


Christmas Eve  
at Hearts Falls



By  
CARL R. BOGARDUS, M. D.



Christmas Eve  
at Hearts Falls



By  
CARL R. BOGARDUS, M. D.

CHRISTMAS EVE  
AT HEARTS FALLS



By  
CARL R. BOGARDUS, M. D.

PUBLISHED BY  
THE MUSCATATUCK PRESS  
AUSTIN, SCOTT COUNTY, INDIANA

CHRISTMAS, 1956

May your Christmas  
be merry and your  
New Year filled  
with happiness.

Carl & Jeannette Bogardus  
and Children

## Christmas Eve at Hearts Falls

**D**ECEMBER 24th, 1810, had been a beautiful, clear, and unseasonably warm day on the Ohio River<sup>1</sup>. The precipitous bluffs and the heavily wooded bottoms bordering the river were still covered with a mantle of light snow, which had fallen the day before. Against the brilliant whiteness of the snow the naked black trees stood out in vivid contrast. Truly it was a starkly uninteresting landscape for the two-man crew of the flatboat *Essex*<sup>2</sup> to behold. Indeed they gave their scenic surroundings scarcely a glance for their undivided attention was given to the difficult task of navigating their heavily-laden, ungainly craft as it drifted free with the swift current of the river.

Davis Ball<sup>3</sup> and his son, Abner<sup>4</sup>, were twenty days out of their home port of Redstone<sup>5</sup>, Pennsylvania, which was sixty miles up the Monongahela River above Pittsburgh. Their flatboat was loaded with pork products—hams, bacon, lard and salt pork—from their own farm on Redstone Creek. Their destination was New Orleans. There they planned to sell their cargo, and the *Essex*, too, which would be dismantled and the lumber sold. They would buy horses and return overland by way of historic Natchez Trace, braving the notorious land pirates of that pioneer thoroughfare, to Nashville. From there they would travel through Tennessee and Virginia to their home on the Monongahela, which they hoped to reach in the early spring. With the proceeds of this trading expedition they planned to emigrate to Ohio with a colony of fellow New Jerseyans.

Davis Ball had with him, and constantly referred to, his Sixth Edition of Zadok Cramer's *Navigator*, that riverman's Bible, without which no flatboater could ever hope to build a boat or descend the river safely<sup>6</sup>.

The *Essex* had passed the mouth of Indian Kentucky Creek<sup>7</sup>, which entered the river from the north; and was now drifting past a scattered collection of cabins on a terrace above the Indiana Territory bank of the river. This was the new village of Wakefield<sup>8</sup>. The Balls noted that there was an Indian birch-bark canoe and two pirogues<sup>9</sup> drawn up on the shore, and a

small flatboat was tied up for the night at the landing. Blue smoke issued invitingly from the chimneys of the cabins, but the crew of the *Essex* had no business ashore. They had discovered in the past that putting up for the night at settlements sometimes meant trouble, so they preferred to spend their nights as far from human habitation as possible.

Accordingly they hesitated not, but floated silently on with the current, staying well out in the channel in order to avoid sandbars, rocks and snags, which could be disastrous to the not-too-substantial planking of the flatboat's bottom and sides. As they cruised on they soon observed looming up into the cloudless sky of the late winter afternoon a queer, sharp-pointed hill which rose steeply from the water's edge, and on the north side of which seemed to be a valley. As they drew closer they saw that it was tapered at each end, and rose in the center to a cliff-crowned height of four hundred feet above the river. As they gazed at this geological oddity in open-mouthed wonderment Davis Ball said, "Son, yonder hill surely must be the Backbone of the Devil<sup>10</sup> which I have often heard about. We shall not tarry here!" The buckskin-clad youth was inclined to agree with his father. Soon the hill with the sinister name was well astern.

