

LOOKING BACKWARD THROUGH ONE HUNDRED YEARS:

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF JAMES B. IRELAND

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IN THE SPRING of 1898, while the government of the United States was considering a declaration of war against Spain, the *Hancock Clarion*, a Hawesville, Kentucky, newspaper, was publishing the personal recollections of James B. Ireland. The remarkable memory of this man extended over a period which had seen the United States involved in three earlier wars.¹

On June 4, 1897, Ireland had celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. At least seven hundred of his friends and relatives assembled at the Sandy Creek Union Church in Hancock County to honor him on that occasion.² He had arrived in a farm wagon, into which he had climbed without assistance.

When, in his one hundred first year, he dictated his memoir, Ireland's mind was still vigorous. His only complaint was failing eyesight which prevented him from reading history as had been his custom.

Ireland's love of history is reflected in his recollections. He

¹James B. Ireland's recollections were dictated to his son, Thomas D. Ireland, and appeared in the *Hancock Clarion* in a series of nine installments, beginning on March 12, 1898. Mrs. R. Perry Davis, of Warsaw, Kentucky, a great-granddaughter of James B. Ireland, has preserved these articles together with numerous other newspaper clippings and letters concerning her ancestor and his family. This material is presented here with her permission and will be cited hereinafter as the Davis Collection. The spelling and punctuation have in most cases been left unchanged.

On January 28, 1958, the Ireland recollections were presented in the form of a paper read to the Christopher Gist Historical Society, Covington, Kentucky, by Mrs. Thomas A. Weldon.

²Louisville *Courier-Journal*, June 5, 1897.

preserved in his mind and recorded for posterity answers to many of the questions which a historian, in an interview, would have asked.

Of Scotch-Irish ancestry, James Beatty Ireland was born five miles east of Georgetown, Kentucky, on June 4, 1797. His first recollections, however, were of a later home of his parents sixteen miles north of Georgetown.³

John Ireland, paternal grandfather of James B. Ireland, was born in Ulster, in the County Antrim, in 1698. He married Margaret Ager, and their six children, Samuel, Jane, Mary, Rachel, John, and Isabel were born between the years 1730 and 1755. When their son John arrived in 1752 the Irelands were living in the County Down. All of the children came eventually to America.

John Ireland, the younger, landed at Philadelphia in November, 1774. During the Revolution he served in a Pennsylvania regiment. In 1790 he moved to that part of Woodford County, Virginia, which later became Scott County, Kentucky. His first wife died after bearing him eight children, William, John, Sallie, Samuel, Alexander, Andrew, Rebecca, and Rachel. Ireland then married Ann Montgomery, and James Beatty Ireland was the first child of this marriage. He was followed by seven other children, Nancy, Mary Ann, Richard, Thomas, Peter, Martin, and Jane.⁴

On April 25, 1822, James Beatty Ireland was married to Sarah Lancaster. In the spring of the following year they moved to an uncleared tract of land in Gallatin County, Kentucky. This farm, which Ireland had purchased, lay four miles east of the town of Warsaw, which then was called Fredericksburg in honor of Adolphus Frederick, one of its first settlers. It was at this location that their eight children, Elizabeth, John, Ann, Reuben, William, Thomas, James, and Sarah were born.⁵

³Newspaper clippings, Davis Collection.

⁴Emra H. Ireland to Mrs. R. W. Brown, November 5, 1910; Luther R. Kelker, Custodian of the Public Records, Pennsylvania State Library, to Mrs. R. W. Brown, November 11, 1910; and Emra H. Ireland to Mrs. R. Perry Davis, February 26, 1947; Davis Collection.

⁵Gypsy M. Gray, "The History of Gallatin County," *Papers of the Christopher Gist Historical Society* (Covington, 1957), 120; Ireland to Davis, *loc. cit.*

In 1856 the Irelands moved to another farm lying on the Ohio River one mile below Warsaw. Three years later they moved by boat to Hancock County, landing about five miles above Hawesville on October 12, 1859. Here, on a farm which he had purchased from Robert Boyd, James B. Ireland spent his next eight years.

A follower of Henry Clay, Ireland voted the Whig ticket at every opportunity. He wanted no part of the Know-Nothing movement, and for a time he stopped voting altogether. During the Civil War he aided the Confederacy whenever possible and several times narrowly escaped being arrested by Union soldiers. In 1868 Ireland supported Horatio Seymour for President. He continued to vote the straight Democratic ticket.

Baptized a Presbyterian in infancy, Ireland later became affiliated with the Disciples of Christ. Following the practice of that church, he was rebaptized by immersion.⁶

The Ohio River flood of 1867 swept away most of Ireland's fences and damaged his property extensively. Turning the farm over to two of his sons, he moved to Hawesville, where he lived until the death of his wife on February 6, 1871.

After visiting among his children for about two years, he married Miss Susan Orr, of Warsaw. She died on December 29, 1879, after which he made his home with his son Thomas at Skillman in Hancock County.

James Beatty Ireland was once featured in Robert Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" as the man who lived in three centuries. He died on January 14, 1901, in his one hundred fourth year.⁷

The spelling and punctuation in these recollections have in most cases been left unchanged.

My first distinct recollections were about the years 1808 to 1810. My father lived 16 miles from Georgetown, on the main Lexington and Cincinnati road. This road had been

⁶Newspaper clippings, Davis Collection.

⁷Newspaper clippings and funeral notice, Davis Collection.

located and measured by Jacob Stucker,⁸ a hunter and surveyor, years before, and had been cut out but was still a new road and was full of stumps. It was the highway over which all of the hemp, wheat, oats and other products of that part of the State was hauled to Cincinnati and the wagons returning loaded with salt, dry goods, groceries and other things for all central Kentucky. Hauling was a big business and men done nothing else but team it all the year round. They took great pride in their teams and wagons. Their teams generally consisted of five horses. They liked to have a trusty leader in front for the others to follow, but sometimes they would have as many as six horses. Their wagons were large and strongly built with high beds made lowest in the middle with the ends sloping out from the bottom, up. They carried a tar bucket swung to the coupling-pole and a jack-screw in the feed box behind. This jack-screw was used to raise their wagons up so they could get the wheels off to grease them and to lift them over a stump when they would strike one in trying to straddle it, which, when the ground was soft, they often did.

In addition to farming my father kept a house of entertainment. It was known as the sixty-mile house. In front of the house stood a large beech tree on which Mr. Stucker had cut the figures 60, it being that distance from Cincinnati. The house was on a hill at the bottom of which in a strip of woods a hundred yards away, gushed out a large clear spring of water, the head-waters of Mill Branch. This spring made our house a favorite place for teamsters and travelers to stop, for after they crossed Mill Branch there was no more water until they got to Williamstown, county seat of Grant county. The road ran

⁸Jacob Stucker was born in Pennsylvania on August 11, 1764. He came to Kentucky with his mother, two brothers, and a sister, arriving in time to participate in the Battle of Blue Licks. In the fall of 1787 he and his brother David were stationed at Georgetown as rangers. About 1788 he married Betsey Rogers, who bore him eleven children. In the War of 1812, Stucker and his son James served in Colonel Richard M. Johnson's mounted regiment. He died on June 11, 1820. See William Henry Perrin (ed.), *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison and Nicholas Counties* (Chicago, 1882), 617; "Blue Licks Monument Dedication," *Filson Club History Quarterly*, III (1928-29), 16; "John D. Shane's Interview with Colonel John Graves of Fayette County," *Ibid.*, XV (1941), 242.

along what was known as dry ridge, the dividing line between the waters of South Licking river and Big Eagle Creek. In the spring of 1811 occurred a very strange sight. The sun had a black spot on and in front of it. This spot appeared to me to be about three inches in diameter, or about the size of the bottom of a pint tin cup, still it made a difference in the sun light. It was nearly two weeks from the time it entered one side of the sun until it passed off at the other. The people were very much alarmed at this strange sight and many predicted great calamities.

