

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Town in Forest Setting; Indian Apple Trees Line
Rivers; No Dam, Water so Low Teams and
Horsemen Ford

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In my last I mentioned those living south of Second street and west of where the canal now is. In this I propose to describe the remaining buildings, with their occupants as nearly as I can remember, and the appearance of the town.

I came up the Maumee River in the 20th day of August 1834, about three o'clock in the afternoon. The view of the town was wonderfully beautiful. There was no dam to check the current of the river, no bridges to mar the view, nor any thing unpleasant in sight.

The town seemed to be set down among groves of trees, for all or nearly all south of Second street was a dense forest of hickory and oaks, about 12 to 15 feet in height. The largest trees in the lower part of town were the old Indian apple trees which lined the banks of both rivers.

Wade Rather Than Ferry

The road, such as it was, crossed the river at the foot of Jefferson street, and a ferry was kept there by David **Hull**, the father of Almira Colby, and of Mary, afterwards wife of Edward F. **Lindenberger**, and mother of Cassins **Lindenberger**, Mrs. **Chenebert** and Lucy Ann **Hull**.

The ferrying business was not then very profitable, as the water in the river was generally low so that teams and horsemen forded, and only a few footmen patronized the ferry which consisted of a canoe and a small flat boat about the size of those used by George **Miller** in the pontoon bridge. I have frequently seen both men and women wading the river, carrying their shoes and stockings in their hand.

Five Houses on North Side

David **Hull** lived in a one-story house on the north side of the river near the ferry, and below him was a large two story colored house, which some of the time was occupied as a hotel and store. A small log house about the place where the brewery ice house now is, completed the settlement on the north side of the river, except a small shanty on the top of the hill and a log house near where J. O. **Fisher** now lives. Miller **Arrowsmith** occupied the latter and I have forgotten who occupied the shanty.

William Wells **Greer**'s family 'occupied the log house where the brewery ice house now stands. Mr. Greer died about that time, and his brother James S. **Greer** came here to look after the family. He was the husband of Mrs. Greer now living with us. In early times he followed teaming, bringing with him about the finest span of horses and wagon brought to our town.

There was scattered here and there an old ox wagon that some of the old settlers had moved here with.

A sister of Mr. Greer married Dr. George W. **Crawford** about this time and came here and soon after built a house about where the Merchants National Bank now stands. The children of William Wells Greer were raised here by their friends. Nancy married a preacher at Maumee City and Orville **Greer** went west and is now in California.

Once 42 Trading Shanties

These were all the houses on the north side of the river, where once, according to information I received from an old Indian trader from Detroit, were 42 trading shanties occupied by French traders, mostly half breeds Indian and French. From the first occupancy of the country by the French they nearly all married Indian squaws, and a great many of their chiefs had French blood in their veins.

I am not sure but what my informant was somewhat mixed. His name was **LaSalle** and

he stated that Defiance was the best trading point between Detroit and Vincennes, Indiana; that he had made several trips between these points in birch bark canoe, skirting the lake in fair weather and following the Maumee up into the St. Marys, and then with a short portage across to Little River, down it to the Wabash and down to Vincennes; that sometimes in the Spring of the year the whole distance was made in canoe. By going up the St. Marys and a branch of the Wabash heading in the same wet prairie with the St. Marys they could paddle their canoe across from one stream to the other, the distance not being great.

First Court On Jefferson

Across the river, on the east side of Jefferson street near Fourth street, was a house occupied by a man by the name of Washburn, in which I am informed the first court in Defiance was held. Mr. **Washburn** soon vacated it and Dr. John **Evans** leased his hotel and moved into it and resided there until he removed to Ft. Wayne.

In the building Lake E. **Myers** now resides in was the store of Dr. John **Evans** and Albert G. **Evans**, which was managed principally by Albert G. **Evans**, as the Dr. had so many other irons in the fire he could not pay much attention to that unless there was a trade on hand with the Indians. As he was a good talker and understood the Indian language well he was sometimes called in to speak on such occasions.

The building just above, now owned by Mrs. Emma G. **Strong**, was occupied as a store and dwelling by Isaac **Hull**, who was also a good Indian trader. He soon sold out to John Oliver, and removed to Maumee City, where he died a great many years ago; but his widow, who was a **Spafford** before marriage, still lives at South Toledo, nearly 90 years old.

Other Early Dwellings

William **Semans** was building the house now occupied by; Hamilton **Davison** and got

enough of it finished so as to move in that fall, having just married a widow lady at Piqua, Ohio. Mr. **Semans** died several years ago at Leavenworth. Kan., but his widow is still living with her son, William O. **Semans**, at Delaware, O. She was a daughter of John **Oliver**, and own sister to David L. **Oliver**, Mrs. Simon P. **Moon**'s first husband, and half-sister to F. F. **Stevens** first wife and Mrs. Mary **Thornton**.

The old house between Judge **Sutphen**'s and Mr. **Buffington**'s was occupied by John **Oliver** a short time, and then he moved on the farm where C. **Biede** now resides. He soon traded the farm to Isaac **Hull** for his goods and afterwards sold out his store and moved into Indiana, where he died leaving a large family of children.

There was a one-story house where Mrs. **Troxel**'s house now stands occupied by Frederick **Bridenbaugh**. Near the present residence of E. **Squire** stood the house and store of Foreman **Evans**, a two-story building with additional lower front room occupied as a store, and the back part and over the store was used by the family as a residence,

Sells Goods and Town Lots

Stores were not the things they are now. Nothing but the substantials were kept then. On the corner of Front and Jefferson street was the Pavilion House, although I am not sure that it went by that name then but obtained it later. Adjoining the hotel on the west side was a grocery store kept by George T **Hickox**.

Opposite the hotel between Front street and the river was the store of Benjamin **Leavell**, one of the proprietors of the town, who sold goods and town lots. The next year he sold his interest in the town and lands adjoining to Curtis **Holgate**, and afterward his goods and building to Benjamin **Brubacher**, and removed back to Piqua, his former place of residence.

Pierce **Taylor** lived on Front street between Wayne and Jefferson, He was a carpenter and

joiner by trade, and did some cabinet work, his house and shop adjoining. He was here with Winchester in the war of 1812, although only about 15 or 16 years of age. His wife died in 1834, and his daughters kept house for him. The oldest one married Jacob **Kniss**, and after his death married Smith **Mead** (name corrected in later article to Jabez **Mead** -Ed) and moved to Wisconsin. Another daughter married Samuel W. **McCord**, a brother-in-law of Judge George B. **Way**. who was at one time prosecuting attorney of this county. They removed to Urbana where they at present reside. He had one son, Samuel **Taylor**, who left here when his sister married and I have lost track of him.

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