneer home, he decided not to roof his, but to stretch a covering of muslin instead. And this way he lived for several years.

As time passed and the muslin became dark and weathered, he could not see so well to read so he loosened some of the mud "chinking" from between the logs in the walls, thus admitting the light. Then at last near the chimney corner where his bookshelf was built, he inserted a single pane of glass. Besides his beloved books, this was the sole luxury his cabin ever afforded.

He tended small patches of ground along the creek bottom, raising enough to supply his simple wants. And by hiving swarms of wild bees he soon had a great colony of a hundred or more stands. Then from the honey he learned to make methelgin, a strong, spirituous liquor, and the beeswax he used for money. For many years, so it is said, beeswax was the accepted medium of exchange throughout the territory, being valued at twenty-five cents per pound.

As time went by, other settlers came and built homes nearby. DICKERSON was friendly if sought and very generous, but his quiet aloofness discouraged advances from his less cultured neighbors. It could be seen he preferred no close friendships.

He was intensely patriotic and when the Civil War broke out, he offered a neighbor's son forty acres of land if he would enlist in the army for the preservation of the union. It seems his own physical condition was such that he was unable to go.

As he grew older, he became more and more of a recluse, seldom going where people congregated. He loved nature and was often seen roaming over the hills and along the river bottoms alone. It is said he never killed anything himself nor would ever permit any hunting on his land.

His business, such as required attention, was taken care of by A.G. SCOTT. MR. SCOTT was perhaps the only person who really knew him in those last years.

On the Afternoon of January 28, 1892, MR. SCOTT knocked on the door of the cabin and, receiving no answer, opened it and looked in. WYLLYS DICKERSON lay dead on the floor. So passed the Hermit of Dickerson Branch, whose monument today is the winding creek that still bears his name.

Another hermit of the pioneer days was JONATHAN STANLEY, who, like DANIEL BOONE, dressed in buckskin and lived by hunting and trapping. It is said he was a great friend of the Indians and knew every bend and crook in all the streams for miles around.

Perhaps someone who sees this can tell us more about him.

Still another of the picturesque figures of early days, according to Professor JOHN HOWELL'S History of Decatur County, was COLONEL GEORGE POMUTZ, a Hungarian, who came with the exiles from Hungary after the ill-fated rebellion led by Louis Kossuth.

He was said to be an unusually handsome man, very tall and blonde with full beard and mustachios. He had a splendidly shaped head and beautiful wavy hair, and was decidedly military in bearing. It is said he rode a spirited white thoroughbred he called Highland Mary. He was exceptionally well educated and was an ardent admirer of Byron, whom he

often quoted.

It was he who planned the Greater New Buda, third and last of the lost cities of New Buda. He platted the town after the manner of Budapesht in Hungary, with University Square, Boehm Street and a Kossuth Platz. He journeyed to Kansas City advertising the prospective town and sold lots.

For a time things went well. Congress passed a law allowing each Hungarian a quarter section of land and industries flourished and developed. Among the outstanding ones were the distillery and shoe shops.

The distillery was well equipped and had its bonded warehouse a dozen yards or so north of where JOHN HAGEN'S farmhouse now stands. (The JOHN HAGEN farm is south of Davis City.)

EMORY DOBOZY was the master expert shoemaker of New Buda, and he and his workmen were very busy, for the exquisite work they turned out was vastly superior to the crude footwear the pioneers were able to get elsewhere.

But to go back to COL. POMUTZ, he was young, unused to the hardships of the frontier and the rigors of a climate far colder than the one he had always known. Then, too, he was restless out of his element. He longed for the atmosphere and spirit of army life. So at length he sought and was appointed consul to Russia, and died while on duty in Petrograd.

He was another of that pitiful band forbidden by a stern edict to see again the yellow houses and red-tiled roofs of Old Buda. But to the last we fancy he was homesick and still said "Varok (I love) Hungary"!

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