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THE BARK COVERED HOUSE,

OR

or, BACK IN THE WOODS AGAIN; BEING A GRAPHIC AND THRILLING DESCRIPTION OF REAL PIONEER LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS OF MICHIGAN

BY WILLIAM NOWLIN, ESQ.

1876

PREFATORY NOTE.

I little thought when I left my farm yards, horses and cattle in the care of other men, and began to write, that I should spend nearly all the winter of 1875 in writing; much less, that I should offer the product of such labor to the public, in the Centennial Year. But I have been urged to do so by many friends, both learned and unlearned, who have read the manuscript, or listened to parts of it. They think the work, although written by a farmer, should see the light and live for the information of others. One of these is Levi Bishop, of Detroit, who was long a personal friend of my father and his family, and has recently read the manuscript. He is now President of the "Wayne County Pioneer Society," and is widely known as a literary man, poet and author.

W.N.

KEY.

Sketch of the lives of John and Melinda Nowlin; of their journeying and settlement in Michigan.

Thrilling scenes and incidents of pioneer life, of hopes and fears, of ups and downs, of a life in the woods; continuing until the gloom and darkness of the forest were chased away, by the light of civilization, and the long battle for a home had been fought by the pioneer soldiers and they had gained a signal victory over nature herself.

Hope never forsook them in the darkest hours, but beckoned and cheered them on to the conquest of the wilderness. When that was consummated hope hovered and sat upon her pedestal of realization. For better days had come for the pioneers in the country they had found. Then was heard the joyful, enchanting "Harvest Home;" songs of "Peace and Plenty."

Crowned with honor, prosperity and happiness—for a time.

PREFACE.

I have delineated the scenes of this narrative, from time to time, as they took place. I thought at the time when they occurred that some of them were against me.

I do not place this volume before its readers that I may gain any applause: I have sought to say no more of myself than was necessary.

This is a labor of love, written to perpetuate the memory of some most noble lives, among whom were my father and mother who sought a home in the forests of Michigan at an early day. Being then quite young, I kept no record of dates or occurrences, and this book is mostly sketched from memory.

It is a history of my parents' struggles and triumphs in the wilderness. It ought to encourage all who read it, since not many begin life in a new country with fewer advantages than they.

It is said that "Truth is stranger than fiction." In this I have detailed the walks of ordinary life in the woods. In these pictures there is truth. All and more than I have said have been realized. My observations have been drawn from my own knowledge, in the main, but I am indebted to my sisters for some incidents related. Together, with our brother, we often sat around the clay hearth and listened to father's stories, words of encouragement and counsel. Together we shared and endured the fears, trials and hardships of a pioneer life.

This work cannot fail to be of deep interest to all persons of similar experience; and to their descendants for ages to come who can never too fully appreciate the blessings earned for them by their parents and others amid hardships, privations and sufferings (in a new country) the half of which can never be told.

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CHAPTER I.

TALKING OF MICHIGAN.

My father was born in 1793, and my mother in 1802, in Putnam County, State of New York. Their names were John and Melinda Nowlin. Mother's maiden name was Light.

My father owned a small farm of twenty-five acres, in the town of Kent, Putnam County, New York, about sixty miles from New York City. We had plenty of fruit, apples, pears, quinces and so forth, also a never failing spring. He bought another place about half a mile from that. It was very stony, and father worked very hard. I remember well his building stone wall.

But hard work would not do it. He could not pay for the second place. It involved him so that we were in danger of losing the place where we lived.

He said, it was impossible for a poor man to get along and support his family; that he never could get any land for his children there, and he would sell what he had and go to a better country, where land was cheap and where he could get land for them.

He talked much of the territory of Michigan. He went to one of the neighbors and borrowed a geography. I recollect very well some things that it stated. It was Morse's geography, and it said that the territory of Michigan was a very fertile country, that it was nearly surrounded by great lakes, and that wild grapes and other wild fruit grew in abundance.