The sun, which had hung low over the Kentucky hills to the south all day, was now dead ahead of them as they were cruising in a southwesterly direction. The great orange-red ball seemed to hang motionless in the brilliantly rose-hued sky over a hill with an angular brow above the river, which Davis told Abner resembled the handle of a plow<sup>11</sup>. The sun's reflection formed a shimmering golden pathway over the rippled surface of the clear, emerald-green waters of the Ohio. One end of this dancing path of gold began at the flatboat and the other seemed to rest on the tree-bordered shore directly ahead of them. Davis, manning the great steering rudder from the roof of the cabin, called down to Abner, who was pulling on one of the sweeps, or huge oars, projecting from the sides of the boat, "Boy, I take that as an omen of good luck—we'll spend this night on the shore straight ahead of us." No sooner had he spoken than the sun plunged down behind the queer-shaped bluff ahead of them. The western heavens still glowed with a fiery hue, which im-

perceptibly shaded into the clear blue over head. The leafless trees on the crest of the bluff stood out in sharp silhouette—dead black against the flaming sky. High overhead honked an enormous flock of wild geese belatedly winging their way to their winter home far to the south.

Davis and Abner knew from past experience just what must be done in order to land the clumsy craft. They laboriously rowed her into shore under the far-reaching bare white arms of a huge sycamore tree growing at the water's edge. As the hull of the boat ground to a stop on the pebbly beach Abner leaped ashore from the bow with a hempen line, which he quickly warped around a nearby small willow. The stern of the *Essex* was allowed to swing around with the current until it too touched the bottom, then Davis jumped to the shore and secured the stern line to a handy cottonwood tree. Abner then climbed back on board and ran out a long oak plank from the gunwale to the beach and the landing was complete.

Ordinarily they remained on board the *Essex* when they tied up for the night—cooking over the fireplace in the cabin and sleeping in the bunks—but as soon as things were shipshape Davis remarked to Abner, "This has been an unusually beautiful day for December, and the evening is not too cold. What say you we camp on shore tonight?" Of course Abner was eager to do anything which smacked in the least of adventure, so he immediately agreed. Soon he had a crackling fire going from the dry driftwood he had gathered from along the shore. Davis went on board the boat and brought out one of the smoked hams from the cargo in the hold. Before long thick sizzling slices were frying in their own savory grease in a big three-legged, cast-iron, spider-skillet. A large hoe cake was baking on a hickory board before the coals. On the ground lay a pile of fresh eggs were awaiting their turn for the skillet. They had been purchased the day before at Col. Robert Johnson's trading post at Great Landing<sup>12</sup>, about sixty miles upstream on the Kentucky shore.

Abner was squatting on his haunches before the fire gazing with enraptured anticipation at the mouth-watering victuals his father was preparing. Quite casually his eyes happened to rise a fraction of an inch and came to rest upon a pair of beaded

mocassins on the other side of the fire, and, rising quickly, took in a tall, copper-skinned figure wrapped in a buffalo robe, with a faded eagle feather thrust at an angle in his long, black hair. Abner gasped and blurted out, "Pa, look!" Davis glanced up from his culinary efforts and the instant his keen eyes observed the situation he automatically reached for his trusty Kentucky rifle, which he always had in readiness. But the Indian only smiled broadly and held up his right hand, palm out, in the universal Indian sign of friendship. Davis immediately put down his rifle, arose and gave the same sign in return. The big Indian then walked around the fire and shook hands, first with the older man, then with the younger, and said, "I speak the white man's tongue. I come in peace. You also come in peace. We will be friends. My camp is up the river. I saw your fire."

Davis answered, "I welcome you to my campfire. Will you sit and eat with us? We will consider it an honor." Then turning to Abner he said, "Son, go aboard the *Essex* and bring a plate for our guest."

The three men sat cross-legged around the fire and ate their fill. As they were eating the Indian told them that he was a member of the Delaware tribe, which lived at that time in central Indiana. To the white man he was known as Old Ox<sup>13</sup>, and he was chief of a band of his people who lived in a village on the banks of the Muscatatuck River<sup>14</sup> two days travel to the northwest. He explained that he was growing old and before he journeyed to the Happy Hunting Ground he wished to tell and show his son and heir, Tow Head, all he knew of the country in which they lived. He said that he had been to this place on the Ohio River many times since the distant day when the Delaware and the white man were enemies<sup>15</sup> and he intimately knew every foot of it.