In the spring of 1812 the Governor of Kentucky, Isaac Shelby, called for volunteers to go out to the Lakes to fight the British and Indians.⁹ Most of the young men and some of the older ones of our neighborhood volunteered. All the troops from central Kentucky (from regiments) rendezvoused at Lexington and from there was sent a regiment at a time to Cincinnati. They would leave Lexington early in the morning and at night camp at our spring, 28 miles march. I would go down to their camp to see them dance and hear them sing. They were jolly crews. Poor fellows, they did not know of the hardships that was in the future for them. They all passed in August. The weather was very hot and they were generally thinly clad and had but few blankets, but by the time they got to northern Ohio the weather got very cold and that winter was extremely cold and these poor men suffered intensely, many of them getting their ears, hands and feet frozen.¹⁰ Their relatives and friends at home made up a great amount of clothing to send them but it was almost impossible to get it to them.

⁹The first call came from Governor Charles Scott. Shelby was chosen as Scott's successor in August, 1812.

¹⁰A letter written by Major Thomas C. Graves on September 6, 1812, from a camp near Piqua Plains says: "I will not recount to you the difficulties we have had to contend with when we were without tents between Georgetown and Cincinnati and exposed day and night to the rains of Heaven and since to scorching suns, because these difficulties were opposed with cheerful alacrity, and we soon became seasoned, like good timber, to every weather and are now fit instruments to be used in the hands of our country for the most useful and glorious purposes." Quoted in Charles Kerr (ed.), *History of Kentucky* (Chicago and New York, 1922), I, 554.

The roads became impassible for wagons, and clothing and provisions had to be sent by pack horses.¹¹ Twenty-five or more men would come along the road at a time riding one horse and leading another one with a pack saddle on his back on which would be tied a sack containing 200 pounds of flour, on another would be clothing, blankets and other things, but much of it never reached the soldiers, and alas! many of them never needed these things, for the battle of the River Raisen having been fought many of these brave men had been killed and scalped.¹² When the news of the battle was received there was great mourning in our neighborhood. People living back from the road would come to our house and stay all day to ask those coming up the road for news, hoping to hear of the safety of the loved ones. Women would stand for hours looking down the road with tears in their eyes. One old lady, Mrs. McGlothing, would sit around all day crying, asking every one that passed if they knew anything of her Johnnie (her only son) but no one did, and she cried on, and when the others came home Johnnie was not with them and no one could tell what had been his fate. The old lady lingered on a few years ever talking of Johnnie and died broken hearted.

Col. Dick Johnson, of Scott county, was wounded at the battle of the Thames and was brought home on a litter.¹³ This was made by placing one horse about ten feet in front of another with a pole on each side, which was held up by a broad strap over the horse's backs. Between the horses and fastened to the poles was a strong sheet on which the Colonel lay. A man led the front horse. They stopped at our house and I took the Colonel out a drink of water. He looked very pale and thin. After the war was over the soldiers were paid off at Lexington. There was two five-horse wagon loads of silver sent from Cincinnati for that purpose. They stopped at

¹¹In his message to the legislature in December, 1812, Governor Isaac Shelby paid tribute to the women of Kentucky for their work in making clothing for the soldiers. *Ibid.*, 554-55.

¹²The Battle of Frenchtown was fought on January 22, 1813. The Raisin Massacre occurred the next morning. *Ibid.*, 555.

¹³Richard M. Johnson, later Vice-President of the United States. The Battle of the Thames was fought on October 5, 1813.

our house over night. The money was in rough stout boxes about six inches square and three feet long. It was all two men could do to carry a box in the house, where they stacked it up and put a guard over it all night. This money had been paid into the Land Office at Cincinnati by settlers who had bought land throughout all of Ohio, and was ordered payed out to the Kentucky soldiers. It was soon put in circulation and made times better. It was mostly Spanish Mill dollars. For change the people would lay it down on something, place an axe on it and hit the axe with a maul, cutting it in any size change they wanted. They generally cut it into four or eight pieces, making eighteen and nine pence pieces. These pieces were three cornered or in the shape of a piece of pie. The sharp corners were very hard on a pocket book and it took a stout buckskin purse to hold it. It was very unsatisfactory money. Men would sometimes instead of cutting it into quarters and eights would cut it into five and ten, and even twelve pieces, and in trading there was continual contention whether the pieces were large enough or not and as the years went by the pieces got smaller, until the Government bought it up and coined it into nine pence ($12\frac{1}{2}$ cts.) and four pence heppenny ($6\frac{1}{4}$ cts.) pieces which, after many years, gave way to our present dime and five cent pieces. In order to keep the people from cutting up the money the Trustees of Georgetown had change checks printed. These were about two feet square. On one side were black spots the exact size and shape of the cut money. There were five dollars worth of spots on each sheet and you could buy a sheet for that price and take the scissors or your sheep shears and cut off the change as you needed it. There were lines made to cut by. These sheets answered a good purpose and no one lost anything by them. If you got a bill torn or defaced any way the Chairman, Mr. Craig, would give you a new one for it or if you wanted a dollar and had spots enough he would give you the silver for them.

When the news of the Battle of Waterloo and the defeat and capture of Napoleon Bonaparte was received there was great sorrow throughout all that country. The people's sympathy was all for the French. There had been so many good

men of that neighborhood killed by the British and their allies, the Indians, that the hatred for the English was very intense.

1816 was what was known as the year without a summer. It was cool and chilly all spring and summer. We had frost every month in the year except September. Wheat and flax done fairly well but corn was almost a failure, being soft and immature. It was a hard matter to get corn for bread and next years seed. The green fruit dropped from the trees and the mast¹⁴ was a failure, consequently most of the hogs died from starvation during the winter. Hogs were the best paying stock the people had. They made the most of them in the woods. In the fall of the year they would get them up, feed a little corn and sell them to speculators who would take great droves of them South selling in Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas, sometimes driving them as far as Charleston, S. C. The hog of that day was a big-boned, rough fellow, and being used to living on the range he made a good traveler. People raised wheat enough for their own bread and some to sell or trade to the merchant. Wheat was all cut with a sickle or reap-hook, threshed with a frail¹⁵ and cleaned by one man sieving it slowly through a riddle¹⁶ while two men fanned the chaff out with a sheet.

Flax was a very important crop at that time, for on it depended the family's supply of summer clothing. To be certain of a crop the ground had to be well prepared beforehand, and the seed sown on Good Friday, wet or dry. There was a great deal of work about this crop. Instead of cutting it, it was pulled up by the roots, spread in swaths to dry a few days, tied up in bundles and the seed frailed off and spread out on the ground again for the fall rains to rot it so the lint would slip from the stalk. Then on clear, crisp days they broke-swingle¹⁷ and hackled¹⁸ it. The women would spin it into

¹⁴Beechnuts, acorns, or other nuts which the hogs could pick up in the woods.

¹⁵A hand instrument for beating the grain from the head or ear of the wheat. Also known as a flail.

¹⁶A course-meshed sieve.

¹⁷To loosen and remove the woody portion of the stem by beating.

¹⁸To clean and straighten out the fiber by combing.

thread on their little wheels during the winter days and nights as they sat around their big wood fires, and in the spring would weave it into cloth. That was a hemp country and hemp was raised and worked very much the same as flax. It was of coarser fiber and was used for making sacks and other coarse, stout articles, also strings and ropes. Men had rope walks and would make rope for themselves and neighbors, but the greater part of the hemp was broke, baled and sold.