Father then talked continually of Michigan. Mother was very much opposed to leaving her home. I was the eldest of five children, about ten or eleven years of age, when the word Michigan grated upon my ear. I am not able to give dates in full, but all of the incidents I relate are facts. Some of them occurred over forty years ago, and are given mostly from memory, without the aid of a diary. Nevertheless, most of them are now more vivid and plain to my mind than some things which transpired within the past year. I was very much opposed to going to Michigan, and did all that a boy of my age could do to prevent it. The thought of Indians, bears and wolves terrified me, and the thought of leaving my schoolmates and native place was terrible. My parents sent me to school when in New York, but I have not been to school a day since. My mother's health was very poor. Her physician feared that consumption of the lungs was already seated. Many of her friends said she would not live to get to Michigan if she started. She thought she could not, and said, that if she did, herself and family would be killed by the Indians, perish in the wilderness, or starve to death. The thought too, of leaving her friends and the members of the church, to which she was very much attached, was terribly afflicting. She made one request of father, which was that when she died he would take her back to New York, and lay her in the grave yard by her ancestors.

Father had made up his mind to go to Michigan, and nothing could change him. He sold his place in 1832, hired a house for the summer, then went down to York, as we called it, to get his outfit. Among his purchases were a rifle for himself and a shot gun for me. He said when we went to Michigan it should be mine. I admired his rifle very much. It was the first one I had ever seen. After trying his rifle a few days, shooting at a mark, he bade us good-by, and started "to view" in Michigan.

I think he was gone six or eight weeks, when he returned and told us of his adventures and the country. He said he had a very hard time going up Lake Erie. A terrible storm caused the old boat, "Shelvin Thompson" to heave, and its timber to creak in almost every joint. He thought it must go down. He went to his friend, Mr. George Purdy, (who is now an old resident of the town of Dearborn) said to him: "You had better get up; we are going down! The Captain says 'every man on deck and look out for himself.'" Mr. Purdy was too sick to get up. The good old steamer weathered the storm and landed safely at Detroit.

Father said that Michigan was a beautiful country, that the soil was as rich as a barn-yard, as level as a house floor, and no stones in the way. (I here state, that he did not go any farther west than where he bought his land.) He also said he had bought eighty acres of land, in the town of Dearborn, two and a half miles from a little village, and twelve miles from the city of Detroit. Said he would buy eighty acres more, east of it, after he moved in the spring, which would make it square, a quarter section. He said it was as near Detroit as he could get government land, and he thought Detroit would always be the best market in the country.

Father had a mother, three sisters, one brother and an uncle living in Unadilla Country N.Y. He wished very much to see them, and, as they were about one hundred and fifty miles on his way to Michigan, he concluded to spend the winter with them. Before he was ready to start he wrote to his uncle, Griffin Smith, to meet him, on a certain day, at Catskill, on the Hudson river. I cannot give the exact date, but remember that it was in the fall of 1833.

The neighbor, of whom we borrowed the old geography, wished very much to go West with us, but could not raise the means. When we started we passed by his place; he was lying dead in his house. Thus were our hearts, already sad, made sadder.

We traveled twenty-five miles in a wagon, which brought us to Poughkeepsie, on the Hudson river, then took a night boat for Catskill where uncle was to meet us the next morning. Before we reached Catskill, the captain said that he would not stop there. Father said he must. The captain said he would not stop for a hundred dollars as his boat was behind time. But he and father had a little private conversation, and the result was he did stop. The captain told his men to be careful of the things, and we were helped off in the best style possible. I do not know what changed the captain's mind, perhaps he was a Mason. Uncle met us, and our things were soon on his wagon. Now, our journey lay over a rough, hilly country, and I remember it was very cold. I think we passed over some of the smaller Catskill Mountains. My delicate mother, wrapt as best she could be, with my little sister (not then a year old) in her arms, also the other children, rode. Father and I walked some of the way, as the snow was quite deep on the mountains. He carried his rifle, and I my shot-gun on our shoulders. Our journey was a tedious one, for we got along very slowly; but we finally arrived at Unadilla. There we had many friends and passed a pleasant winter. I liked the country better than the one we left, and we all tried to get father to buy there, and give up the idea of going to Michigan. But a few years satisfied us that he knew the best.

