

A BOY'S STORY OF PIONEER LIFE IN MICHIGAN.

BY THEODORE E. POTTER.

I was born in Saline, Washtenaw county, Michigan, March 10, 1832. My early life was spent like that of other boys born in the territory about that time. My father and mother, with two small children, came to Michigan in the spring of 1830 from Cayuga county, New York, by way of the Erie canal to Buffalo, and from there by steamboat to Detroit within seven day's time. They then walked to Plymouth, thirty miles, in two days, carrying their two children in their arms, stopping a few days with relatives there, then walked to Saline, a distance of twenty miles further, where they first settled, and my father built one of the first frame houses in that part of the country, one story high, and located on the present village plat. In this house he not only lived, but worked at tailoring, a trade he had learned when a boy at Huntington, Pa., where he was born in 1798. His father died when he was quite young and at eighteen years of age my father went with a party of surveyors from Cleveland, Ohio, to St. Louis, and a year following with another party from Toledo, Ohio, surveying a road through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois to the Mississippi river at Quincy, Ill., thus learning something of surveying and of the vast wilderness of the great west. My earliest recollection of life was when I was three and one-half years old, living in a log-house, on a new farm and my parents going two miles from home to attend a funeral, leaving me with my sister and oldest brother.

I tried to go up stairs on a ladder, fell and caught one leg between the rounds of the ladder and broke it above the knee, from which I suffered so much pain that to stop my crying my brother, who did not know my leg was broken, carried me from one bed to another, my broken leg dangling, and it was four hours before my father returned. He started on foot for Saline, five miles away, to get a doctor, and by the time he came my broken leg was very badly swollen. After it was set, my father took a two-inch auger and bored holes in one of the logs of the house, drove in long pegs, laid boards on them, and mother fixed up a nice bed for me, and for six weeks I laid on that firm bed that could not jar nor spring before I was allowed to try to walk again.

When I was four years old my father took his ox-team and went to

Detroit to meet some relatives of ours who were coming to locate near us, and brought home a bright, new wagon. While my father and mother's nephew, Louis Phelps, were gone to look at the last government 160-acre piece of land left in our township, I took an ax and chopped off the tongue of the new wagon. This was a serious offense, and in those days the vigorous application of a green birch was the ready and common mode of punishment for a four-year-old offender, and but for the intervention of one of the new comers, and wife of the owner of the wagon, I might not have survived the ordeal to tell the story.

Not long after we moved back to Saline where my father took up a business of surveying, which took him from home much of the time for two years. At that time Saline was the largest village on the old stage route between Detroit and Chicago, and when the four or six-horse stagecoaches came in with a grand flourish of whip and tin horn-blowing and prancing horses, nearly every person in town would be at the tavern—all business at a stand still—to see, as a great event, with almost as much of a curiosity as a menagerie, who had come or who were going and the horses changed.

The Michigan Central railroad was finished as far as Ypsilanti, the farthest west of any railroad at that time, and to celebrate the event all the people within reach of Ypsilanti were invited there to a barbacue.

My father went and took me with him; when we got there, early in the day, we found the one street finely decorated with flags, and a brass band filling the air with music. We next visited the place where the ox was being roasted over a huge log fire, to make sure by our own eyes that we and the multitude to be present, were not to be disappointed of our great dinner we had come so far to share.

Then we went to the depot to witness the arrival of the first passenger train from Detroit, on which were the officers of the road, with General Cass and other prominent men who were to speak. About two inches of light snow had fallen that morning, and when the train came in sight on the slight up-grade near town it presented the novel spectacle of two men sitting on opposite ends of a cross-beam in front of the engine, holding large splint brooms to sweep the light snow off the track. That was the first and original snowplow of sixty-five years ago. The train consisted of several flat cars loaded with passengers, and two passenger cars, made like the old-fashioned Concord coaches, with doors on each side, for the officers of the road and speakers.

For a new country the crowd of people was very great, and to a boy

eight years old, it was a wonderful sight. After the dinner of roast ox, baked potatoes, pumpkin pie and ginger-bread, the people formed in line behind the band and marched to the speaking stand, where General Cass and the railroad officials orated eloquently over the great growth and prospects of Michigan, much more than fulfilled since that time. As my father had just returned from a surveying trip, he was called upon for a short speech descriptive of the new country.

On reaching home late that night, my mother asked me what I had seen and heard that day; I told her I had seen the roasted ox, the brass band, the railroad train, the two men with brooms to sweep the track, and heard General Cass and my father make a speech to the people.

Not long after this we moved on another new farm, which my father soon sold and moved to another still newer, on the Saline and Monroe road.