The meal being finished and the cooking utensils being cleaned up and stowed in their proper places on board the *Essex*, Davis and Abner gave tobacco to Old Ox for his stone pipe, and they filled up their own cob pipes. Then the three sat down around the fire for a pow-wow.

Old Ox related to the very attentive Balls the epic story of the migration of his people, the Lenni Lenape, from the northwest, untold centuries ago, to the Atlantic Coast, where they

lived in peace for countless moons, until they were again driven back westward by their ancient enemies, the cruel and ferocious Iroquois. He told them how the Ohio River received its name, that the English called it Ohio from the Seneca O-y-o, which meant "beautiful river", and how the French called it LaBelle Riviere, which meant the same thing.

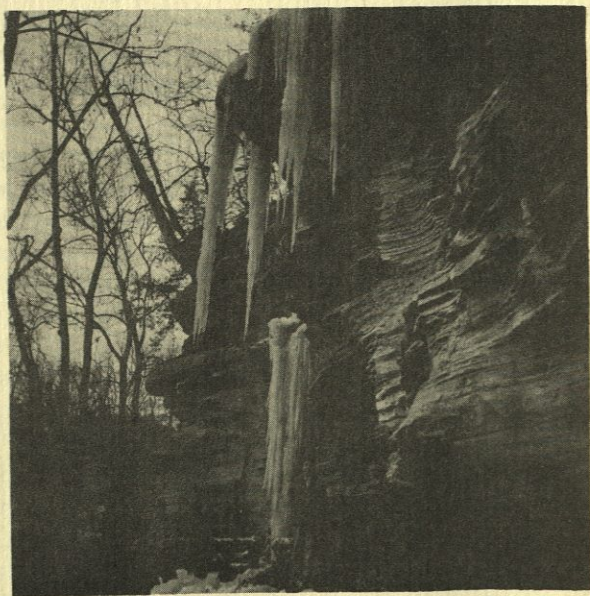
Old Ox then told them that he knew the location of the cave, on the stream which the whites called Silver Creek<sup>16</sup>, full of silver, so long sought by greedy white men.

He next told them that before the white man, the first Spanish and French, came from across the big Water, the country between the Ohio, the Great Lakes, the Father of Waters and the mountains to the east, was peopled by many tribes of a people of his race called Akans<sup>17</sup>. Their ancestors had migrated there from the far southwest and were related to the highly-civilized Aztecs of Mexico, so cruelly mistreated by the Spanish. These now-vanished people had lived there for more moons than there were leaves in the summer on the great sycamore under which they sat. They were peace-loving tillers of the soil, hunters and traders. He told how they obtained copper from the Great Lakes, pipestone from Minnesota, mica from the Carolinas, flint from Ohio and obsidian from the snowy mountains far toward the setting sun.

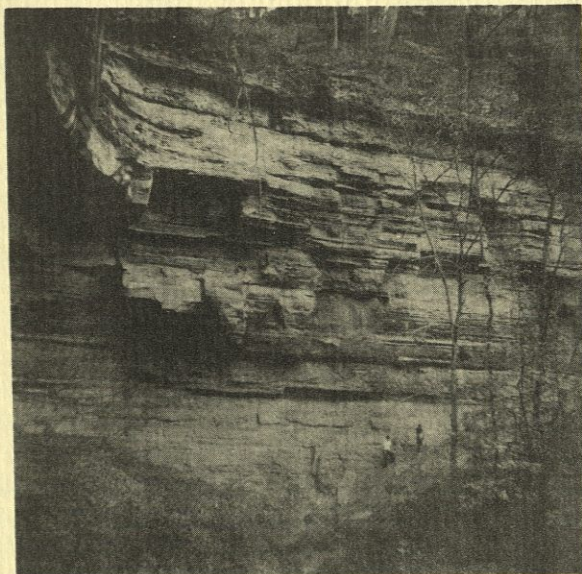
He explained how these people built the many mounds, still to be seen today throughout the midwest and south, for purposes of religious worship and for defense against their enemies. Finally he told them how the peaceable Akans were eventually warred upon by the fierce and predatory Iroquois, from the northeast, and how they built their hilltop fortresses<sup>18</sup> for places of refuge, and bluff top signal and watch towers<sup>19</sup> along the Ohio River to give advance warning of the approach of their implacable enemies. He told how the Iroquois finally either exterminated or drove out every living Akan from their country, leaving only an empty land where formerly many thousands had lived; and how later these same Iroquois drove into this empty land from the east the Delawares, the Shawnees, the Miamis, and many others; who then fought back at the whites when they, in turn, sought to drive them out and take their land, but all to no avail.