Early in the spring of 1834 we left our friends weeping, for, as they expressed it, they thought we were going "out of the world." Here I will give some lines composed and presented to father and mother by father's sister, N. Covey, which will give her idea of our undertaking better than any words I can frame:

"Dear Brother and Sister, we must bid you adieu,
We hope that the Lord will deal kindly with you,
Protect and defend you, wherever you go,
If Christ is your friend, sure you need fear no foe.

"The distance doth seem great, to which you are bound,
But soon we must travel on far distant ground,

And if we prove faithful to God's grace and love,
If we ne'er meet before, we shall all meet above."

About twenty years later this aunt, her husband and nine children (they left one son) sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and grand-children visited us. Uncle had sold his nice farm in Unadilla and come to settle his very intelligent family in Michigan. He settled as near us as he could get government land sufficient for so large a family. With most of this numerous family near him, he is at this day a sprightly old man, respected (so far as I know) by all who know him, from Unionville to Bay City.

Now as I have digressed, I must go back and continue the story of our journey from Unadilla to Michigan. As soon as navigation opened, in the spring, we started again with uncle's team and wagon. In this manner we traveled about fifty miles which brought us to Utica. There we embarked on a canal boat and moved slowly night and day, to invade the forests of Michigan. Sometimes when we came to a lock father got off and walked a mile or two. On one of these occasions I accompanied him, and when we came to a favorable place, father signaled to the steersman, and he turned the boat up. Father jumped on to the side of the boat. I attempted to follow him, did not jump far enough, missed my hold and went down, by the side of the boat, into the water. However, father caught my hand and lifted me out. They said that if he had not caught me, I must have been crushed to death, as the boat struck the side the same minute. That, certainly, would have been the end of my journey to Michigan. When it was pleasant we spent part of the time on deck. One day mother left my little brother, then four years old, in care of my oldest sister, Rachel. He concluded to have a rock in an easy chair, rocked over and took a cold bath in the canal. Mother and I were in the cabin. When we heard the cry "Overboard!" we rushed on deck, and the first thing we saw was a man swimming with something ahead of him. It proved to be my brother, held by one strong arm of an English gentleman. He did not strangle much; some said the Englishman might have waded out, in that case he would not have strangled any, as he had on a full-cloth overcoat, which held him up until the Englishman got to him. Be that as it may, the Englishman was our ideal hero for many years, for by his bravery and skill, unparalleled by anything we had seen, he had saved our brother from a watery grave.

That brother is now the John Smith Nowlin, of Dearborn.

Nothing more of importance occurred while we were on the canal. When we arrived at Buffalo the steamer, "Michigan," then new, just ready for her second trip, lay at her wharf ready to start the next morning. Thinking we would get a better night's rest, at a public house, than on the steamer father sought one, but made a poor choice.

Father had four or five hundred dollars, which were mostly silver, he thought this would be more secure and unsuspected in mother's willow basket, which would be thought to contain only wearing apparel for the child. We had just got nicely installed and father gone to make preparations for our embarkation on the "Michigan," when the lady of the house came by mother and, as if to move it a little, lifted her basket. Then she said, "You must have plenty of money, your basket is very heavy."

When father came, and mother told him the liberty the lady had taken, he did not like it much, and I am sure I felt anything but easy.

But father called for a sleeping room with three beds, and we were shown up three flights of stairs, into a dark, dismal room, with no window, and but one door. Mother saw us children in bed, put the basket of silver between my little brother and me, and then went down. The time seemed long, but finally father and mother came up. I felt much safer then. Late in the evening a man, with a candle in one hand, came into the room, looked at each bed sufficiently to see who was in it. When he came to father's bed, which proved to be the last, as he went round, father asked him what he wanted there. He said he was looking for an umbrella. Father said he would give him umbrella, caught him by the sleeve of his coat; but he proved to be stronger than his coat for he fled leaving one sleeve of a nice broadcloth coat in father's hand. Father then put his knife over the door-latch. I began to breathe more freely, but there was no sleep for father or mother, and but little for me, that night.