My father was a strong Whig politically, and in 1840, we learned that General Harrison, "Old Tippecanoe," was to speak at Fort Meigs, in Ohio, seventy-five miles from Saline, and he and Mr. Parsons, who owned a sawmill, got up a party of sixty to go that distance to hear him. They fitted up a huge wagon with the large wheels used to cart logs to the sawmill, by arranging long seats on each side, a flagstaff near the driver's seat with the "Stars and Stripes" waving from it, and part way up a platform with two live coons on it. In the rear end was a log-cabin in which were two barrels of cider with faucets and cups to accommodate the oft thirsty passengers. These with a brass band of eight pieces, and sixteen horses, made the jolly outfit. As the grand cavalcade was passing our log-house on the road, my father, who was in charge as marshal stopped it long enough for the band to play one of its favorite airs, the men to take a drink of cider, and give three cheers for "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," and so the big train moved on, to return in seven days from its great campaign with no other loss than the two barrels of cider and the time they had spent.

After this event, my father traded farms and moved three times within two years; the last time on a well-improved farm of eighty acres near Plymouth, Wayne county, purchased of a relative who had turned Mormon, and gone to Nauvoo, Ill. This farm had good buildings on it, and was near a district school. So that when we moved on it in the spring of 1842 I was ten years old, and had enjoyed very little opportunity for education, as this was the twelfth time we had moved since I was born. I now for the first time had the advantage of a very good school near home, which I improved until January, 1845.

Two exciting events occurred during our stay here. One was a cyclone coming in the night when we were all in bed, carrying away the roof of our house, compelling us in the midst of a heavy rain to seek shelter in the barn, and in a small kitchen attached to the house. But within two days, with the help of neighbors, we had a new roof on, though we had to go to Ypsilanti for the materials. The other event, nearly a fatal one, occurred on Christmas day, 1844. A boy about my age by the name of Clayton, came to our house to have me go with him to the woods to hunt partridges. My father and oldest brother were away, and unknown to my mother I took the old musket that my father had carried in the battle of Oswego, N. Y., in the war of 1812, with its flintlock and steel ramrod, and after shooting several times at squirrels and partridges but killing none, we went to shooting at a mark. Tiring of this, we varied our sport by loading with blank cartridges and firing at each other at three or four rods apart. In our excitement I forgot to take the steel ramrod out of the barrel after loading my gun, and when I fired the rod passed through the Clayton boy's coat sleeve, drawing blood, but doing no serious injury. That ended the mimic warfare. We agreed to go home and keep perfectly quiet about our Christmas celebration. In 1856, I met Clayton at the State fair in Detroit, and he said he had not found the rod yet.

Ten days after that Christmas hunt our family were on the move again with ox-teams, going to the unbroken forests of Eaton county, where we occupied the new double log-house built in advance by father and my oldest brother. To young persons who may never have seen these pioneer shanties, much less have seen one built, a description may be of interest. Usually the only tools were an ax, a saw, an auger, and sometimes an adz.

After clearing ground sufficient for this double shanty, sixteen by twenty feet, the straightest beech and elm trees, ten to twelve inches in diameter, were cut into logs sixteen by twenty feet long, and hauled to the place. The largest logs were selected for the front, so that when ready for the roof, which would have a slope of about three feet, the shanty would have an inside height of ten feet in front, and seven feet in the rear walls. Basswood trees were then cut for the roof, split in two, the centers dug out like a trough, and the halves laid trough side up near each other first, then others trough side down to lap over the upper edges of the first tier, making a waterproof roof, without rafters or shingles; for floors white ash trees were cut, split, lined and hewed to make straight edges, and laid. Each shanty was twenty feet long

and stood eight feet apart, all under this one roof, giving a covered alley way between them. The doorways were cut in the walls to open out into this alley. The doors, also made out of hewn split ash, hung on wooden hinges, and closed by a wooden latch, with a piece of raw-hide string to pull the latch up to open the door.

Not a nail was used to build these two shanties. All the money spent on them was to buy two seven by nine six-lighted windows. Fireplaces were cut through the logs, and stick-chimneys built upon the outside laid and plastered with clay. When ready, my father started with the ox-team after the family, leaving my oldest brother in charge.

It took five days to make the trip, and required two neighbors with their ox-teams to move the family, furniture, provisions and corn. Though not quite thirteen years old, my father sent me ahead one day in advance with a drove of stock—three cows, two yearlings, five sheep and four hogs. Only a neighbor's boy about my age accompanied me, guided by a rough map my father made of the route, and name of the tavern where I was to stay over night. I was allowed six days to take the stock through, and was not overtaken by the teams until we reached Eaton Rapids, the fifth day. We had twelve miles to go the next day, four of them over a new road just cut through, that no team had ever gone over.

We reached our shanty home before night, and received a warm and glad welcome by my brother, with cheerful fires blazing in both shanties to greet the family of seven children, the oldest sixteen, and the youngest two years old, besides father and mother.