Most farmers aimed to have sheep enough to furnish their families with winter clothing. The wool was picked, colored, carded, spun and wove at home. Shoes were all made from measure by the town or country shoemaker and men thought they were lucky if they got their families shod up by Christmas. The gardens contained but few varieties of vegetables. Tomatoes were thought not fit to eat. They were the small red kind and were called tomatoe apples. They were raised by a few for their perfumery and to lay on the mantle board for ornaments.

The farming implements of those days were quite rude. The first plow I recollect using was the bar shear.¹⁹ These were in two pieces, the point and shear lying almost flat on the ground. It had a colter²⁰ running from the bar up to the beam. The beam was six or seven feet long. It was about like holding a two-year-old colt to hold this plow in the ground, and when it struck a root its kick was worse. We afterwards had the Cary plow named for the inventor. This plow had a shear that stood up well in front with the proper twist to turn the dirt. The mould board was wood. It was made by cutting down a twisting oak tree split out a juggle²¹ and smoothe it off the right shape, bolt one end to the shear and the other end to the right handle. In order for a tree to make a good mould board it should twist against the sun, which was a little difficult to find. Men would go many miles to a good mould board tree and would split out enough to last them years. The Cary plow did very good work in that light fresh soil. On one handle

¹⁹Bar share.

²⁰A knife attached to the beam which cut the turf ahead of the share.

²¹A block of wood.

would hang a root cutter; on the other a paddle to clean off the mould board when clogged up with dirt too much. Harrows were mostly made by getting the fork of a tree the right shape, boring auger holes through it and driving in hard, tough pins for teeth. Iron was so expensive but few could own an iron tooth harrow. The first axe I ever owned I went to Georgetown, bought the iron and a small piece of steel, took them to the blacksmith and struck for him while he made it. It cost me when finished \$2.50, besides it took me a half day to grind it down to an edge and put it on a straight handle. Crooked handles were unknown at that time. Trace chains were all made by blacksmiths. They had very long links and cost from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per pair. Carpenters were hard to get and were expensive, but there were some fine workmen, both carpenters and cabinet makers at that time. It is surprising what nice work they could do with the rough material and the few clumsy tools they then had.

Merchants keep but few goods in stock. One of the most important and expensive articles they sold was salt, which, for many years sold as high as \$2.50 to \$3.00 per bushel notwithstanding money was scarce and valuable, a good man's wages being only about 35 or 40 cents per day. The school houses were small log buildings with door in one end and one-third of the other end was fire place and chimney. A log was cut out on either side for the windows, which extended almost the full length of the house. The glasses were 8 x 10 in size and were the most expensive part of the house. A clapboard roof and a puncheon floor completed the building. On the inside below the windows a plank was nailed to sloping pins driven in the wall for a writing desk. The benches were made by splitting a log in two and putting legs in rounded side. Above the fire place were nailed two hooks to hold the teachers switches, of which he always kept a good supply in stock. The books we used were Dilworth's spellers, Linley Murray's readers and Jesse Guthries' arithmetic. We had no grammars or geographys. It was generally considered if a boy could cipher to the single rule of three and a girl could read in the fourth reader and write her own name, they knew enough. Great stress was placed on penmanship and the best

qualification a teacher could have was to be a good scribe and able and inclined to use the rod. Pens were all made out of goose quills and if a family did not own geese they could buy the quills at the store. Ink was made by boiling down blue ash and water maple bark until it was thick enough, and then putting copperas in it. The paper was plain white and had to be ruled by the one that used it. We had no lead pencils, and the best thing that we could get to rule with was the end of a pewter spoon. We had no envelopes and in writing a letter we had always to leave one page blank to fold outside to write the address on. Letters were sealed with small red wafers. Postage on a letter was from 6¼ to 25 cts., owing to the weight of the letter and the distance it had to be carried. You could either pay the postage when you mailed the letter or let them mark it unpaid and the person receiving it would have the postage to pay. People were often put to great inconvenience about fire, cover it up as well as they might at night. Sometimes they would get up of a morning and the fire would be all out and they would have to send a mile or more to a neighbor's to borrow fire before they could cook their breakfast. A good many kept a steel and flint and a good supply of punk, and would start a fire that way. I have often started a fire by filling the pan of my gun with powder, then hold a piece of dry tow above the lock and flash the pan, when the tow would catch on fire.

The belief in ghosts, wizzards and witches prevailed to a considerable extent and many were the strange, mysterious, blood-curdling stories told and believed. Some distance from our house lived Mrs. Nancy King, an old decrepit woman of not very prepossessing appearance who was accused of being a witch and exerting an evil influence over the country. If any of the stock died or was afflicted in a peculiar manner, they were bewitched; or if a child came into the world deformed, hair-lipped or any peculiarities about it, old Nancy was blamed for it. So confident were some of the people that she bewitched them that they brought the matter before the Ray's Fork Baptist Church (Rays Fork is one of the prongs of Eagle Creek) of which she was a member. At the trial several claimed that she had such influence over them that they could not do a

good deed or have a good thought. Billy Davidson, a big pury,²² lazy old fellow, testified that she often rode him a great many miles to dances and other sinful places, and would sometimes carry home on his back sacks of potatoes and turnips (that was the only work he did do) and next morning he would be so stiff and sore that he could scarcely walk, and that it kept his mind in such confusion that it was impossible for him to serve the Lord in a proper and acceptable manner. While many of the members did not believe these witch tales it was thought best by the majority for the peace, harmony and prosperity of the church that Sister Smith [King?] be dismissed and the old lady left the church crying. That church was the Old Calvinistic Baptist, or, as they were then called, the Hard Shell or Iron Side Baptist. They were very strict and rigid in their conduct and discipline. During a revival meeting a free mulatto man came forward to join. In questioning him to ascertain if he was one of the elect, a brother asked him if he believed there were christians in other churches. He said he thought there were. This answer caused much consternation. Some said it was very uncharitable to suppose they were the only christians. Others argued if there were christians in other churches what was the use of their faith and order. How could others be christians and differ from them when they were following the plain simple teachings of the Bible. Finally they agreed to take the candidate under their watch-care until they could refer the matter to the Association which was soon to convene with the Elkhorn church. When the case was brought before the Association the Moderator appointed a committee to decide the case. The committee reported back advising the Ray's Fork church to see that their own members were christians and not bother themselves about other churches. The members years afterwards became more liberal in their views. They had some as able men as there was in Kentucky to preach for them and Ray's Fork church prospered and had an influence for good over a large scope of country.

Deer and turkey were quite plentiful in that country and in my young days I was fond of hunting, and many were the

²²Short-winded, usually due to corpulence.

compliments I received from the teamsters and travelers that would stop at our house for the nice venison and turkey my gun furnished them. So common were deer that one day old Mr. Stucker came along the road and told myself and brother that he had killed a fine deer about a mile below and left it on the side of the road, and if we would go down there and get it we might have it. Of course we went, tied the feet together, ran a pole between them and carried it home on our shoulders. My favorite way of hunting was to go quietly through the woods by myself, but sometimes several persons would go together. Some of them would ride horse-back and take their hounds. Others would stand at the crossings to shoot the deer as they would run by. As I was considered a good shot I was generally assigned to a stand. Deer mostly had certain runs and places to cross the ridges. The hunter would conceal himself near one of these crossings and wait for the deer to approach. Perhaps he would hear the hounds on the trail a mile or two away, but they are coming nearer. Soon they are getting close, every dog yelping. You hear the bushes crack and out bounds a big buck, his head up and his long prongy horns almost touching his back. You give a keen whistle on your powder charger and he comes to a sudden halt, and stands perfectly still, but you must be quick now, for in less than half a minute he will be away again. At this point a young hunter is likely to take what we call "buck-ague". He would be so excited as to become perfectly nervous and lose all control over himself and forget to shoot, or if he did fire it would be wild of the deer. But after a few failures this feeling would wear off and he could take as deliberate aim at a deer as he could at a hog in the pen. At different places there were springs of salt or brackish water, where the deer would come about daylight of a morning or at early dark of an evening, to lick and drink, and we would kill a good many by watching these licks and shooting them.