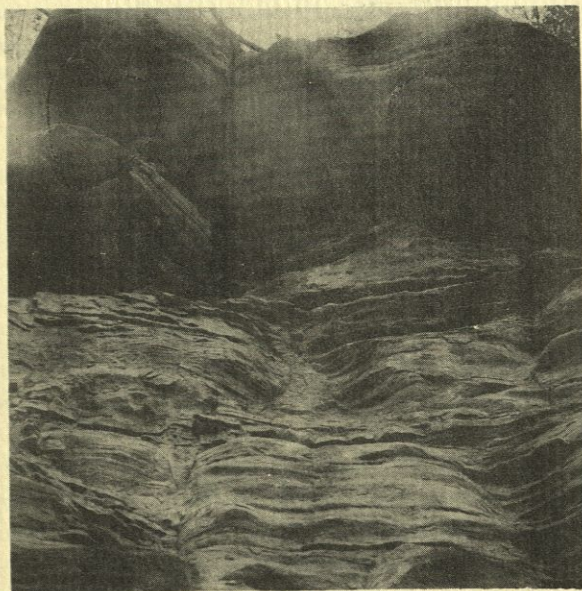
Hearts Falls, Jefferson County, Indiana, December, 1955.



The author, December, 1955. The hearts are carved under the overhanging ledge around to the right out of the picture. The falls are out of sight in the left distance.



Bob and Nancy Bogardus under the falls, November, 1956. The stream drops over the brink in the upper left.



The hearts, November, 1956, retouched in order to better show the outline of the hearts, which because of their position under the ledge, are difficult to photograph.

Old Ox answered as best he could the many questions fired at him by the Balls, father and son, displaying a remarkable knowledge of Indian history, life and lore. Finally he said, "The hour grows late. My son, Tow Head, will wonder why I have not returned to our fire. But before I go I will tell you the story of Hearts Falls as it was told to me by the Shawnees. The little stream near which you are now camping drops over a high ledge only an arrow's flight from here. Listen carefully and you can hear it."

"It happened many, many moons ago," he continued, "when the peace-loving people, the Akans, whom I have told you about, lived along the waters of the beautiful river. The various tribes traded with each other, and with distant tribes. They hunted in the forest and fished in the streams, while the squaws raised corn, tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, squash, pumpkins and little Indians. A tribe of these people dwelled in the level land where we are now camping. The chief of this tribe, Cingwia, which means, Thunder, had among the rest of his children, a daughter, Apilita, the Sandpiper, who was noted far and wide for her beauty, grace and industriousness. I give you these names as they were told me by the Shawnees. One of the young bucks, Titipele, the Little Eagle, by name, had been in love with her from the time when they as children swam in the Ohio and roamed together through the forest.

"In due course, having reached maturity, they decided the time had come for them to be married according to the tribal custom. Titipele approached the lodge of Cingwia and requested an audience with the chief. Upon being admitted he told Cingwia that he had many skins and other articles of value with which he wished to buy the hand of the eldest daughter, Apilita.

"Cingwia thanked him for his offer and told him that he was sorry but the hand of Apilita was promised to Totolasia, the Cricket, who was chief of a prosperous tribe of their people who lived a day's canoe journey up the river at the place where the river from the hunting grounds to the south, the Kentucky, flows into the Ohio. Cingwia explained that he wished to form a close alliance with the tribe of Totolasia and this would be the only way to bring it about. The two tribes would celebrate the marriage at the time of the maize harvest when the moon would be at its fullest.