As we had no fodder for the stock, and only the corn in the ear hauled seventy-five miles, browsing was the only hope of life for them, and our principal business for the next three months was cutting down trees for them to feed on. Within two days after entering our new home my oldest sister and myself came down with the measles followed within one month by all the rest of the children.

My oldest brother had a relapse and came near dying; his hair nearly all came out, and left him as bald as a bare rock the rest of his life. Still we managed to clear seven acres and get in the spring crops, such as corn, potatoes, pumpkins and squash. After selling his Wayne county farm, paying up the mortgage and other debts, my father had \$300 left to begin life anew and make another home. But necessary expenses until a crop could be raised had reduced that to \$100, enough to buy eighty acres of government land. So he decided to go on foot to Ionia, fifty miles away, and make the purchase. The evening before

going he laid the 100 silver dollars out on the cherry table, the nicest piece of furniture we had, and let us all see and handle and count over the largest amount of money we children had ever seen. After he had gone we were greatly worried for fear he would be robbed, carrying so much money alone and on foot, and talked among ourselves a great deal about it and until he returned on the fourth day safe, sound and successful, to our great joy and relief.

The crops on the seven acres of new ground proved very successful and when harvested three acres were sown to wheat. The next winter my father hauled tamarack logs to the sawmill at Eaton Rapids to be sawed into lumber for a frame barn, giving half for the sawing, and in the spring built the first frame barn in that part of Benton township.

It was in 1846, and the barn was thirty by forty feet, and in the stable of that barn my sister taught the first school in that vicinity, having seven scholars, three of them of our family.

In the following July my father cut our three acres of wheat with a sickle, and I bound and set it up. The next day he cut one acre for a neighbor, binding and setting it in shock, and taking three bushels of wheat for his pay. I went with him to do the binding. It was very hot that day, and the field surrounded by heavy timber, shut out all cool breezes.

It being so hot he drank frequently and freely of cold water from a spring near by until we finished the work. But it proved to be his last day's work. He was taken very sick, became unconscious, and on the twenty-sixth day of July, 1846, was buried in the little wheat-field on his new frontier farm at the early age of forty-eight years, leaving a widow with seven children and a farm of seven acres cleared, for their only dependence in life.

As soon as my mother's two brothers, owning fine farms near Auburn, New York, heard of my father's death, they came out to see us, with the purpose of taking us all back with them to New York and taking care of us. But my mother would consent to no offer or proposition they could make. They plead that the family, they were sure, could not support themselves in such a wilderness as Michigan then was, and they could not leave them there to starve.

But my mother replied that all she had to live for was her seven children, the oldest one nearly seventeen and the youngest three years old, and as she had moved fifteen times since she was married she would not move again as long as she could keep the family together. The winter before my father's death, my oldest brother and sister had

been sent to Vermontville to school for one term and I was told that I should go the next winter, but my father's death put a stop to our schooling for the next four years, when a district schoolhouse was built on the corner of our farm, and a school opened, greatly relieving the anxiety of my mother over her children growing up without educational advantages, owing to the fact that wherever we had lived and a school started we moved off to some new part of the country, where there were none.

Before my father died, he was planning to sell his farm and move to the prairies of Wisconsin, where he thought we could get a living easier, and no doubt would have done so the next spring if he had lived. But his death put an end to the roving habits of eighteen years, and firmly decided my mother to stay where she was as long as her children would stay with her.

As my father had been elected justice of the peace for the township in 1845, and also supervisor in 1846, and was filling both offices, his death was deeply felt as a great loss by the entire community. The day after his burial we drew the wheat into the barn, and the day following, threshed ten bushels of it with flails and at night shelled five bushels of corn, and the third day I was sent with our ox-team and the ten bushels of wheat from the three acres and the five bushels of corn to be ground into flour and meal at the Delta mills. On the way I met a Mr. Samuel Nickerson with a horse and buckboard at a place in the road too narrow for the teams to pass each other. Having an ax with me, I went to cutting the road wider, and in doing so stepped near a large rattlesnake, that warned me by his vicious rattling, to keep out of his way. After killing the snake and getting the teams past each other, Mr. Nickerson learned who I was, and told me he was a lawyer, was present at my father's funeral, and only four weeks before had tried a case before him as justice of the peace at Dimondale.

I reached the mill before dark, but had to stay over night to get my grist, sleeping in the mill, and got home next day with flour and meal enough to last us three months. Early in the spring we had chopped three acres of timber near the new barn, and we wanted to log and burn it and put it into wheat that fall. In September, we arranged to exchange work with two men to help do the logging; one was township treasurer by the name of Tagget, living four miles west of us, and one of the first settlers in the county.

I was but fourteen years old. We were living in a log shanty shingled with hollow logs, and the floor made of logs and then hewed.

My father had died only a month before, leaving my mother with seven children and seven acres of cleared land, three cows and one yoke of oxen.