In those days every male between the age of eighteen and forty-five years were enrolled in the militia and were requested to muster or drill. The county was laid off in bounds, each bound large enough to contain a company of men. Each household was required to own a gun and to keep on hand a supply

of powder and lead. We had three companies and one regimental muster each year. Each member was compelled to be present at roll call or pay a fine of \$2, unless he had a legal excuse, but it did not need a penalty to make them attend. They were fond of it. The war had been over but a few years and the war spirit was still with them and they felt proud and brave as they kept step with the music of the fife and drum and the flag flying. The captain with his epaulets on his shoulders and a tall red plum [plume] in hat and the women waving their handkerchiefs (they were as fond of the musters as the men) we just dared old England to try to knock the chip off our shoulders again. They would drill two hours and disband for dinner, which many would bring with them, several neighbor women spreading together and all partaking in common. After dinner they would parade again, drill for two hours and have inspection of arms and generally wound up by the officers treating. After this was over the horse show would commence on the drill ground. Every man that had a horse to sell or stallion to stand would parade them around, showing their gaits, telling of their good qualities and giving their pedigree. After this show was over swapping horses and fighting was in order for the balance of the day. There was a great deal of whisky made and drank at that time. Many that had good springs would have still-houses and make whisky for themselves and neighbors, generally getting their meal ground at the water mill. Everyone kept a supply of whisky at home and the bottle was always set out when a neighbor or friend called by. Men would not harvest or do any hard work without it. They could not afford to risk the great amount of water they drank hurting them and it was thought right that every one should have his dram. Every preacher—good pious men—would take a dram the last thing before they left for church to cut the cobwebs out of their throats and clear their voices. The whisky was cheap, and thought to be healthful. We had three day elections. The polls would open on the morning of the first Monday in August and close Wednesday evening, and every body had to go to the county seat, Georgetown, to vote. The candidates generally made it pleasant for the voters by furnishing plenty to drink. They would often

have free drinks at some barrooms and a man to walk the streets inviting all to go in and take something. Sometimes they would set buckets of whisky in the shade of a tree with a cup or gourd handy, so everyone could help themselves. Voters would step up to the Court House, pull off their hat and request the clerk to register their name and speak out independently who they voted for. Candidates frequently took seats back of the Judge and when a man would vote for them they would very politely thank him for his kindness. It was very natural that so much free liquor would cause drunkenness and fighting, though men did not always have to be drunk to fight, but would fight when sober at the smallest provocation. Yet, any thing serious seldom happened from these fights. Weapons were not carried and it was considered cowardly to take any unfair advantage of an adversary. It was fair fist and skull, a test of courage and manhood, with no bad results more than a black eye or a mashed nose. While the law did not exactly approve of this manner of conduct, yet, if men fought fair they were seldom fined. It was considered no breach of the peace, but rather an enjoyable affair by the spectators. Nor did fighting always make enemies of men. They would fight one day and be good friends and neighbors the next. Men and women of those days were generally plain, kind, goodhearted, honest, accommodating and neighborly.

I had become restless and in common with many young men I believed there was some better place than home. So on the first day of May 1820 I started on horseback to Kaskaskia, Illinois. I went to Frankfort and there had the good luck to meet up with Mr. Fielden Jones, sheriff of Union county, who had come to Frankfort to pay his county revenue to the State Treasurer, and was starting home. I found Mr. Jones to be very much of a gentleman — a pleasant and entertaining traveling companion. We passed through Louisville, then on to Hardinsburg, where I bought a saddle-blanket, having lost my own. We passed through the back part of Hancock county, while Mr. Jones told me this story. A few years before a merchant from Shelbyville named Farmer went to Philadelphia and bought a large stock of fine dry goods and hired them hauled to Pittsburg on wagons, where he loaded them on a

flat boat and hired a man named William Clutter to help him bring the boat down the river. After they had passed Cincinnati and were along the Boone county border Clutter knocked Mr. Farmer on the head with an axe and threw him overboard and run the boat himself until he got to Union county, where he landed and commenced selling, but his customers soon discovered that he did not have his goods in shape for selling and that he did not know the name or price of his goods. They got suspicious that something was wrong and Mr. Jones arrested him and found blood stains in the boat and the goods marked in Mr. Farmer's name. In the meantime Mr. Farmer's body had been found and hearing that Clutter had been arrested on a boat the sheriff of Boone county came down after him. Mr. Jones was the principal witness against Clutter on the trial. He was found guilty, sentenced and hung in Boone county. Years afterward I read a pamphlet giving the history of this trial and William Clutter's confession of his life. He had been a desperate criminal from his young boyhood days. That night we stopped at Mr. Hawes in the upper part of Daviess county. The next day we passed through the yellow banks (Owensboro). The town consisted of but a few log houses. The next day we passed through Red Banks (Henderson), which was not a great deal larger, and that night I stayed with Mr. Jones six miles from Morganfield. The next morning I crossed the river at Shawneetown. The most of the houses were built on posts eight or ten feet high to keep them out of the high water. From there I went by the way of Saline Salt Works. These salt works were under the management of the state of Illinois and the State Agents sold to all in small or large quantities at one price—one dollar per bushel. The next day I stopped at a house on the side of the road and asked a woman if she could give myself and horse something to eat. She said she could give me something but they had no feed for my horse. I went in and she put some cold corn bread and some bear meat out on a clapboard table and told me to help myself and went outdoors. I was hungry and it tasted mighty good, and I would have enjoyed my meal but just then her husband came home in a terrible rage swearing loud and long, and I did not know but what it was on account of my presence.

When the woman came in the house I asked her what her husband was mad about; she said one of their neighbors had killed some of his hogs. I asked her if he was a close neighbor [and] she said not very close, about thirteen miles.

After I left this settlement there were but two houses until I reached my journey's end, eighty miles. These two families had newly settled there about thirty miles apart to entertain the travelers that followed the trail. These eighty miles were one vast prairie, the first prairie I had ever seen, and as I leisurly rode along I was perfectly entranced with the scenery. Occasionally I could see far away in the distance a clump of small trees or a thin skin of timber along the small water courses. The weather was clear, the sun warm and pleasant, the grass green and luxuriant. Flowers of all colors were blooming everywhere. The prairie chicken, alarmed at my near approach, would flutter up, circle over my head and fly away. My horse would follow the dim path without guiding. I would occasionally stop and let him get a bite or two of the rich grass that was so tempting all around him.

The settlers around Kaskaskia were mostly French, with a few Indians still remaining among them. I worked that summer and early fall helping to build houses and dig wells. In October I returned home over the same route I had traveled going out, spending another pleasant night with my friend Fielden Jones, and arrived at home in time to vote for James Monroe for his second term for President.²³ This was my first vote for a Presidential candidate. The vote of that county was almost unanimous for Monroe. During his first term the country had been so prosperous and there had been so many States admitted into the Union during his administration, that he was very popular. Party lines were obliterated and he received the vote of every State in the Union. Four years later we had a very bitter and vindictive canvass between the four candidates, Adams, Jackson, Clay, and Crawford. I was for Clay and faithfully followed him ever afterwards. I was never much of a politician, but I knew what Henry Clay said was right, WAS RIGHT, and I always voted that way.

²³Ireland probably favored Monroe, but there was no popular vote in 1820.

