

WHEN THE INDIANS ROAMED OVER THIS SECTION OF IOWA.

F.A. GARBER Relates Tale of Mr. YOUNG's Experience With Braves

This week we are indebted to FRANK A. GARBER and JOHN THOMAS WEINBERGER of Leon, for Indian tales and the story of old Mt. Tabor church, also to MRS. IDA HENDRICKS BARCUS of Bovey, Minn. for some early-day reminiscences concerning pioneer homes and the Palestine Church.

It is possible that there are authentic records among the papers of these early rural churches that may be obtained through those who are now serving as clerks or secretaries of each organization. If these records are still in existence, it would indeed be a kind act for someone living in the community to take the trouble to look them over and send us a copy of the proceedings first recorded. Send letters to LELA KIRK PARKER at Davis City.

Some time ago we had requests for more Indian stories, so here they are. This week we will let MR. GARBER send shivers up your backs as he realistically relates some tales concerning the red men when they lived in Decatur County. The first one he tells us he heard from MR. YOUNG, the father of W.H. YOUNG, former treasurer of Decatur County.

"MR. YOUNG lived in the northwest part of the county across Grand River, east from Westerville. There was a natural park on the YOUNG farm and here the Indians often camped."

"One evening when MR. YOUNG was a young man he went to get the cows, and not having much success in finding them, he sat down upon a log to listen for the bell. He had been sitting there but a short time listening when he suddenly looked up and there standing like a statue directly over him was a big Indian buck. To say he was startled would be putting it tame enough; but he managed to speak and found that the Indian meant no harm. However, he couldn't quite understand how the fellow got so close while he was listening intently for the cow bell."

"The Indian then invited him to go to the wigwam, which he did. As they approached the wigwam, it was very apparent that something unusual was on. The whole tribe was dancing around the wigwam and having a characteristic savage jubilee. The Indian led him to the door of the tent and a sight such as few white men ever saw in Decatur County, greeted his eyes. On a rope stretched diagonally across the tent were the scalps of 18 Indians."

"The Indian explained that they had been on the war path up north in the territory of the Sacs and Foxes and had come upon a small camp while all the braves were away. Whereupon they had killed and scalped all the old men, women and children and made a clean get-away. The hullabaloo he witnessed was their celebration of the victory."

"MR. YOUNG related that he reproached the Indian for killing little children. The grinning Indian replied, 'killum while little so they not grow up and make bad Indians'.

"MR. YOUNG remembered of one instance when a band of Indians camped in his locality and had a sick woman with them. She was very sick and they expressed the fear that she would 'nippoo' (die). She was being transported on a platform made by fastening two long poles at the horse's neck and letting them extend well behind the horse where the platform was fastened. Here the sick woman was laid. Their fears that she would 'nippoo' were well founded for 'nippoo' she did and was put to rest in a tree top near where DeKalb now is."

Old settlers tell us that it was no uncommon sight in the early days when passing through the timber to see these gruesome bundles lashed to the topmost limbs of some great tree or dangling hideously as the wrappings and contents decayed.

MR. GARBER continued with yet another Indian tale. He says:

"The Indians never appeared in bands in this county in my memory; but my brother, older than I, remembers of a band he saw when he was a small boy. He and father were going to Leon one day when they noticed a large crowd of men on a ridge northeast of Leon on what is now the BIGGS farm. They were curious to know what was going on so they found that a man by the name of PETE HARET and the Indians were preparing for a horse race. The race was run and HARET won. The Indians wanted to run another with a different horse, but HARET took the stakes and beat it for town. The Indians, after a short time, strung out across the prairie to the southeast and disappeared."

MR. GARBER relates another story and calls it "A Religious Episode." It hasn't anything to do with Indians and perhaps is somewhat lacking in the dignity of the usual religious story; but to us it seems a delightful example of pioneer resourcefulness and brotherly love. Here it is:

"When father and W.J. STOUT were young in the ministry (about 1856 or 57) someone came after MR. STOUT to get him to preach a funeral. He had never tried a job like that so he came after father to take his place. Father told him he could not go as he had a batch of sorghum boiling and could not leave it. STOUT offered to finish the sorghum; but father protested that the only pair of pants he had were the ones he was wearing and they were too sticky to be worn by the minister at a funeral."

"But STOUT fixed it. He stepped behind the door, pulled off his good pants, handed them to father, put father's on, and the problem was solved."

Since telling in earlier chapters of the Indian sugar camps at Terre Haute, we have learned that there are several of the oldest settlers who remember incidents concerning them.

It seems the whites took advantage of these great groves of sugar maples, too, and oftentimes camped near the Indians while each group boiled sap.

MRS. KELLOGG, a pioneer resident of Garden Grove, in her memoirs relates how a group of visitors enjoyed a trip to an Indian sugar camp here. She said the Indians were very pleased that the whites showed interest in what they were doing and one old squaw generously offered the white ladies tastes of the boiling sap. The white ladies later regretted that they had accepted when they observed a young squaw approach the kettle and plunge a prairie chicken into the boiling liquid and saunter off, plucking the feathers as she went. And she also says that one's love of the delicious maple sugar could scarcely survive the ordeal of spitting out short black, white and brown hairs and later learning that the dogs slept in the kettles all winter.

Mr. LEE CRAIG of Davis City related another Indian tale and it, like the story told by MR. GARBER, shows just how stealthy the Indians could be. It seems that down along Grand River bottom, not far from the Missouri line, a settler had built a big, two-roomed cabin not far from the Pottawattamies' winter camping grounds.

One winter when the weather was extremely cold, an Indian came to the door and was invited in to warm by the big fireplace. Over and over again he grunted his satisfaction. That night after the family had been in bed and asleep for hours, one of the girls, who slept on a bed near the fireplace, awakened and was horrified to see seven Indian bucks stretched out flat on the floor with their feet to the fire. Too scared to breath even, she lay perfectly still and after some time, first one Indian got up and stole out silently and then another, until they were all gone. Then she bounded for the next room and woke the family. They decided that so long as the Indians continued to molest nothing, the best thing to do was to pay no attention to them.

And all the rest of that cold winter, the Indians came and went as silently as shadows warming themselves at the great fireplace. We fancy, though, the girls changed beds with somebody in the other room. Gosh! Wouldn't we have been scared into a spitting stutter.

>From the Leon Journal Reporter - 1933
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