My oldest brother was eighteen and youngest three years of age, with no schools near us and but few settlers in the township. Our cows, with bells on, ran at large in the woods. In stormy weather they often laid out over night and it was my duty to look them up early in the morning. One day I started out with my younger brother and a small dog. We could hear the bells about a mile away. As we came in sight of the cows the dog began to bark at a large buck deer with great antlers. I went forward to help the dog and the deer left fighting the dog and pitched at me. I ran behind a big black oak tree, and when the deer made an attack on me the dog would snap at his heels; my youngest brother stood looking on about ten rods off, badly frightened and screaming at the top of his voice. I finally succeeded in getting a dry oak limb for a club, and whenever he made an attack on me I would strike him on the head, and finally succeeded in knocking him down and pounded him on the head. My brother came up and we thought we could draw the deer home. We drew him about two rods and could draw him no further. In our excitement we forgot all about the cows, and started for home on the run to carry the news to the family.

We found our oldest brother at home, with two men who were helping him do some work. We told them what we had done, but it was hard to get them to believe it. They finally concluded to go with us and see for themselves, and found the deer, which proved to be a very large one.

They dressed it and then we all returned home and had plenty of venison for the family for a whole week. The daring act of a boy was published in our only county paper and copied by Detroit papers, and commented on as a great achievement for a boy only fourteen years old. My mother told me that from that time on I should have a gun to carry whenever I went after the cows.

For the first time in my life I was permitted to hunt with a gun. There was handed down in our family a revolutionary gun which had a history that could be traced back to 1775, and was used by my father in 1812 at the battle of Oswego, N. Y.

It was an old smooth bore, flintlock with steel ramrods, cartridge box and belt. This was my first gun, and I felt real proud of it; and whenever I had an occasion to go into the woods, this historic musket was with me, loaded, primed, and ready for any large game that dared to

appear. The same month I killed the deer with a club, I had a shot at no less than five deer and had missed everyone of them.

My mother said to me, "Ed., if you expect to supply the family with venison, you had better trade your gun off for a dry oak limb." That fall, in September, one evening just before dark, word came to our house that a bear was killing the hogs of a neighbor two miles from us, and wanted us boys to come at once and bring our guns and lanterns. The man who brought word said that he would go after Tile Cogswell and his four bear dogs, who lived two miles farther away.

My oldest brother and myself started at once, he taking his rifle and I my old historic musket. When we got there we found the bear had injured one of the hogs badly, breaking his back, but Mr. Jones' wife, with two dogs, had kept the bear from killing it and carrying it off. The night was very dark, but it was evident from the way the dogs were barking and howling that Bruin was not far off.

We killed the hog, and told Mrs. Jones to take the dogs to the house and shut them up, and we would draw the hog to a log bridge, which was about ten feet high, secrete ourselves behind a large elm tree and await developments. My brother conceived this plan, claiming the bear was hungry and would follow the hog where we had dragged it. We took our position several feet lower than the bridge, so that we could look up towards the sky and see the bear if he came on the bridge.

We had not been waiting more than thirty minutes before Mr. Bruin made his appearance on the bridge. He evidently had scented us, and was suspicious of danger, as he squared himself broadside to us, and looked down at us, my brother whispered—"Now is our time, take aim,—fire." Bruin made a jump, struck the bank within six feet of us, ran into a large beech top within ten rods of us, making terrific groans as if in great pain and anguish, breaking and chewing up the limbs near him.

Not knowing what he would do next, we lighted our lanterns and took possession of the bridge, determined if necessary to fight it out on the bridge. In all new countries the early settlers have certain signals for such occasions. In the timber, where settlers are few and far between, they usually blow horns, ring cow-bells or fire guns.

As soon as we had fired at the bear, we heard three shots fired which indicated that Tile Cogswell and his bear dogs were on the way and not far off. In a short time we heard horns blowing and cow-bells ringing and within an hour from the time we had fired our first shots

at least twenty men were on the bridge listening to our story, and to the groans of Bruin.

Tile Cogswell and his guns were selected to interview Mr. Bruin at once. The dogs were let loose, and with lanterns and guns, we all followed. We found the bear so badly wounded he could not run, but he made a desperate fight with the dogs. He killed one of the dogs and another was killed by one of the men in shooting at the bear. Cogswell, who saved the rest of his dogs, rushed forward to within ten feet of the bear and shot him through the head. We then held a council and decided that two of the men should go with me and get my mother's ox-team and stone-boat and draw the bear to our place that night and dress it, and the next day have a holiday, when all the neighbors within five miles were to come and receive a share of the largest black bear that had ever been killed in that part of the State.