"Saying nothing more Titipele abruptly left the lodge of Cingwia and searched out Apilita, who was working in her mother's garden. Upon hearing the news she was heartbroken and immediately went to her father and tearfully begged him to reconsider his decision. She had always loved Titipele, and knew Totolasia not at all. She avowed she would not marry him. Her father was adamant and sternly informed her that his decision was final and that her blood would be mingled with that of Totolasia at the time of the rapidly approaching Harvest Moon.

"That night she met Titipele at their usual meeting place on the sandy beach of the river, and by the light of the half moon high overhead, swore to each other that they would never be parted. They remained there on the shore until the moon was dropping down into the west, making the most of their last few hours together. Then they silently returned to their respective lodges.

"Early next morning, according to plan, they met at the cliff above the falls at the head of the little stream. There Titipele with his stone ax and flint hunting knife carved two hearts in the undersurface of an overhanging ledge. By the time the sun was at its highest he had finished his task. Then, hand in hand, they slowly made their way around to the brink of the falls, and stood upon the very edge for a few moments. Then, clasped in one last embrace, they leaped over together and were crushed to death on the jagged rocks far below<sup>20</sup>.

"Ever after this place has been known to the Indians as the Falls of the Carven Hearts. In my day we have always called it the Falls of the Hotehali, which in the Shawnee tongue means Hearts Falls."

When he had finished his recital of the legend of Hearts Falls Old Ox rose from his place before the now-dying fire and told the Balls that his bones had grown old and stiff from too many seasons, but that he would send his son, Tow Head, to them in the morning and he would guide them up to the falls in order that they could see for themselves that the story he told them was true. Then, with a "Sleep well, brothers", he silently disappeared into the blackness. Abner built up the dying fire into a roaring, crackling bonfire; father and son wrapped themselves in their blankets underneath the huge sycamore and were soon fast asleep.



Early the next morning, just as the sun was peeping over the horizon, a husky young brave approached the camp and introduced himself as Tow Head. Davis and Abner noticed that his hair was as straight and black as any other Indian's, and asked him why he was so-called. He smiled and said the white men up on the Muscatatuck River called him that, but he knew not why. He added that it could have been for the same reason that a white man he once knew, almost seven feet tall, was called Shorty by his friends.

While Davis prepared breakfast Tow Head took Abner up on top of the falls. As they stood on the ledge at the same spot Apilita and Titipele had stood the little stream beside them plunged merrily over the brink and splashed on the mossy rocks far beneath them. From where they stood they could trace its foaming course through the rock-strewn canyon as it raced to mingle its puny waters with those of the mighty Ohio, which was in plain view. Spiralling up through the bare trees at the river's edge rose a column of blue smoke, which seemed to beckon to them to return. As they made their way along the cliff between the falls and the river Tow Head pointed out to Abner the two deeply-carved hearts in the living limestone, just as Titipele had left them on that fateful day so long ago. They arrived back at the camp just in time for the bountiful breakfast prepared by the white boy's father.

The meal being finished Tow Head bid the Balls farewell and returned to the camp of Old Ox. Then Davis and Abner cast off the lines which moored their craft to the shore and were again New Orleans bound. Looking back as they rounded Plow Handle Point they observed their two new-found friends standing on the shore behind them. They saluted them with upraised right hands, which parting gesture was returned by the two Delawares. Very shortly they disappeared from view and the *Essex* was cruising south on an empty river.

Thus they spent Christmas Day.

The End.

