

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

First Settlers on Maumee; Keel Boats and
Pirogues Transport Heavy Cargoes
on River; the Snook Family

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In my last I gave as well as I could the history of the first settlement on the Auglaize by the Shirleys and Hudsons and promised to give some sketches of the first settlers on the Maumee.

A few early settlers were here who had been attached to either Wayne's or Winchester's armies, and attracted by the riches of the country had wandered bark and were living here with the Indians.

John **Perkins** had been employed as early as 1817 in surveying, not as I before stated in Williams County, but in Henry County, and finally settled for a time at Camp No. 3, which is now in Richland Township. William **Preston** and Montgomery **Evans** at the same time were living in Wayne's old fort, having been scouts in Winchester's army.

From Miami County

A majority of those who first purchased land here were from Miami County, Ohio. The Shirleys and Hudsons were from there. Benjamin **Leavell**, one of the original proprietors of Defiance, lived in Piqua where the United States land office was located, and it is probable his influence had something to do with the settlement in the immediate neighborhood of Defiance by Miami County people.

Joshua **Hilton** and Jesse **Hilton** moved from Miami county in December, 1823. The former entered the land where Phillip **Smith** now lives and Jesse the land between that and the B. and O. depot. Joshua had six sons and one daughter. The daughter married and returned to the eastern part of the state. The sons were Brice, Horace, John, Ezra, Eben, Benjamin and Richard, all of whom are dead

except Brice Hilton, who is probably as well known in this county as any other man in it, and to whom I am indebted for many of the facts stated in these articles. When the Hiltons arrived here, there were but five families between here and Fort Wayne.

Quits White Hubby for Chief

A Frenchman by the name of **Blair** lived north of the Maumee where Stephen **Horsey** now lives, Thomas **Driver** near the **Davies** farm, Peter **Sonebar** near Delaware town; Sonebar's wife was a squaw, or part squaw, and afterwards left Sonebar and married Oeconoxee, a Tawa Indian chief.

Montgomery **Evans** lived a long while in the fort and moved from there to Camp No. 3 in Richland Township and from there to Delaware Township.

John **Hilton** built the first brick house for a dwelling in Williams County, or perhaps he and William **Seaman** built the first one, as they were both built in 1834.

An Energetic Widow

When the Hiltons moved to Defiance, they met George W. **Hill's** father, returning from looking at land on the Maumee which he purchased, but died before he got ready to move, but his widow, with her sons and daughters, Thomas J., John E., George W., Clarinda, Daniel F. James M. and Mary E., moved to Delaware Township in 1824.

She was a strong energetic woman, and very outspoken and sometimes rather rough in her language, a great worker, and her sons cleared up a large farm, which is still occupied by George W., and his three sons who have settled near him. He is the only survivor of his father's family and now, about 82 years old. When Hill moved to Delaware he says they were the eighth family in Delaware Township.

William **Snook** with his family came with Hill's family from Warren County and settled in Delaware Township near where the B. and O. railroad now crosses the Maumee River. He purchased the lands on both sides of the

river, but the climate and privations were too much for him and he was taken sick. The nearest physician at the time was Dr. **Covant** at Maumee City, for whom they sent a messenger, but before his arrival he was dead, and the estate was required to pay the moderate sum of \$50 for his visit.

Propelled by Poles

His sons with whom I was acquainted were George, Wilson H., John S., Peter and William N., and they did a great deal of piroguing on the rivers from the head of the rapids on the Maumee called Providence to Fort Wayne. All the goods received at Fort Wayne and Defiance in those days after the preponderance of white settlers were transported on keel boats and these pirogues, prior to that of pack horses.

The keel boats were built like ordinary canal boats, but narrower, with a runway on the outside of the deck and were generally manned by five men, two on each side to push and one to steer. They had long poles with a socket on the hewn end and pushed the boat by placing the end of the pole against the shoulder, starting at the bow and walking to the stern.

These boats could only be used where there was a pretty good stage of water. Sometimes they would go down from Fort Wayne when the water was high and work their way along up by the bushes. If there were no bushes, the men would go along the bank with a long line and tow it.

Occasionally a trip would be made at the June freshet, but generally pirogues had to be used in the summer, and it required three men at least to manage them, two in the bow to push and one to steer and when they came to a riffle, they would have to get out and put handspikes through the bow and stern and almost carry them over. A keel boat generally carried about twenty tons, some more but that size was deemed the best.

300 Bu. on Dugout Boat

Pirogues were made to carry from eight to ten tons of goods or from 250 to 300 bushels of grain. I have seen 300 bushels loaded and brought to Defiance on one made from a burr oak tree.

The Snook boys probably did as much piroguing as any other family on the river, but are all dead except W. N., who resides at Antwerp. John S. was killed in Mississippi near Vicksburg during the war. Pete, who studied law with the writer, went to Texas in early times and died near the City of Mexico. The daughter married Eli W. Sharp and moved also to Texas. Both of them, I think, are dead.

George Snook had a large scar on his cheek, which he got in a rough and tumble with a large black bear.

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