It was a great relief to all the settlers for miles around, to know that this particular bear was dead. He had been a regular visitor for the past two years to nearly every farmer who kept hogs in the entire township. The bear weighed before being dressed, a little over four hundred pounds. It was found that both my brother and myself hit the bear, and that either of the shots would have proved fatal as they passed clear through him, and not six inches apart. My brother then advised me to do my hunting after dark, as it was evident I could see to shoot better in the dark than in the light. At least one hundred settlers visited our home the next day and received a portion of the carcass that had cost them so dearly in pork.

In the summer of 1847, we cleared up the ten acres, chopped the previous winter, sowed the same to wheat in the fall, from which we harvested nearly 400 bushels. That year the State capitol was located at Lansing, within twelve miles of us, settlers were coming in rapidly, new roads were being surveyed and opened to the capitol from all the surrounding towns and villages, and general improvement and prosperity were manifest. A company of ten persons surveying an air-line road from Battle Creek through Bellevue and Charlotte, to Lansing, stopped over night at our house, sleeping on the cabin floors, my mother getting supper and breakfast for them. In the morning the head surveyor wanted another hand, and offered twenty-five cents a day and board until they returned, and I was selected to take the position, to carry water, make fires and do such other miscellaneous work as should be required. He inquired if I was the boy who killed the buck with a club, and being told that I was, said they had two guns with them,

but had killed no game except a few partridges and a woodchuck, and told me they would expect me to furnish the party with venison, even if I had to do it with a club, but that I could use the guns if I wished, and take time to hunt while they were at work on the way. We started early but made only three miles that day, as the route from our place was almost wholly through an unbroken forest of hardwood timber, the only cleared land being my mother's farm.

My first day's hunt netted seven partridges for supper. The next day we made less than a mile, crossing "the old maid's swamp" covered with a thick growth of tamarack and willow brush, with mud and water underneath. Nearly all day I cut brush and small trees for a path, but as soon as near hard land, I was ordered ahead to locate a good camping spot, and soon found one near a stream of water. While preparing the ground I saw two deer on the trot coming towards me. I seized my gun, dropped behind a log, and when they were within five rods of me I bleated, they stopped, I fired and broke the back of one, and cut his throat and went back and reported to the party that I had located the camp, and a man was sent with me to get it all ready for the night. When they came up they were all surprised to find a deer, dressed and hung up ready for cooking, and all had plenty of venison that night, and during the rest of the way. This was my first deer killed with a gun. My former failures were from excitement and aiming too high. After this I never had another attack of "buck fever."

The fourth night we camped near where Waverly Park now is, west of Lansing. Next morning we heard cow-bells and some one chopping. Some of us followed the sound, and on reaching Grand river saw a log-house on the other side, where Mr. Cooley lived. He came across in his boat, and told us we were within three miles of Lansing, and took one of our party in his boat to town, returning about noon, accompanied by Charles Bush, a prominent citizen of the new city, bringing us a good dinner and by 4 o'clock p. m. we were all at the corner of Washington avenue and Main street, where they were then building the Benton house, to accommodate the first legislature, to meet in January, 1848. I had seen brick buildings before, but had no idea how they were put together until I saw them using mortar with the brick on the Benton house. The influx of people was so great, and the houses so few, that we could find no roof to sleep under. We followed Washington avenue, which had just been under-brushed, north to Briggs' store, where we bought supplies for our supper, there pitched our tent under a large elm tree just south of the store, and camped for the night. Next morn-

ing, after breakfast, most of the party walked father north, past the frame of the first capitol building, ready to be raised that day, on to North Lansing, where there were two or three small stores, and a saw-mill.

All the settlers around Lausling had been invited to the "raising" that day, jugs of whisky provided free for all, and also dinner and supper, and the whole proceeding was after the fashion of an old style raising of the heavy hewed frame of an old-fashioned barn or house. The most of our party assisted at the raising, and also at the dinner and supper, and helped empty the jugs, but rallied at our tent under the elm tree at night, every man sober.

Next morning we started on our return, following our previous trail four miles, then started a new survey half a mile south of the previous one, which was ultimately adopted as far as Charlotte, evading half a mile of swamp crossed by the first survey. In after years the Peninsular railroad followed our first survey east of Charlotte most of the way to Lansing.

On the tenth day from my leaving, I reached home much elated over my experience and my first visit to Lansing, the infant capital, and hub of the State of Michigan.

In the following month of September, I made my second visit to Lansing, under the following circumstances: A man by the name of Corydon P. Sprague, a relative of my father, with his young wife, both school-teachers, on their way to Wisconsin, visited us and other near relatives. He went to see Lansing and concluded to settle there and open a select school. Having no means to build a school-house, five families of his relatives volunteered to go and build one for him, and make him a present of it. So about the 10th of September, 1847, Samuel Preston, John Strange, George P. Carman, William H. Taylor and Theodore E. Potter, to represent his father, all from Eaton county, with axes and teams, met in Lansing near the junction of Grand and Cedar rivers, where Bush & Thomas had given a lot for the purpose, and near where the Potter Manufacturing Company's factory was afterwards built, commenced cutting timber on the lands of speculators, who were not there either to consent or object, hauled the logs to the lot with their ox-teams, and in ten days had completed a two-story log school-house and residence,—the first school-house ever built in Lansing, hauling the pine lumber for the floors and desks from Flushing, a distance of forty miles.