The next winter I spent in Shelby county working for my brother-in-law, David Mackey, who had a large contract putting up posts and rail fences. Hearing Indianapolis was building up fast and thinking it a good place for a carpenter to find work I, on the morning of the 16th of April 1821, started for that town afoot. Two days later I crossed the Ohio river at Madison, Ind. Here I learned they were expecting a steam boat down the river. I decided to lay over a day and see it, but I did not have to wait many hours until it came in sight. When it got close to the town they fired off a cannon and every body came to the river to see the steam boat. It was the Robert Fulton and was only a small boat, but it looked very large, pretty and wonderful to me. I went on my tramp but my thick heavy shoes began to blister my feet, so I had to pull them off, carry them in my hand and take it barefoot. When within eight miles of Vernon I stopped all night with an old German named Jacob Clapp. The next morning he put at me to work for him and as my feet were so sore from traveling, I concluded to do so, thinking I would go on to Indianapolis the next week, but they were so kind to me, and insisted so hard that I should not leave, that I stayed until August, when Mr. Clapp borrowed the most of the money I had and went to North Carolina where they had moved from, to attend to some business, leaving Mrs. Clapp, two boys and myself to attend to things until he got back. But he had not been gone long when all four of us about the same time were taken down with the ague and swamp fever. We had no medicine and but little to eat, and one was scarcely able to care for another. So sick were we and so indifferent to all our surroundings that we let two small calves, that were in a pen to keep them away from the cows, starve to death. In this condition we were found by a Mr. Sharp who lived more than three miles away, our nearest neighbor. He took me to his home on a slide²⁴ and saw that the others had good attention. Mr. Sharp was from Henry county and knew all my relatives in that county and he treated me very kindly. When the fever left me I still had the ague and my legs and feet swelled so badly I could not walk at all, but I wanted to

²⁴A sled.

go home, so Mr. Sharp hired a man to take me back to Scott county. This man would lift me on the horse where I would sit and hold to the saddle all day long while he led the horse. When we stopped at night he would carry me in the house. A few months after I got home a neighbor happened to pass through that country and Mr. Clapp wrote me a kind letter and sent me all he was owing me for work, and the money he had borrowed. His wife died before he got home. I had tried two States and had made a failure in each, so I resolved that henceforth I would remain in Kentucky.

I was married on the 25th of April, 1822, and the next spring I moved to Gallatin county and settled four miles east of Fredricksburg (now Warsaw) on the head waters of Sugar Creek, so named on account of the number of sugar maples that grew along its banks. This was a hilly, heavily timbered, productive country. Gallatin was a newer county than Scott, but was fast settling up with a good class of people from east Tennessee, Virginia and the Eastern States. I bought plenty of land but it was all in the green woods. I had a small house to live in but no place to put my horses except in a rail pen. When not working the horses, in order to save feed, I would bell one of them and turn them out to live on the range, always being careful to get them up of nights, as it was rumored that there was an organized gang of horse thieves operating in that county. One evening there came a tremendous hard rain and the horses did not come home. So next morning I was up by day-light to hunt them. I had not gone far when I heard the bell in the direction of big Eagle Creek, and I hurried on for fear they would try to cross the swollen creek and get drowned. When I got in sight of the creek I saw them on the far side and I knew they had started back to their old home forty miles away, but they were traveling slow, picking the green grass as they went. Big Eagle is quite a river and swollen as it was that morning it was two hundred yards wide with a very swift current. I scarcely knew what to do. I was a good swimmer but had never tried it with my clothes on. I took off my shoes and hat, took some bark and tied my pants tight around my ankles and plunged in, but I had not swam far when I found out my mistake. My breeches legs filled full of water and as

it could not get out my legs felt like they were in two water sacks and were very heavy. To make matters worse when about midstream my dog that had followed me in the water crawled upon my back and all the scolding and coaxing I could do would not get him off, I whirled over and gave him a ducking and he cut out on his own hook. I landed on the far bank a long ways below where I started, in a very much exhausted condition, but I ran on and got ahead of the horses, made halters out of hickory bark, got on one and led the other and swam them back across the creek. The wind had got in the west and was very cold and I thought I would chill to death before I got home.

It was slow, laborious work clearing the land of the heavy timber. In the fall of the year people would raise houses and barns and in the spring every man would have a log rolling. I would lose a week or two at a time in the busiest part of the year helping my neighbors roll logs. Every one had to be neighborly in self defense. If you did not help others, others would not help you. This log rolling was no fun. Men would go early, work hard and late. At dinner time they would gather around the spring, quench their thirst and wash their blackened hands. The bottle and sugar would be set out. All would take a toddy and sit down to a good dinner which had been cooked in pots and skillets around the fire place or outside under a shed and which the women took great pride in serving. We would be treated to hog jowl, fried eggs, turnip greens, corn bread, fried ham, hot biscuits, butter and butter milk, winding up with half moon fried pies and maple molasses. In order to make one dinner answer two purposes the women would frequently invite their friends the same day to a quilting or wool picking.

Sugar and molasses making was an important industry at that time. There were only a few days in February and early March in which to manufacture the year's supply of sweetening. It was good management to have the troughs, spiles²⁵ and wood all ready so there would be no time lost when the season came. An ideal sugar day was to freeze hard the night

²⁵Small tubes which were inserted in the trees to conduct the sap.

before and the day to be clear and warm. On such a day the water would commence running by eight or nine o'clock and drip on until after sun down. Often when we had a good run we would have to boil long after dark to keep up. You could look all around and see the light shining up against the sky from the neighbors camp fires.

Deer was not so plentiful as they had been in Scott, but there was plenty of turkey and squirrels, and other small game was in abundance. Men would get the hollow bone out of turkey wings for callers. Put this bone in the mouth and blow a certain way would sound very similar to a turkey hen's yelp. Find where the turkeys used, get as close as you think safe, conceal yourself well and give a yelp on your caller and a gobbler would answer you. Yelp again and he will start towards you. Yelp again at intervals and he will continue to come but you must have patience, for he comes slowly, struts along, stops and scratches, picks up a bug or a beech nut and on again. As he gets close you must not yelp too often or loud, for he is a cautious fellow and has an acute ear to detect any unusual or suspicious noise. A little longer suspense and you fire and are well paid for all your waiting, for you have a bird worthy for a Prince's dinner.

It was a custom of those days in the spring of the year, after the corn was planted and generally on a Saturday, to have a squirrel burgoo. The man that could furnish the most squirrels was the hero of the day. Men would be in the woods as soon as it was light enough to shoot, to compete for this honor, each one going the direction he might think best. If a man was late he was docked on his number. The women would bring the bread and seasoning and the men would do the cooking. Women could make good enough soup at home but when it came to burgoo it was strictly a masculine art and it took an expert to know exactly how much water, how many squirrels and the amount and kind of seasoning to put in the big kettle, and the length of time it should cook. It was all left to the judgment of one or two men who prided themselves on their culinary art. When done every one would come with a slice of bread. The cook would fish them out a part of a squirrel

and lay it on their bread and give them a cup or a bowl full of burgoo and all would sit around on the ground or logs and eat and compliment the cook. After dinner the young folks would talk, laugh and court, the women would brag on their smart children and talk about their domestic affairs and the men would shoot at a mark, and all would go home feeling that it had been a day well spent.

We had plenty of copperhead and rattle snakes and men when at work in their new grounds were ever on the alert to jump if they heard anything rattle. I was very watchful through fear, and I killed a great many rattle-snakes. Mr. Andrew Hamilton, quite a wealthy man, and grandfather of Mrs. W. S. Thomas, bought a large tract of land and came on with his negroes to build his house before moving his family. He was exceedingly afraid of snakes, and in order to be safe he built a platform about ten feet high to sleep on. One night he woke up and felt a rattler in his bed with him. He rolled out instantly, the fall hurting him badly.

