

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Part 3

History of Owen County: Story of the Civil War

by

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STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR.

When I was a small child, my mother would gather us children around her after her days work was done and tell us stories of the Civil War, the things that she remembered herself, and we never tired of hearing these stories. My grandfather Greenville Wiley who owned a farm at that time in Owens county about twenty miles from Owenton, and he sent his tobacco there as that was the nearest tobacco market, so did all the farmers in that vicinity.

I remember this story as she told us as if it was but yesterday, mother said that the hired men had taken the tobacco to Owenton to be sold and that grandfather rode horseback down there to see what the tobacco brought and to get the check for the tobacco.

At that time there was a band of men roaming over the country, that claimed to be soldiers, but in reality were Guerrillas, they did not belong to either army, but was robbing and stealing everything they could get. They wore masks, and we all know that regular soldiers would not have any occasion to do that. So that morning as grandfather was on his way to Owenton he met this crowd of men and one of them rode a white horse, they stopped him and asked him where he was going, and he told them that he was on his way to Owenton, as he had sent his tobacco crop down there to be sold. They also asked him when he was coming back, he told them that he hoped that he could get back sometime that afternoon, grandfather knew these men knew he had sent his tobacco to be sold and thought it was best to tell them the truth. They treated him very nicely, and he went on his way. So he reached his destination his tobacco was sold and he received the check for the same. He then started on his return trip home,

it was almost dark and before he got any distance night had overtaken him, it was a beautiful moonlight night and grandfather was almost certain that he would encounter that band of men again so every nerve was on the alert and he kept his eyes on the road ahead, so not to miss any sign of them, and suddenly just as he reached the top of a steep hill, he saw the white horse and rider and several other mounted men riding very fast toward him and he had a feeling that they had been waiting for him. Realizing that they saw him, he knew that he could not slow down if he did their suspicions would be aroused, so he rode on at a brisk gait. He had the check for his tobacco crop in his pocketbook in his hip pocket, and taking it out threw it down at the roots of some large trees just off the side of the road, they rode up to him and stopped and he did the same, they talked a few minutes about various things, and then one of the men asked him if he had the money for his tobacco. He told them that he did not, as it was late when the tobacco was weighed, and that he would have to make a trip down to Owanton the next day for the money, which often they had to do, unless they staid all night. With that they told him to get down off his horse which he did and they searched him taking off all his clothes even his socks, but of course they did not find the money or check. They said they were sorry that they had to do this, but the army needed money and supplies so badly that they had to stoop to these methods which was very embarrassing for them.

Then they mounted their horses and allowed him to put his clothes back on and told him if he met any looking for them to tell them that he had not seen anything of them. He lost no time in mounting his horse

and rode straight on toward home, as he knew that they would be watching him to see if he was doing anything that might cause them to believe that he did not tell the truth about his check. He had not gone very far when he met a band of soldiers riding at break neck speed, they halted and asked him if he had seen anything of this band, he told them they were just about two miles ahead of them, they went on as quickly as they could and captured the whole bunch of them and took them on to Owenton, and placed them in jail. Grandfather, then turned his horse around and rode back to the trees got his pocketbook and lost no time in taking a short route through fields to reach home as he knew that grandmother would be worrying about him, as they never knew in those times what would happen. But he reached home in safety, those men were tried and sent from Owenton to some prison, I don't remember where, and remained until after the war, and grandfather said that one of those men was a near neighbor of his, and lived there after the war until his death. But grandfather was always just a little prejudice against him for the things that happened that night, but the man never knew that grandfather really knew that he was in that crowd of Guerrillas.

(This story is absolutely true, and was told by Miss Elizabeth Hedrick's mother and Greenville Wiley, was her grandfather.)