In this two-story log-house Mr. Sprague and wife lived and opened

the first select school in Lansing, having a full attendance the first winter, Mrs. Sprague teaching the primary classes and he the more advanced. But during the summer of 1848, new schools were opened in other parts of the city, as most of the people were settling along Washington avenue, on the north side of the river, leaving the Sprague school too much out of reach and inconvenient of access.

In the fall of that year he opened but one department, and his wife taught a district school at Delta Mills, until she was taken sick and died, and he became disheartened and returned to his former home near Auburn, New York. Afterwards he went to California, located at Sonora, and in 1850, was elected a member of the California legislature, serving two terms, went to Oregon, practiced law, married his second wife, returned to California, became a leading lawyer of the State, and is now living, at eighty-five years of age, on a fruit farm.

While building the log school-house, old Chief Okemos, then eighty years old, and a few of his tribe were camped near us. They had been hunting near our home not long before, and he knew me, and also about my killing the buck with a club, and had said it was a brave and dangerous deed. He delighted to prove his own bravery and many dangers by showing the numerous scars he carried from many conflicts with both Indians and white men, made by the tomahawk, knife and rifle. History tells us of the British commissioning him as colonel of an Indian regiment to fight the Americans at the battle of the Thames, and afterwards he went to Detroit and agreed with General Cass to lay down the tomahawk and scalping knife, and became a good Indian, and never broke his agreement. He took great interest in me, calling me his "Pick-a-nin-ne," "She-mo-ke-man" (white young man), and watched me intently while making a crotch dray, and hauling and skidding logs with the oxen and a log chain. As it was very warm, and I was working with bare feet, he pointed to his own feet, and said: "Squaw make moccasins—you wear moccasin,"—and at night he took me to his wigwam. The squaws looked at my bare feet and then at each other and began to shake with laughter. One of the men said they were making fun of my bare feet. Soon one of the squaws handed Okemos a pair of new, nicely beaded moccasins, and he asked me to put them on. I offered to pay for them, but he refused it. I then proudly walked around showing them in all their wigwams, greatly to their delight.

Since then I have been conversant with numerous tribes of Indians, but Okemos is the only Indian I ever knew to give a present to a white

man. I did not go barefoot again in Lausling. Then Okemos asked me to have a night hunt with him up the Cedar river. Three of us went in a large canoe, Okemos in the bow, I in the center, and another Indian in the stern to steer the boat. We rowed up about two miles and stopped until it was dark. The weather was warm and sultry, and mosquitoes very thick and tormenting. Torches were lighted and then the boat was permitted to slowly drift down the stream in complete silence. Okemos in the bow of the boat sat armed with a hatchet on a long handle. In a short time we saw the antlers of a large deer's head protruding out of the water, his body immersed to keep off the mosquitoes, and his eyes shining like two small brilliant stars. Before we reached him we discovered two more heads of submerged deers, all intently gazing at the bewildering lights, unconscious of danger until Okemos with his hatchet struck the antlered one in the head, then struck one of the others, which made such a splashing in the water as to frighten the third one away. Before midnight we were back to camp with two fine deer. This was the first time I took a hand in this kind of still hunt, though I had heard about it and practiced it on the lakes and rivers of the west years afterwards.

Okemos lived to be over 100 years of age, and died at one of his camps on the Looking Glass river east of DeWitt, his body lashed to his favorite pony and taken to Shim-le-con, an Indian mission village on Grand river, south of Portland, where it was buried.

After going home from Lausling and finishing up the fall work we bought eighty acres more of government land adjoining us on the east, and during the winter chopped twenty acres of that, burning a large part of the timber while green, gathering the ashes to make into "black-salts" by a neighbor who had an ashery and worked them up on shares. The black-salts were sold to merchants in Charlotte, who had them made into potash, then drawn to Marshall and shipped to Buffalo, where they were made into saleratus, ready to be shipped back to the merchants and sold to the same families who had cut the timber and burned the logs that made the ashes they had raked up to make the black-salts that made the saleratus that raised our pancakes.