### FOOTNOTES

1. The first white man to descend the Ohio River was the great French explorer, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle (1643-1687). It was in the winter of 1669-1670 that he, with a party of French soldiers and Iroquois Indian guides, left Canada, crossed Lake Erie, and made their way to the head-waters of the Allegheny River in present-day New York state. They then paddled down the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers to the Falls of the Ohio (present day Louisville). There La Salle was deserted by his Indian guides, and the Frenchmen returned overland to Canada by way of the present state of Indiana.
2. The *Essex* was named for Essex County, New Jersey, the home of the Ball family. Davis Ball's great grandfather, Edward Ball (1643-1724) had been one of the founders of Newark, Essex County, New Jersey, in 1664.
3. Davis Ball, the author's great great great grandfather, was born in Essex County in 1758, and served with New Jersey troops during the Revolution. He married Mary Hatfield. In 1785 he emigrated with his family to Redstone Old Fort on the Monongahela River in southwestern Pennsylvania. Later they emigrated again with a colony of New Jerseyans down the rivers by flatboat to the mouth of the Big Miami River. They poled and cordelled their boats up that stream to a site a few miles above present-day Hamilton, Butler County, Ohio, which they called Bloomfield. Later the name of the town was changed to Trenton. Davis operated a ferry called Ball's Ferry, and as he grew older the operation of the ferry was taken over by his son, Abner Ball. One winter day in 1819 while the Miami was in flood stage Abner went down to the mouth of the river with a party as pilot and boatman. In his absence his father attempted to set a group of people across the swollen and swift river. The ferry capsized in midstream and Davis Ball, with six others, was drowned.
4. Abner Ball (1785-1846), son of Davis Ball, was born in New Jersey and made the trip to Pennsylvania as an infant. He married in Butler County, Ohio, in 1809, Rhoda Martin (the first of seven Rhodas in the family). He entered government land in Fayette County, Indiana, in 1813, and following the tragic death of his father, moved there to live and spend the balance of his days.
5. Redstone was first called Redstone Old Fort because of an old Indian fort which stood on the bank of the Monongahela at the mouth of Redstone Creek. Today it is called Brownsville. Earlier flatboats were built there and later many fine steamboats were built there. In May, 1782, Jacob Yoder (1758-1832) went from Redstone to New Orleans on the first flatboat to descend the rivers and landed at New Orleans with a cargo of produce. He is buried on his farm in Spencer County, Kentucky, where an iron tablet commemorates his bid to fame as the first flatboater.
6. This little pocket-sized book, published at Pittsburgh in 1808, which represented the best dollar any riverman ever spent, had as was usual in those days, a long title, as follows: "The NAVIGATOR: Containing Directions for Navigating the Monongahela, Allegheny, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers; with an ample Account of those Much Admired Waters, from the Head of the Former to the Mouth of the Latter; and a Concise Description of their Towns, Villages, Harbours, Settlements, Etc., with Accurate Maps of the Ohio and

- Mississippi. Many editions of this book were published, of which the author has five in his library.
7. Indian Kentucky Creek, a good fishing stream, enters the Ohio at Brooksbury, Jefferson County, Indiana. It was originally called Indian Kentucky River, as contrasted to the Kentucky River, which flowed into the Ohio from the South. During the earliest days the northern bank of the Ohio River was called the Indian Shore and the southern bank the Virginia Shore.
  8. Wakefield was founded in 1810 by John Paul (1758-1830), a Revolutionary War soldier who served under Gen. George Rogers Clark (1752-1818) during the conquest of the Northwest. In 1812 the name of the village was changed to Madison. It was destined to become a very important river town.
  9. The name pirogue, borrowed from the French, was applied to a canoe hewed out of a solid tree trunk, as contrasted to the birch-bark canoe of the north.
  10. This unusual formation, said by geologists to have been formed by Clifty Creek, which once flowed between it and the bluff, is today known to most people as the Devil's Backbone, and by some more squeamish sisters it is called Lost Hill!
  11. This bluff, called by many generations of students at Hanover College (founded in 1827), Plowhandle Point, is a prominent part of the breathtaking view down the river valley from that institution's campus atop Hanover Hill.
  12. Col. Robert Johnson (1745-1815) was one of Kentucky's pioneers, having emigrated there in 1779, and settled at Great Crossing, Scott County. His son, Col. Richard M. Johnson (1780-1850), reputedly killed the Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, at the Battle of the Thames, Canada, during the War of 1812, and was Vice-President of the United States. Robert Johnson, about 1800, bought the land where Warsaw, Kentucky, now stands and cut a road through the forests from Scott County to the river (In Gallatin County this road is still called the Johnson Road). He established on the river a trading post and tavern for the benefit of river travelers, which he called Great Landing. In 1815 he laid out a town there which he called Fredericksburg in honor of a friend, Adolphus Frederick, who operated a boat yard there. In 1831, when a post office was established there, the name of the town was changed to Warsaw, by Archibald Beall, because there was another Fredericksburg in Kentucky.
  13. The village of Old Ox was located on the south bank of the South Fork of the Muscatatuck River. On or near the boundary line between Scott and Washington Counties. He and his tribesmen hunted and fished along a stream in present-day Scott County, Indiana, named after him, Big Ox Creek. A smaller fork is called Little Ox Creek. Both head up in the Knobs of southern Scott County. Old Ox died in 1811, and was succeeded by his son, Tow Head.
  14. In pronouncing the name of this river be sure to put the accent on the "Scat". This name is of Delaware Indian origin, from Mosch-ach-hit-tuk, meaning Clear River. It is a tributary of the East Fork of the White River, which in turn joins the West Fork and flows into the Wabash River.