One of the worst pests was the small ground squirrel. For several years they were very numerous and were a perfect nuisance. The little striped rascals would jump around on the rocks and fences, cluck and chatter while we planted corn, and as soon as we were out of the field they would dig it up. They would eat as much as they wanted, carry off a dozen or more grains in their jaws, hide them under a rock or root, and go back and get more. Men and boys would catch them with dogs [or] under deadfalls and poison them, but it all done but little good, and it was a hard matter to get a stand of corn around the out[er] edges of the fields. Some would sow corn over the ground to feed them so they would let the planted corn alone but the contrary fellows preferred the soft corn. Others made rattle-traps — a wooden cog wheel turned by a crank — a spring board fastened so every time it slipped off a cog it slapped another board, making a loud noise. They would start around their fields at day-light with their rattle. The ground squirrels were badly scared by the noise and would scamper away and hide in their holes, but by the time they got on the other side of the hill with the rattle the little rascals

would be back in the field digging up corn again. But in years they almost disappeared. I never knew why.

Physicians were scarce at that time and people would often have to send quite a distance when sick for a doctor and when he got there he had but a limited supply of medicines, but he would give you a dose of all he had in stock. For ague or chills he would first give you a dose of tartar emetic. After you get through vomiting and your stomach was a little settled you take a dose of calomel and jallap²⁶ working it off next morning with castor oil, and before your chill time you must go to bed, cover up good and take a corn sweat, after which for two or three days you must take every four hours a dose of Peruvian bark stirred in a little wine or whisky. This remedy generally cured the chills. For fever the first thing the doctor would bleed the patient. Bleeding was a favorite remedy, not only with the doctors but with everybody. Every neighborhood had some one who owned a lancet and would bleed the people for accommodation, believing he was doing humanity a good deed. They were bled not only for diseases but as a preventive. Men, when particularly anxious to remain well during a certain time or when going from home or on a journey, would get bled beforehand. Women would get bled for headache and many other causes. My mother-in-law was a tall, spare, pale, delicate woman, and for many years was in the habit of being bled every month, and I believe this was finally the cause of her death as it was of hundreds of other women. My left arm has to-day many scars made by the lancet and I have no doubt there was more Kentucky blood shed in one year at that period than was ever shed by Kentucky soldiers in any one war, and the most of it was female blood.

Gallatin was a very large county at that time. It embraced all of Trimble and Carroll counties.²⁷ The county seat was

²⁶Jalap—A powdered drug prepared from the root of a plant native to Mexico.

²⁷Gallatin County was formed in 1799 from parts of Franklin and Shelby. Trimble County was formed from parts of Gallatin, Henry, and Oldham in 1837. Carroll was created in 1838 out of Gallatin, Henry, and Trimble. Before Ireland moved to Gallatin a piece of the original county had been severed in 1819 to be used in forming Owen County.

Port William, at the mouth of the Kentucky river, now Carrollton. Not long after moving to the county I was summoned on the grand jury. I lived twenty-six miles from Port William and I had to leave home at three o'clock in the morning and ride hard to get there in time for court. We got through our duties that day, but too late for me to return home, so I stayed at the hotel that night and started home next morning, if not a wiser, at least, a poorer man, for I got neither pay nor thanks for my services. Juries were not paid in those days and it is needless to say they done their business with despatch. Petit juries were only summoned for one case. That decided they were dismissed and a new jury summoned for the next case. Circuit Judges were appointed by the Governor during good behavior and they were very independent of the people, were strict in their discipline and impartial in their decisions. The Circuit Judge appointed three magistrates for each county. Their term was for six years, one going out of office every other year, the retiring 'Squire becoming the sheriff for two years.

Taxes were low — 50 cts. poll and 6¼ cts. on the hundred dollars. The first tax receipt I got in that county read as follows:

Received in full for state and county tax for the year 1824 one dollar and 5 cents. David Gibson, Sheriff.

Mills were scarce at that time. They were all water mills and could only be built where there was sufficient force in the creek to furnish power to turn the wheel. They were few and far apart. They did well enough during the wet season of the year but during the dry months of summer and fall they could grind but little and the people were often hard run for bread stuff. The mills would grind for an hour or so and then shut down the water gate and wait perhaps for four or five hours until they could accumulate another head of water. Millers would often get up once or twice of a night, grind out their water supply and go back to bed again. Men would often keep a standing sack of corn at the mill, but it would sometimes be a week before their turn would come and they would have to borrow several sifters full of meal from their more lucky neighbors before they could get their corn ground. I recollect at

one time the weather was so dry that the mills even on the largest streams almost ceased to grind and people had to pound up their corn for meal or live on lye hominy. Hearing that Sanders mill fifteen miles below on Eagle Creek was still grinding I started at midnight with two bushels of corn for that mill, hoping to be the first one there. When about a mile from the mill I looked across the broad creek bottoms and by the early morning light I saw a fellow coming from an opposite direction with a sack on his horse. I thought I would whip up a little and beat him to the mill but I soon discovered he had grasped the same idea and that I had a race to run — a race on which might depend supper or no supper — no small matter to me, as I had had no breakfast and would get no dinner. We were soon in a trot and from that we reached the mill under full lash, the sacks flapping our horses sides as we went, but he beat me. After a while I gave a boy that lived close by twenty-cents to swap turns with me, got my corn ground and reached home before night. In order to be more independent I concluded to build me a horse mill. I went to Bedford, Ind., and hired a man to dress me out two mill stones and haul them to Madison. From there they were shipped to Warsaw and I hauled them out home and built my mill which was unlike any mill I ever saw before or afterwards. The whole thing turned around on a pivot. The motion was given by two wheels that ran a circular track that was laid on sills on the ground, but it made good meal. It also ground wheat and I built a bolt near by which a man could turn with one hand, while he fed the ground wheat in evenly with the other hand. It separated it into good flour, shorts and bran. It was a two-horse-power mill and of dry weather I got a big custom, but it ground so slow and I was so busy on the farm it did not pay me to attend to it. I would set the mill alright of a morning and the people would come with the gears on their horses, hitch in, grind out their grist and go home. If a man only had one horse he would join with a friend and both come. I kept the toll dish and a box to put the corn in convenient for each one to do their own tolling. This they generally did very honestly but occasionally a fellow would think he had hard enough time any way and would go home with out once

thinking of the toll. They would sometimes grind all day long and late in the night. I would loan them my tin lantern when it got dark and they would grind on until maybe the last thing I would hear before going to sleep would be the mill grinding.

Years afterwards Hezekiah Clements down on Dry creek bought a steam engine which ran a grist mill, saw mill and carding machine. This was a great relief to a large scope of country for both men and women. People no longer had to depend on the creek for their bread stuff. Men no longer had to use the whipsaw, and the women no longer had to card their wool by hand. To encourage the building of steam mills the Legislature passed an act allowing steam mills to take one sixth for toll, other mills being only allowed one eighth.

For several years while my mill was running people had a great deal of trouble with sick wheat. This wheat looked as nice and plump as any, made white flour, raised well and tasted well, but a short time after eating it a person would become sick at the stomach and would get no relief until they threw it all up. I never knew of any other bad results more than a good vomiting, but the people did not know what the matter was, and were almost afraid to eat wheat bread at all. By close observation I discovered a very small red spot of mold or fungus on the end of the grains and I learned to tell the good from the sick wheat and I would have to go far and near to examine seed wheat. While it would germinate and grow as well as any, farmers were afraid to sow it for fear it would come sick again. Stock of no kind would eat it, even the hungriest hog would not touch it. Many tested their wheat this way. I never knew what caused the red speck or why it stopped.