In those days this was the only paying business the now very valuable hard timber could be put to by those early settlers, to get their land cleared. As an example of this, my oldest brother, George, filed on forty acres adjoining us on the north, and before the time for payment expired he had cut timber enough off from it and burned into ashes to make black-salts to sell to pay for the land. Fever and ague

was very prevalent in Michigan and hardly any family escaped it. Ague shakes were the fashion, quinine the remedy, some carrying it loose in the vest pocket handy to take a pinch at any moment while at work. My mother said she finally wore out the ague after a ten year's fight, by the bitter help of that drug, and every fall all the children of our family but me were sure to have it, and seeing the example of it around me so much I became an expert in imitating the shakes, but never had a genuine experience of the bone-rattling, teeth-chattering, flesh-burning, which no amount of resolution, and perspiration, quinine and cold water could fully prevent. Still young people of today must not think we young people of those days had no fun. Amusements of various kinds were common, such as young people and children play in all ages and countries. Besides in that new country then we had our house and barn raisings, huskings, apple-parings, spelling matches, coon hunts and other sports not known now, having become obsolete with the passing of pioneer days—amusements in which old and young participated.

Eaton county had sixteen townships, which were divided into four election precincts of four townships each. In our precinct, comprising the townships of Windsor, Benton, Oneida and Delta, the first election was held at the house of Walker Nichols, five miles south of Grand Ledge and twelve miles southwest of Lansing, ten years before the capitol was located there.

At this first spring election, township officers were to be elected for one year. Of course, it brought together all the men and queer characters from all those four townships. Prominent among them was a man by the name of Bailey, living about two miles north of Charlotte, one of the first settlers in the county, noted as a violin player, and a very social and agreeable fellow among the settlers.

Some had come on horseback, and for amusement Bailey offered to run a race of ten rods on foot, with a heavy fence rail on his shoulder, against a man from near Delta on horseback, the bet to be a gallon of whisky. The Delta man being a temperance man and Christian, to his honor and consistency refused to bet with whisky, or make any bet at all, but consented to the race, the conditions of which were to be that Bailey, bearing on his shoulder the rail, selected by a committee, from among the largest ones on Mr. Nichols' fence, was to start one rod in rear of the horse to get under way, and on getting even with the horse the word "go" was to be given and both start together. Bailey won the race and ever after went by the name of "Rail Bailey." Shortly

after this he went to the store in Charlotte to get a pair of rubber boots. Finding a pair that fitted him, he put them on and walked out into the mud and came back with them covered with it, and told the merchant that they suited him, and he would like to keep them but had no money to pay for them. The merchant replied that as he had soiled them so badly that no one else would buy them, he would have to keep them and pay when he could. Early settlers say that he never paid for the boots.

That same spring a new doctor with his family came to Charlotte and Bailey employed him in his family. When his corn was ripe the doctor wanted Bailey to take a hog he had received for doctor's fees, that had been fattened in part on beechnuts and fat it on corn, then kill and dress it for half. Bailey consented, told him to bring the hog out next day, and he would have a place ready. When the hog came he put it in the pen, fed it corn that night and next morning, then killed and dressed it, and took the doctor his half, saying it was fat enough for his own use, and he thought for the doctor's too. The doctor was angry but could do nothing but make the best of it, and said afterwards that the story, circulated all over the country, gave him such a reputation that he had no lack of patronage, and helped him more than anything else. I cannot vouch for the truth of all these stories, but such persons and incidents originated much of the gossip, story-telling, laughter and amusement of people in those days of scattered neighborhoods, sparse populations, few books and newspapers, over a wide territory where people met, or visited, or exchanged work with each other.

In the spring and summer of 1848, the jobs to open the State road from Battle Creek to Lansing, I had helped to survey, were let to different parties. Among them were four men by the name of Gilkey, living near Lansing, who took two miles of it near our home, making their headquarters at our house. I took a contract of them to build eighty rods of the road one mile east of our farm for which I was to have \$250 in State land scrip, good for 200 acres of State land anywhere in Michigan. I was in my seventeenth year, and strong and rugged for one of my age. I first cut the timber four rods wide, then cleared the center of the road one rod wide of stumps taken out by the roots. Twenty rods of the road had to be causewayed with logs twelve feet long. I always took my dinner and gun with me and once during my nooning killed a deer near where I was at work. After finishing my road job I sold \$100 worth of my scrip in Lansing for \$20 cash,

and with the remainder located eighty acres of land in Kent county, and forty acres in Shiawassee county near Corunna.

During the winter of 1848 and 1849 we cut twenty acres of timber, burned most of it to ashes to make black-salts and saleratus.

The California gold excitement at that time was taking many men out of the country, and would have taken nearly all the young men if they had the means to go with. I was only seventeen years old, but tried every possible way to get some money to go with. I had 120 acres of land, but could not raise any money on it, as nobody had any to loan or buy with.

In the spring we made 300 new sap troughs out of split ash logs hewed out with an ax and charred inside to keep them from leaking, tapped 400 maple trees, made 800 pounds of sugar to exchange for goods and family supplies, and in the summer harvested ten acres of wheat with grain cradles, threshed it with a horse-power machine, and then had the fine crop of over 300 bushels for use and market.