Everything had been quiet about two hours when we heard steps, as of two or three, coming very quietly, in their stocking feet. Father rose, armed himself with a heavy chair and waited to receive them.

Mother heard the door-latch, and fearing that father would kill, or be killed, spoke, as if not wishing them to hear, and said: "John have the pistols ready," (it will be remembered that we had pistols in place of revolvers in those days) "and the moment they open the door shoot them." This stratagem worked; they retired as still as possible.

In about two or three hours more, they came again, and although father told mother to keep still, she said again: "Be ready now and blow them down the moment they burst open the door."

Away they went again, but came once more just before daylight, stiller if possible than ever; father was at his station, chair in hand, but mother was determined all should live, if possible, so she said "They are coming again, shoot the first one that enters!" &c., &c.

They found that we were awake and, do doubt, thought that they would meet with a little warmer reception than they wished. Father really had no weapons with him except the chair and knife. I said, the room had no window, consequently, it was as dark at daylight as at midnight. The only way we could tell when it was daylight was by the noise on the street.

When father went down, in the morning, he inquired for the landlord and the man that came into his room; but the landlord and the man with one sleeve were not to be found. Father complained to the landlady, of being disturbed, and showed her the coatsleeve. She said it must have been an old man, who usually slept in that room, looking for a bed.

We went immediately to our boat. As father was poor and wished to economize, he took steerage passage, as we had warm clothes and plenty of bedding, he thought this the best that he could afford. Our headquarters were on the lower deck. In a short time steam was up, and we bade farewell to Buffalo, where we had spent a sleepless night, and with about six-hundred passengers started on our course.

The elements seemed to be against us. A fearful storm arose; the captain thought it would be dangerous to proceed, and so put in below a little island opposite Cleveland, and tied up to a pier which ran out from the island. Here we lay for three weary days and nights, the storm continually raging.

Finally, the captain thought he must start out. He kept the boat as near the shore as he could with safety, and we moved slowly until we were near the head of the lake. Then the storm raged and the wind blew with increased fury. It seemed as if the "Prince of the power of the air" had let loose the wind upon us. The very air seemed freighted with woe. The sky above and the waters below were greatly agitated. It was a dark afternoon, the clouds looked black and angry and flew across the horizon apparently in a strife to get away from the dreadful calamity that seemed to be coming upon Lake Erie.

We were violently tempest-tossed. Many of the passengers despaired of getting through. Their lamentations were piteous and all had gloomy forebodings of impending ruin. The dark, blue, cold waves, pressed hard by the wind, rolled and tumbled our vessel frightfully, seeming to make our fears their sport. What a dismal, heart-rending scene! After all our efforts in trying to reach Michigan, now I expected we must be lost. Oh how vain the expectation of reaching our new place, in the woods! I thought we should never see it. It looked to me as though Lake Erie would terminate our journey.

It seemed as if we were being weighed in a great balance and that wavering and swaying up and down; balanced about equally between hope and fear, life and death.

[Illustration: "THE MICHIGAN."—AFTER LEAVING THE ISLAND IN THE SPRING OF 1834.]

No one could tell which way it would turn with us. I made up my mind, and promised if ever I reached terra-firma never to set foot on that lake again; and I have kept my word inviolate. I was miserably sick, as were nearly all the passengers. I tried to keep on my feet, as much as I could; sometimes I would take hold of the railing and gaze upon the wild terrific scene, or lean against whatever I could find, that was stationary, near mother and the rest of the family. Mother was calm, but I knew she had little hope that we would ever reach land. She said, her children were all with her and we should not be parted in death; that we should go together, and escape the dangers and tribulations of the wilderness.

I watched the movements of the boat as much as I could. It seemed as if the steamer could not withstand the furious powers that were upon her. The front part of the boat would seem to settle down—down—lower and lower if possible than it had been before. It looked to me, often, as though we were going to plunge headforemost—alive, boat and all into the deep. After a while the boat would straighten herself again and hope revive for a moment; then I thought that our staunch boat was nobly contending with the adverse winds and waves, for the lives of her numerous passengers. The hope of her being able to outride the storm was all the hope I had of ever reaching shore.