It was wonderful the number of wild pigeons there was at that time. They were the color and shape of the common dove but twice the size. They would come in droves in the latter part of the fall and winter time and feed on the beech nuts and other mast. When traveling they would pass high over in long lines reaching as far as the eye could see from one horizon to the other. Sometimes they would be so thick as to almost hide the sun and in such large gangs that they

would be ten minutes or more passing over, and yet they flew very swiftly. They would fly a great distance to their roosting grounds, often getting there long after dark and so thick would they roost that they broke large limbs off the trees by their weight, and of mornings there could be found a great many dead and crippled ones on the ground. They were more plentiful some years than others. Farmers disliked to see a pigeon year. They ate up the mast from the hogs. Sportsmen would kill plenty of them but they were generally poor and tough, and but little account to eat.

It was right difficult at times to get leather to make shoes. There were but few hides to be had, and by the slow process of tanning it took nearly twelve months to convert a hide into leather, but it was good leather when finished and wore well. Men would buy the leather at the tan-yard and take it to the shoemaker and have their family shoes made. I made a great many shoes. I would work on the farm of good weather and of bad weather and nights until bed time would shoemake. The neighbors would come, bringing a side of upper and a side of sole leather, and a half-dozen or so measures and I would make shoes for both male and female. I only wanted the length of the foot. I would guess at the balance. I made my own lasts. Both shoes were made on the same last. It was a great relief to the shoemaker when pegs were invented. Before that time shoes all had to be sewed with a wax-end, which was slow, hard work on thick, coarse shoes, but it was a long time before the people became satisfied with pegged shoes. For several years it was fashionable to have a squeaker in the shoes. This was made by lapping two pieces of leather between the two soles in such a manner that every time the wearer would step they would slip a little and make the squeak. You could hear a man walk a hundred yards with a pair of such shoes on. The louder the noise the more fashionable it was. Three or four men coming in church at the same time with good "squeakers" in their shoes would drown the preacher's voice. People took good care of their shoes, which were roughly and stoutly made. They would keep them well greased and change them on different feet every morning to keep them from running over. A neighbor saw a pair of boots in the store and

bought them. He was highly pleased with the fit but the next day when he had changed them he could scarcely walk at all. He went back and told the merchant they were every other day boots and when the merchant told him they were rights and lefts and he must wear them on the same foot all the time he became dissatisfied and wanted his money back but it was not long before everybody wanted rights and lefts, and that let me out of the trade. If I had to have two lasts to make one pair of shoes I would quit the business. I patched and half-soled along for awhile, but I never made a pair of rights and lefts.

On the morning of the thirteenth of November, 1833 occurred the great phenomenon of the stars falling or the meteoric shower.²⁸ I woke up at three o'clock, I knew not why, unless it was the light shining in my face. I went to the door, opened it, and beheld the most wonderful and beautiful sight I had ever seen. The whole elements were a blaze of splendor. The meteors were coming down almost as thick as snow flakes: not straight down, but a little sloping towards the North. None were nearer me, apparently, than a hundred yards. They did not seem to strike the earth but would go out when near the ground. They would almost cease for a time and then come down in showers again. They did not move fast but just floated slowly without noise. They were of many sizes—some mere specks, others as large apparently as a pint cup. The larger ones would frequently burst into thousands of bright bluish sparks that were most beautiful. My wife stood and watched them until the morning light made them dim and when the sun rose bright and clear they could be seen no more. It was astonishing, coming as it did in the latter part of the night, how so many persons beheld the sight. At Napoleon, a small town three miles from my home, lived Uncle Billy Conover, quite an intelligent and well-enough-to-do man, who was in the habit of tippling. That

²⁸This was the great Leonid shower which caused many people to assume that the end of the world had come. It was, however, observed and studied so carefully by astronomers that the science of meteoric astronomy is said to have been born on that date. *Encyclopedia Americana* (New York, 1948), XVIII, 713.

night he was sleeping off one of his sprees. His wife, a good pious woman, woke soon after midnight and was very much frightened. She aroused her husband and told him to get up quick the stars were all falling. But he did not believe such stuff. She ran screaming through the town calling to the people to get up. Returning home she found Uncle Billy still asleep. She called to him, "Oh! Mr. Conover, are you still asleep? Do wake up. The day of judgment has come." He said, "Pshaw Betsy, do come to bed. Don't be a fool. The day of judgment can't come in the night," and he slept on and missed that magnificent sight. But there was no sleep for the villagers. They were too badly frightened. They sent for the preacher and all repaired to the church, sang, prayed and exhorted until day-light. No one could behold that strange and wonderful sight without a feeling of solemnity and reverential awe.

About 1837 and for several years afterwards there was a great business depression. Times were hard, money scarce, and prices low. A good horse could be bought for \$30, milch cows from \$7 to \$10. Wheat was 30cts per bushel, corn 60cts a barrel (5 bu.), a good hand would work all day on the farm for thirty cents. I killed some nice hogs, hauled them to town and sold the pork to Willis Peak, the merchant, for 1½ cents per pound and took my pay in trade. Times gradually, but slowly, got better and ten or twelve years afterwards money got to be too plentiful, of the kind. Banks were issuing it everywhere. The money of the Kentucky Banks was mostly good, but Ohio, Indiana and other States had a free banking system that flooded the country with "wild-cat" money as it was called. The bills of these "wild-cat" banks were artistically engraved and promised great things, but it was badly depreciated and counterfeits at one time were about as plentiful as genuine bills and the people were very suspicious of it. The towns and almost every neighborhood had its money judge—men who were close observers and quick to detect anything wrong about a bill. Men would not accept any considerable amount of money without first submitting it to the inspection of a money judge. Merchants and other business men would take a semi-monthly magazine or pamphlet called *The Detector*, which would give the rating of the banks, describe counterfeits and

give the subscribers all the information they could for their protection. Yet, notwithstanding all these precautions, men would occasionally get caught by a counterfeit or a broken bank bill. Whenever they would get any of this "wild-cat" money they would be anxious to buy something to get rid of it. There were generally more buyers than sellers, which caused high prices.

The forties were years of improvement and advancement, on the farm as well as elsewhere. The old reap-hook had given away to the cradle,²⁹ with which a man could cut three times the amount of grain in a day. The Sloop and Peacock plows with their steel and cast mouldboard had driven the Cary from the field and the ground-hog threshing machine was fast taking the work from the frail and treading floor. Merchants were keeping a larger and more varied stock of goods. Salt had gotten cheap and plentiful. Sugar could be bought cheaper than it could be made. Stores were keeping flour by the barrel or they would open a barrel and sell you as little as you might want. They kept boots, shoes and hats in plenty and a big variety of women's dress goods and even ready made clothing for men.

The Lucifer match was invented and there was no more need for the steel flint and punk. No more borrowing fire from the neighbors but it was a debatable question with the people whether the match would prove a blessing or a curse. While they were a comfort and convenience, many were fearful they would cause accidental fires and would increase incendiarism and cause the destruction of much property.

Mr. Sayre, who lived on an adjoining farm, went to Cincinnati and paid fifty dollars for a cooking stove for his wife. That stove was the eighth wonder of the world to the women. They all had to go to see it and would stay for dinner to try how they liked the victuals cooked on a stove. Some liked them and some didn't, but they all wanted a stove. Why, it was nothing but pleasure for Mrs. Sayre to do her cooking. No stooping, but little heat. It took such a short time to get dinner,

²⁹A scythe with an attachment of long finger-like rods to catch the cut stalks so that they could be deposited in bunches ready to be tied.

she could cook everything at the same time. I believe of all things invented by man nothing has equalled the cook stove for the comfort and happiness of the human family and especially for womankind, for to stoop over a hot fire for an hour or two three times a day during the hot summer months and lift the heavy cooking utensils was a burden that was almost intolerable. The women would have fire blotches all over their faces, arms and hands caused by the heat of the fire while cooking.