15. The Delawares were compelled to migrate westward from the Atlantic coast by two irresistible forces—their bitter enemies, the Iroquois, and the encroachment of white settlers. In 1724 they were in western Pennsylvania. By 1751 white pressure had forced them into Ohio, and by 1770 they were in Indiana, where they were accepted by the Miamis. During the French and Indian War they fought on the side of the French and in the Revolution they sympathized with the British. During the Indian Wars they fought with their chief, Buck-hongahelas, under the greatest of all American Indians, Little Turtle (1751-1812), leader of the Miamis, and were with him at the time of their decisive defeat in 1794 by Gen. Anthony Wayne (1745-1796) at Fallen Timbers, Ohio. After the Treaty of Greenville, Ohio, in 1795, the Delawares no longer resisted the whites. In 1835 they were removed west of the Mississippi River, and today do not exist as a tribe.
16. There is an interesting legend in connection with this. It tells of a pioneer white settler in Clark County, Indiana, who befriended a starving Indian one winter, who, in order to show his appreciation, blindfolded the pioneer and led him by devious ways to the cave of silver and allowed him to take away as much as he could carry. The stream where the cave was supposedly located is still known as Silver Creek.
17. The story of these now-vanished people is told by Col. Lucien Beckner, of Louisville, in his very interesting and informative booklet, published in 1955, "The Moundbuilders", as a reprint from the Filson Club History Quarterly.
18. One of these prehistoric fortresses was on a bluff top overlooking the Ohio River at the mouth of Fourteen Mile Creek, in Clark County, Indiana. Another was on a high point of land at a spot in Jefferson County, Indiana, where Graham Creek and Big Creek come together to form the South Fork of the Muscatatuck River, on the lower waters of which Old Ox lived.
19. These signal towers were so situated that each could be seen from the next ones above and below. Though there may have been others, signal towers have been located at Rising Sun, Indiana; near Gunpowder Creek, Kentucky; two miles south of Patriot, Indiana; the North, or Gridley, Hill, two miles below Warsaw, Kentucky; below Log Lick Creek, Indiana; opposite Carrollton, Kentucky; and above Milton, Kentucky.
20. When Thomas B. Reed learned of the legend of Hearts Falls he composed a lengthy poem, which was published in the *Madison Courier*. In this connection we quote from the beginning:

"Tradition now essays to tell  
 In mournful tones a tale of grief.  
 How that the daughter of a chief  
 Was loved by one she loved as well,  
 But son of an ignoble sire  
 Might not to royal blood aspire . . ."

Reed's poem went on to tell the entire story, and then concluded in the following manner:

"And on the dreadful precipice  
 They clasped, by mortal eye unseen,  
 Each other in one long embrace,

And with a last and lingering kiss,  
Still gazing in each other's face,  
They leaned above the deep ravine  
With neither voice nor wail or woe,  
They plunged a hundred feet below;  
And found upon the moss beneath  
Their bridal couch and couch of death."