I saw the Captain on deck looking wishfully toward the land, while the white-caps broke fearfully on our deck. The passengers were in a terrible state of consternation. Some said we gained a little headway; others said we did not. The most awful terror marked nearly every face. Some wept, some prayed, some swore and a few looked calm and resigned. I was trying to read my fate in other faces when an English lady, who came on the canal boat with us, and who had remained in the cabin up to this, time, rushed on deck, wringing her hands and crying at the top of her voice, "We shall be lost! we shall be lost! oh! oh! oh! I have crossed the Atlantic Ocean three times, and it never commenced with this! We shall be lost! oh! oh! oh!"

One horse that stood on the bow of the boat died from the effects of the storm. Our clothes and bedding were all drenched, and to make our condition still more perilous, the boat was discovered to be on fire. This was kept as quiet as possible. I did not know that it was burning, until after it was extinguished; but I saw father, with others, carrying buckets of water. He said the boat had been on fire and they had put it out. The staunch boat resisted the elements; ploughed her way through and landed us safely at Detroit.

Some years after our landing at Detroit, I saw the steamboat "Michigan" and thought of the perilous time we had on her coming up Lake Erie. She was then an old boat, and was laid up. I thought of the many thousand hardy pioneers she had brought across the turbulent lake and landed safely on the shore of the territory whose name she bore.

But where, oh where "are the six hundred!" that came on her with us? Most of them have bid adieu to earth, and all its storms. The rest of them are now old and no doubt scattered throughout the United States. But time or distance cannot erase from their memory or mine the storm we shared together on Lake Erie.

CHAPTER II.

DISAGREEABLE MUSIC.

It was night, in the Spring of 1834, when we arrived at Detroit, and we made our way to the "United States Hotel" which stood near where the old post office was and where the "Mariner's Church" now stands, on Woodbridge street.

The next morning I was up early and went to view the city. I wished to know if it was really a city. If it looked like Utica or Buffalo.

I went up Jefferson Avenue; found some brick buildings, barber poles, wooden clocks, or large watches, big hats and boots, a brass ball, &c., &c.

I returned to the Hotel, satisfied that Detroit was actually a city, for the things I had seen were, in my mind, sufficient to make it one. After I assured myself that there was a city, so far from New York, I was quite contented and took my breakfast. Then, with our guns on our shoulders, father and I started to see our brand-new farm at Dearborn. First we went up Woodward Avenue to where the new City Hall now stands, it was then only a common, dotted by small wooden buildings.

Thence we took the Chicago road which brought us to Dearbornville. From there the timber had been cut for a road one mile south. On this road father did his first road work in Michigan and here afterwards I helped to move the logs out. The road-master, Mr. Smith, was not willing to allow full time, for my work; however I put in part time. Little did I think that here, one mile from Dearbornville, father would, afterwards, buy a farm, build a large brick house, and end his days, in peace and plenty.

From this point, one mile south of the little village, we were one mile from father's chosen eighty, but had to follow an Indian trail two miles, which led us to Mr. J. Pardee's. His place joined father's on the west. We crossed Pardee's place, eighty rods, which brought us to ours. I dug up some of the earth, found it black and rich, and sure enough no stones in the way. Late in the afternoon I started back to mother, to tell her that father had engaged a Mr. Thompson (who kept tavern in a log house, half a mile east of Dearbornville) and team, and would come after her in the morning. When I reached the Chicago road again, it seemed anything but inviting. I could just see a streak ahead four or five miles, with the trees standing thick and dark either side.

If ever a boy put in good time I did then. However, it was evening when I reached Detroit, and I had traveled more than twenty-six miles. Mother was very glad to see me, and listened with interest, to her boy's first story of Michigan. I told her that father was coming in the morning, as he had said; that Mr. Joseph Pardee said, we could stay with him while we were building. I told her I was glad we came, how nice the land was, what a fine country it would be in a few years, and, with other comforting words, said, if we lived, I would take her back in a few years, to visit her old home.

