

## DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Ten Children Family 'Minimum'; Dams  
Change River Traffic; Privations  
Require Robust Men

**BY EDWIN PHELPS (1815-'97)**

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In these jottings of the early settlements in Defiance County, I do not intend to do injustice to any of the old settlers, but it is difficult to bring the mind to remember all the transactions of more, than fifty years ago. I have heretofore been trying to trace the very earliest settlers prior to 1830, and in reviewing my former articles, I find I have missed a goodly number, who were the first to commence the battle of life in this wilderness of timber, Indians and ague. Few now living can imagine the hardships they had to undergo. Nearly all of the early settlers were poor men and nearly all raised large families, about ten children being the minimum.

### **Settling Noble and Delaware**

In this I will try and find a place for some of the earliest settlers, whom in my former papers, I have overlooked, and among them were **Gadda** and Joseph **Blair**, two Frenchmen, from Detroit, one of whom I have barely mentioned, who came here about 1817 from Detroit. Whether they came at the instigation of **Godfrey**, of Detroit, to whom the United States had granted a section of land in Noble township, a part of the William **Travis** farm, I do not know, but they settled near that land.

Benjamin **Mullican** (**Mulligan?**) came here about 1821 and settled first south of town, within the present city limits, and afterwards moved into Delaware Township and died there.

George **Woodcox**, father of our townsman, Benjamin B. **Woodcox**, settled in Delaware Township in a very early day, with Winchester's army and stayed along the river from that time forward. He was one of the

first white men to run a pirogue from Maumee to Ft. Wayne.

There were no dams across the Maumee on the rapids and boats ran all the way from Maumee, (now south Toledo) to Ft. Wayne. After the dams were built boats stopped at the head of the rapids and goods were hauled from there to Maumee, 18 miles.

### **On Sulphur Creek**

Barnabas **Blue** was another old settler who dropped down in Delaware Township. Just when he came I have been unable to ascertain, but think he was a scout in Winchester's army.

Samuel **Hughes** settled at the mouth of Sulphur Creek, on which he built a sawmill and had one run of stone for grinding corn at a very early day. He raised a very large family of children, but the family seem to have faded away.

William **Travis** came to the Maumee River as early as 1819, but did not stay long. He returned to Delaware County, where he married and moved to Defiance in the spring of 1824. and a short time after settled in Delaware Township. He had two brothers, Ezra and David, who also came here and settled in Noble Township in 1825 or about that time. The three brothers were originally from Kentucky and when in their prime, were large stalwart men.

Nearly all of these early settlers were strong, robust men or they never could have endured the privations to which they were exposed, and the most of them, notwithstanding their hardships, lived to a good old age.

### **River Farms Prized**

Up the river settled about 1824 Jacob **Platter**, Lewis **Platter**, George **Platter**, generally called "Engineer George", and another George **Platter**, commonly called "Uncle George"; also, Gavin W. **Hamilton**, who married a **Platter**. Nearly all good farms along the river in Delaware Township were occupied prior to 1826. I think the Platters

were Virginians by birth, and also very large men.

One of the principal reasons for settlement on the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers above Defiance was the ease with which their produce could be transported to Defiance, the only market they had, which was done by boats in the river.

All this time there were few settlements on Bean Creek above Brunersburg, the dam at Brunersburg cutting off communication by boat above that place, and the first principal settlement on Bean Creek was in 1831 and 1832.

#### **Partees At Brunersburg**

Although the principal settlement on Bean Creek was in 1831-32, there were a few settlers at about this time on the creek in the vicinity of Brunersburg. John **Partee**, Sr., settled just close where Lyman **Langdon** now lives, In 1823. There were but two houses in Brunersburg then, one occupied by Joseph **Partee** and the other by John **Perkins**. James **Partee** had entered the land just above Brunersburg, on the east side of Bean Creek, and John **Plummer** land in Tiffin Township, which I think was the first land sold In Tiffin Township.

#### **Grist Mill At Burg**

About the same time that John **Partee** moved onto his farm, but after, John **Lawrence** and Obediah **Webb** settled on the east side of the creek nearly opposite and William **Buck** and William **Kibble** settled near Brunersburg, as well as Enoch **Partee**, and nearly all these old settlers remained and occupied, the same farms on which they first settled till the time of their death.

Samuel **Hughes** came about the same time and probably assisted Perkins in building the grist mill at Brunersburg in 1828 and afterward settled as I before stated at the mouth of Sulphur Run, in Delaware Township, building a mill there, Hughes being a millwright by trade.

There are so few of these old settlers or even their children left that it is difficult to get accurate information in regard to these matters, and I give the best information I can obtain., The recollections of the very oldest inhabitants have varied considerable in their data, and I have to depend mainly upon. what old settlers told me fifty years or more ago.

#### **First Work on Maumee**

I think I have mentioned now about all of the very early settlers, but one I cannot forget, who had no fixed place of abode and is Thomas **Carr**, a Frenchman, with whom I performed my first day's work on the Maumee River in a pirogue, going up the Maumee River, to what is familiarly known as the Dunning farm. It was new business to me, and a large boat with only two of us, and the "sacres" I got from my awkwardness I shall never forget.

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