The musters were still continued but they had lost their glory. The war spirit of the people had long since died out and men would rather be at home cultivating their crops than senselessly tramping around over the parade ground, and nothing but the fear of a fine would cause them to attend. One day we met at town to muster, but just as we had formed ranks on the drill grounds there came pouring out of an old warehouse that stood near by a company of nearly fifty men, the like of which no one had ever seen before. For meanness the boys began to yell "earthquakes, earthquakes!" They had on hideous looking false faces and their uniforms were of all colors and kinds of shabbiness, and they had sticks, brooms and paddles for guns. Our Captain could no longer control his men. They all broke ranks to look at the earthquakes, who, in obedience to the command of their Captain, would go through all manner of ludicrous maneuvers and girations. When they started to call the roll our Captain hurried up with pencil and paper in hand to get their names so as to have them arrested, but their names were as ridiculous and outlandish as their costumes. They returned back in their fort at the warehouse and disbanded, and we did not know who they were, but that complete burlesque had the desired effect. It broke up the musters and everybody was glad of it. The officers afterwards summoned the men to muster, but none would go. Earthquakes were taking place all over the State and the next Legislature repealed the muster law.

Good steam boats were now running, giving us daily mails, pleasant and swift travel, and good shipping facilities to either Cincinnati or Louisville. The Ben Franklin came down one evening & blew a blast that alarmed the natives, for no one

had ever heard a noise as loud and long as a steam whistle. Some quit their work and went to town to see what was the matter. An old negro woman who was out in a corn field gathering beans, ran home and almost out of breath told her mistress that there was a panther down there in the woods, but it soon got to be a familiar sound and every evening almost as punctual as a clock that whistle would sound, echo and reverberate through those rough Gallatin hills.

We could get plenty of newspapers now published at Cincinnati and Louisville, but of all of them the Louisville Weekly Journal was largely the favorite, especially among the Whigs, containing as it did so many of George D. Prentice's long, interesting and logical editorials; so many of his pithy, keen-cutting paragraphs and occasionally a beautiful poem from his pen. The Journal was a weekly feast for which the people would ride many miles to the post office to get on the day of its arrival. The subscription price was \$2.50 in advance or \$3.00 at the end of the year. The postage on it was 6½cts per quarter.

In 1844 Henry Clay, Kentucky's idol, had again been nominated for the Presidency and the Whigs had high hopes of electing him this time. Four years before they had swept the country for General Harrison with a hard cider and log cabin campaign and the rallying cry of "Tipecanoe and Tyler too!" And now they would do the same thing with the "Sage of Ashland — Harry of the West" and the enthusiasm and excitement of the people was never so great before. All fall was given up to public speaking, rallying, campaign singing and barbecues. The day of the election the voters went to the polls in delegations. The Whigs carried hemp stalks and the Democrats polk stalks, and it took cool and sober heads to prevent trouble between the two parties. When the news came of Clay's defeat there was greater sorrow, disappointment and chagrin among Kentuckians than there perhaps ever was before or since.

The following winter Texas was annexed and admitted into the Union as a State, and then came the Mexican war with all its excitement and the people again were imbued with a martial

spirit. There was a company of cavalry volunteers, composed of our best young men. The company was to leave one Sunday evening by boat for the war. Nearly every body went to Warsaw to see them off, to wish them well and that they might have a safe return home. When the boat came down they embarked amidst the shouts of the crowd and the cries, screams and lamentations of their mothers, sisters and other relatives. They became Company B. of the first regiment of Kentucky cavalry. Col. May³⁰ did valiant service for General Taylor in most all of his victories of that war. A few were killed, others died from diseases, but most of them returned home to tell of their wonderful feats of chivalry and how they fought and whipped the bloody Mexicans.

In 1850 the new Constitution was adopted, among other changes, making all of the State and county offices elective and the year afterwards the common school system was established. The county was laid off in districts of the proper size and in order to get the benefit of the three months free school the people all over the county went to work building school houses.

In the summer of 1859 having heard that Robt. Boyd, of Hancock county, wished to sell his farm, I went down to see him and bought, but Mr. Boyd was in the midst of a very warm and exciting canvass for the Legislature against Eugene Faulkner and would draw up no writings, and requested me to keep it a secret for fear the knowledge that he had sold his farm would injure his election. I went back home and returned again Tuesday after the election and Mr. Boyd was so disappointed and mortified over his defeat that he was more than anxious to close the contract. I put my family, my stock, and farming implements and everything I possessed on a flat boat, and after floating two hundred miles in eight days I landed and became a citizen of Hancock county, Oct. 15, 1859.

I was well pleased with my new home. I was among good, intelligent, accomodating people and my family in the midst

³⁰Probably Charles A. May who, according to Smith, "became a newspaper hero, and for reasons that are rather hard to understand, was promoted several times during the war" Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico* (New York, 1919), I, 34.

of cultivated, social and refined society. I had for neighbors the three brothers, William, Dr. Green and Baird Sterett, and their venerable father, Capt. John Sterett, also Geo. M. Younger, Thos. M. Newman and Geo. Jarboe, all noble men. There are yet living of my old neighbors of that time Dr. David Davison, Chas. E. Couty, Chas. E. Price, Henry E. Haynes and D. L. Adair. We had a good broad level road to Hawesville which was quite a lively business town.

The county officials were William Mason, county judge; James E. Stone, county and circuit clerk; William Miller, sheriff and J. M. Oldham, jailer, and Manly Newman post master. Among the merchants, Stephen Powers and Mike Hogg sold goods where C. T. Duncan's drug store now stands. John G. and Charles Duncan kept at the Taber corner, John Martin across the street a few doors from the corner, Samuel F. Brown and George W. McAdams and Mike Fritz near where the latter's sons now keep. Washington Carlton and Robert Shevils kept hotel and Mr. Thomas and Mr. Thornton were our blacksmiths and Joel Jackson was running a mill in the upper end of town.

There was a great deal of coal being mined near town at that time. It was loaded on barges which the steam boats would tow up the river, take off what coal they wanted and let the barge and man leisurely float back. This was a new and novel sight to me, as I had never been in a coal district before.

The next spring and summer myself and the boys worked very hard, but we were abundantly rewarded by a good crop and everything the farmer had to sell was in demand at fair prices and time was passing very pleasantly with me. I was getting acquainted with the people of the county and I liked them.

Almost every morning some large palatial steam boat would swiftly pass down bound for the Mississippi river and New Orleans, and there were numerous smaller boats for the minor rivers. Coal boats would float by, generally two lashed together, and often when awake of nights I could hear the splash of their oars as they would pull around the point. Flat boats, "Broad Horns", loaded with all manner and kinds

of produce for the Southern coast were seldom out of sight that fall. Gaudily painted store boats with flags flying would be lying at every landing anxious to sell or barter. There were a great many negroes in the bottom and of mornings as they started to gather corn at sun rise they would commence singing. The song would be caught up by the ones on the adjoining farm. Others would catch the tune and join in, and on, and on, the song would go, until the whole bottoms would ring with the melody of negro singing. Everybody was cheerful and in good spirits. All was peace, good will and prosperity, and then alas! came the war—the cruel bloody war, the third war of my recollection, and the worst of all—fratricidal war, in which brother [fought] against brother, son opposed father, neighbor was suspicious and fearful of neighbor, and the best of friends became deadly enemies, people were afraid to talk, afraid to give an opinion or express a sentiment. Men were afraid to stay at home and afraid to leave home, and no one felt safe or secure in his rights or liberties. For four long years there was anxiety, trouble, distress and sorrow and the war ended, but old times had passed away and a new era was established.

When I think back over my long, but to me brief, life and remember the companions of my youth and the friends of my younger manhood, I feel as like some lonely tree that had grown up amidst some dense forest which, by reason of its unworthiness, had been spared by the woodman's axe, and while I well recollect where others stood, I alone am standing.