The next morning father and Mr. Thompson came, and we were soon all aboard the wagon. When we reached Mr. Pardee's his family seemed very much pleased to see us. He said: "Now we have 'Old Put' here, we'll have company."

Putnam county joined the county he came from, and he called father "Old
Put" because he came from Putnam county.

Father immediately commenced cutting logs for a house. In one week he had them ready, and men came from Dearbornville to help him raise them. He then cut black ash trees, peeled off the bark to roof his house, and after having passed two weeks under Mr. Pardee's hospitable roof, we moved into a house of our own, had a farm of our own and owed no one.

Father brought his axe from York State; it weighed seven pounds; he gave me a smaller one. He laid the trees right and left until we could see the sun from ten o'clock in the morning till between one and two in the afternoon, when it mostly disappeared back of Mr. Pardee's woods.

Father found it was necessary for him to have a team, so he went to Detroit and bought a yoke of oxen; also, at the same time, a cow. He paid eighty dollars for the oxen and twenty-five for the cow. These cattle were driven in from Ohio. The cow proved to be a great help toward the support of the family for a number of years. The oxen were the first owned in the south part of the town of Dearborn. They helped to clear the logs from the piece father had cut over, and we planted late corn, potatoes and garden stuff. The corn grew very high but didn't ear well. The land was indeed very rich, but shaded too much.

The next thing, after planting some seeds, was clearing a road through a black ash swale and flat lands on our west section line, running north one mile, which let us out to the point mentioned, one mile south of

Dearbornville. We blazed the section line trees over, cleared out the old logs and brush, then felled trees lengthwise towards each other, sometimes two together, to walk on over the water; we called it our log-way. We found the country was so very wet, at times, that it was impossible to go with oxen and sled, which were our only means of conveyance, summer or winter. When we could not go in this style we were obliged to carry all that it was necessary to have taken, on our shoulders, from Dearbornville.

We had many annoyances, and mosquitoes were not the least, but they did us some good. We had no fences to keep our cattle, and the mosquitoes drove the oxen and cow up to the smoke which we kept near the house in order to keep those little pests away. The cattle soon learned, as well as we, that smoke was a very powerful repellant of those little warriors. Many times, in walking those logs and going through the woods there would be a perfect cloud of mosquitoes around me. Sometimes I would run to get away from them, then stop and look behind me and there would be a great flock for two rods back (beside those that were around me) all coming toward me as fast as their wings could bring them, and seeming only satisfied when they got to me. But they were cannibals and wanted to eat me. All sang the same song in the same old tune. I was always glad when I got out of their company into our own little clearing.

[Illustration: THE BARK COVERED HOUSE—1834.]

But Mr. Pardee was a little more brave; he said it was foolish to notice such small things as mosquitoes. I have seen them light on his face and run in their bills, probe in until they reached the fountain of life, suck and gormandize until they got a full supply, then leisurely fly away with their veins and bodies full of the best and most benevolent blood, to live awhile, and die from the effects of indulging too freely and taking too much of the life of another. Thus at different times I saw him let them fill themselves and go away without his seeming to notice them; whether he always treated them thus well or not, I cannot say, but I do know they were the worst of pests. Myriads of them could be found any where in the woods, that would eagerly light on man or beast and fill themselves till four times their common size, if they could get a chance. The woods were literally alive with them. No one can tell the wearisome sleepless hours they caused us at night. I have lain listening and waiting for them to light on my face or hands, and then trying to slap them by guess in the dark, sometimes killing them, and sometimes they would fly away, to come again in a few minutes. I could hear them as they came singing back. Frequently when I awoke I found them as wakeful as ever; they had been feasting while I slept. I would find bunches and blotches on me, wherever they had had a chance to light, which caused a disagreeable, burning and smarting sensation.

Frequently some one of us would get up and make a smudge in the room to quiet them; we did it by making a little fire of small chips and dirt, or by burning some sugar on coals, but this would only keep them still for a short time. These vexatious, gory-minded, musical-winged, bold denizens of the shady forest, were more eager to hold their carniverous feasts at twilight or in the night than any other time. In cloudy weather they were very troublesome as all the first settlers know. We had them many years, until the country was cleared and the land ditched; then, with the forest, they nearly disappeared.

