

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Colby Only Physician Maumee to Fort Wayne; Rides 110 Miles Horseback in 24 Hours; Settlers Live in Old Fort

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In my last I promised to give a sketch of some of the citizens in the country around Defiance, but I think I have not done justice to Dr. Jonas **Colby**, one of the prominent citizens of Defiance in times past, and well known in the surrounding country.

He came to Defiance in 1832 and had been here two years when I came. He was a practiced physician, had already quite an extensive practice, and was fast taking the place of Dr. John **Evans**, who was anxious to close up his business here and remove to Fort Wayne.

In the early history of the country the months of August and September were the months of harvest for physicians, as during these months the bilious fever and fever and ague took full possession of the country, and few, very few, indeed, escaped one or the other.

Ague Lasted All Winter

There was a difference of opinion which was the worst. Neither very often proved fatal with proper care. The bilious fever was the more severe, but did not last so long, and left the patient in better health afterwards. The fever and ague frequently held on all winter.

At the time Dr. Colby came to Defiance there was not a physician between Defiance and Fort Wayne on the west, nor one between Defiance and Maumee city on the east. On the north none nearer than Coldwater, Michigan, and south, Findlay, Lima and St. Marys were the nearest points at which a physician could be had. Although the country was very sparsely settled, there being no settlement except along the streams, those

who got sick were as anxious for a doctor as those in the heart of civilization.

Doctor Rides Indian Trails

Defiance was then in the center of a circle about 100 miles in diameter consequently a physician would naturally have to ride about 25 miles in each direction, all of which had to be performed on horseback, following the Indians trails.

What we called the sickly season commenced about the middle or last of July and ended or began to slack up about the middle of October. Dr. Colby would endeavor to attend every call, both far and near, and ride until the calls would become fewer and then he would succumb and have a run of bilious fever more or less severe, according to his previous exposure.

New Physician Comes

The summer of 1834 was noted for its high water in July, and the sickly season commenced earlier than usual and was unusually severe. He rode that year until the 15th of September, when he was taken sick. He was attending upon me at the time. I was quite low with the bilious fever.

A new physician had just arrived by the name of Smith, who was employed for me. and if Dr. Colby had not got better before I did I think Smith would have killed me.

The Fall of 1838 was very sickly, and I was staying in Dr. Colby's office; and I remember once he rode 110 miles in 24 hours and prescribed for 30 patients. The only sleep he got was while his horse was eating at the Indiana state line, and while a meal was being prepared for him at Defiance. He rode one horse 60 miles and another 50, crossing the Maumee and Auglaize rivers several times.

First Settlers 1821-24

The earliest settlement of the Maumee Valley, especially in the vicinity of Defiance, was from the year 1821 to 1824, during which time the most of the settlers who were here in 1831 came, and there was very little addition to their numbers until 1835 and

1836. There were several settlers on Bean Creek or Tiffin river, who came there about 1831 and 1832. There were a few settlers about Brunersburg before that, but farther up the creek.

The first settler was Capt. John **Partee's** father, who settled just above Lyman **Langdon's**, in 1823. At that time there were but two families living on the creek, John **Perkins**, at Brunersburg, and James **Partee** just above on the east side of the creek.

John **Perkins** was the oldest white pioneer in this and Williams counties. He came here in 1816 as a surveyor and surveyed a great portion of Williams county under a contract with James Watson **Riley**. I am not advised as to where he made his headquarters but think in Wayne's Old Fort.

Living in Wayne's Fort

My recollection is that Montgomery Evans moved to Defiance in the year of 1818 and lived in the Old Fort several years, and my impression is that Mrs. Evans told me that they boarded the surveyors while in town. While surveying the surveyors camped in the vicinity of their work but had to have better accommodations while making out their field notes and plats.

Erects Mill in 1828

The surveyors closed about 1821, and John **Perkins** remained here, bought the land where the Brunersburg mills were, and soon after erected a saw mill there. In 1828 he erected a grist mill with mostly wooden machinery, which was the only mill then within fifty miles.

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