As I have said our oxen were the first in our part of the town. Mr. Pardee had no team. Father sold him half of our oxen. They used them alternately, each one two weeks, during the summer. For some reason, Mr. Pardee failed to pay the forty dollars and when winter came father had to take the oxen back and winter them. The winter was very open, and much pleasanter than any we had ever seen. The cattle lived on what we called "French-bogs" which grew all through the woods on the low land and were green all winter.

We found wild animals and game very numerous. Sometimes the deer came where father had cut down trees, and browsed the tops. Occasionally, in the morning, after a little snow, their tracks would be as thick as sheep-tracks in a yard, almost up to the house. The wolves also, were very common; we could often hear them at night, first at one point, then answers from another and another direction, until the woods rang with their unearthly yells.

One morning I saw a place by a log where a deer had lain, and noticed a large quantity of hair all around on the snow; then I found tracks where two wolves came from the west, jumped over the log, and caught the deer in his bed. He got away, but he must have had bare spots on his back.

One evening a Mr. Bruin called at our house and stood erect at our north window. The children thought him one of us, as father, mother and I were away, and they ran out to meet us, but discovered instead a large black bear. When they ran out, Mr. Bruin, a little less dignified, dropped on all fours, and walked leisurely off about ten rods; then raised again, jumped over a brush fence, and disappeared in the woods.

Next morning we looked for his tracks and, sure enough, there were the tracks of a large bear within four feet of the window. He had apparently stood and looked into the house.

[Illustration:]

The first Indian who troubled us was one by the name of John Williams. He was a large, powerful man, and certainly, very ugly. He used to pass our house and take our road to Dearbornville after fire-water, get a little drunk, and on his way back stop at John Blare's. Mr. Blare then lived at the end of our new road. Here the Indian would tell what great things he had done. One day when he stopped, Mrs. Blare and her brother-in-law, Asa, were there. He took a seat, took his knife from his belt, stuck it into the floor, then told Asa to pick it up and hand it to him; he repeated this action several times, and Asa obeyed him every time. He, seeing that the white man was afraid, said: "I have taken off the scalps of six damned Yankees with this knife and me take off one more."

When father heard this, with other things he had said, he thought he was the intended victim. We were all very much frightened. Whenever father was out mother was uneasy until his return, and he feared that the Indian, who always carried his rifle, might lay in ambush, and shoot him when he was at work.

One day he came along, as usual, from Dearbornville and passed our house. Father saw him, came in, took his rifle down from the hooks and told mother he believed he would shoot first. Mother would not hear a word to it and after living a year or two longer, in mortal fear of him, he died a natural death. We learned afterward that Joseph Pardee was the man he had intended to kill. He said, "Pardee had cut a bee-tree that belonged to Indian."

According to his previous calculation, on our arrival, father bought, in mother's name, eighty acres more, constituting the south-west quarter of section thirty-four, town two, south of range ten, east; bounded on the south by the south line of the town of Dearbon. A creek, we called the north branch of the River Ecorse, ran through it, going east. It was nearly parallel with, and forty-two rods from, the town line. When he entered it he took a duplicate; later his deed came, and it was signed by Andrew Jackson, a man whom father admired very much. Mother's deed came still later, signed by Martin Van Buren.

This land was very flat, and I thought, very beautiful. No waste land on it, all clay bottom, except about two acres, a sand ridge, resembling the side of a sugar loaf. This was near the centre of the place, and on it we finally built, as we found it very unpleasant living on clayey land in wet weather. This land was all heavy timbered—beech, hard maple, basswood, oak, hickory and some white-wood—on both sides of the creek; farther back, it was, mostly, ash and elm.

CHAPTER III.

HOW WE GOT OUR SWEET, AND THE HISTORY OF MY FIRST PIG.

We made troughs, tapped hard maples on each side of the creek; took our oxen, sled and two barrels (as the trees were scattered) to draw the sap to the place we had prepared for boiling it.