Four miles east of us in Windsor township, was a log school-house, in the woods, where in October a boy six years old by the name of Wright was attending school and in returning home got lost in the woods. Settlers living nearest by looked for him that night in vain. The next day people for miles around were notified, and about 200 men joined in the search. They found where he had lain over night, and during the day found his cap two miles southwest of the school-house. Next day fifty more men from Eaton Rapids joined in the search. Towards night on the third day, I was on the extreme right flank of the searching party and about three miles from the school-house south of Taylor's lake, near the head of Thornapple river where the willow brush were very thick, when some one at my left fired at a deer. Instantly not more than ten feet from me, something sprang up in a thick clump of willows that for a moment I supposed to be a wild animal, but quickly saw it was the boy, and at once shouted that he was found. He was so frightened and exhausted that he could not speak, and his feet were badly frost-bitten. We carried him to the nearest house, where he was treated by a doctor who was in the searching party, and then taken to his home. But the boy never fully recovered from the shock and exposure. Four years after this the boy was a scholar, in the same school-house, of Miss Diantha O. DeGraff, the girl I would not leave behind me, and married her in 1858, and still live with her, in 1906.

Hunting bee trees for honey was another business the settlers engaged

in to some profit in the fall and winter. There were three methods of doing it quite successfully. One was to make a box with a glass top to slide, put some honeycomb with honey in it and leave the slide open, and set it in the sun in the woods where the bees would find it, fill up with the honey and fly straight for their homes. The hunter would take his ax and mark the trees in line with the flight of the bees, then close the box with some bees in it, move some distance to the right, or left, in the sunshine, open the box and line the bees from that point, and where the second line crossed the first the bee tree was sure to be found near.

Another way was to follow their line of flight in a warm day and when near the tree detect them by their buzzing. Or, when there was snow on the ground, take a warm sunny day when the bees would come out, and some of them get chilled and fall down on the snow and ground.

In the spring of 1850, I was still hoping some way would open to enable me to go to the gold fields of California. In the meantime one of love's occasional romances occurred. My oldest brother, George, in attending one of the log-house dancing parties met a young lady by the name of Gladden. It was a case of love at first sight, and they were married the same month, and he at once built a log-house for himself on his forty acres adjoining us, and was living in it the month after their marriage, though still working and managing our mother's farm.

In the following spring while making sugar, some differences occurred between us on that subject, I wanting to work the farm and he claiming I was too young. That left me nothing to do but obey the orders of my brother, with which I was not satisfied, thinking that my mother and brother were not giving me the privileges at home to which I was entitled. There was helping me that spring in our sugar-making a young man twenty years old by the name of John Verplank. He was the oldest of eight children, in a very poor family living on a new farm one mile from us.

To him I confided my troubles, and as he and his father did not agree very well together, he said he was planning to leave home and look out for himself, but his father would not give his consent, and he said he should leave even if he had to run away. We finally agreed to go off together the following night, go to Jackson, forty miles, on foot, and see if we could not get work on a farm, or in Jackson on the railroad. The next night we filled the large potash kettle full of sap, left it boiling, took our best suit of clothes tied up in a bandanna hand-

kerchief, besides a fresh loaf of bread and a dozen fried-cakes to eat on the way, and a cake of sugar, each having about the same outfit. We each also had about three dollars in silver. On reaching Jackson the next day at noon, we went to a hotel, and told the landlord we were looking for work. He said he had a farm near Jackson and wanted to hire some men to split rails for fifty cents a hundred and board. We told him we were from the Eaton county woods and accustomed to that work. After an agreement with him, he gave us our dinner, wrote an order to the tenant on his farm, gave us the directions, and we reached the place about 3 o'clock and found an Irish family in possession. The man gave us tools, took us to the woods, marked the trees we were to cut and split, and we worked until night, cutting logs eleven feet long, had a good supper, slept well, and early next morning after breakfast went to split up the logs we had cut, but found the white oak so very tough that after working very hard all day we had split less than 200 rails. The next day we worked until noon, and told the Irishman that we could make no wages on such timber, and would have to quit unless our wages were raised. He took his horse and went to Jackson, to consult the landlord, but came back saying there would be no increase in our pay. We told him he was welcome to the 300 rails we had split, but on leaving he gave us fifty cents each, and we took the railroad track and walked to Grass Lake, where we took a freight train to Ann Arbor, working our passage by helping to unload freight along the way. At Dexter we heard of a farmer two miles out, who wanted to hire two men, we went there, helped him do his chores that evening, took supper with him, and then he told us he could pay us but five dollars a month besides board and washing. We told him we could do better. We staid all night, and helped him do his chores for lodging and breakfast, when he offered us six dollars a month, which we declined, and walked on to Ann Arbor, where we tried to get work on the railroad, but were told we were too young.

We now concluded we had made a mistake in leaving home, and decided to return, unless on our way back we could find a good job. We walked to Whitmore lake and staid over night with a good farmer, then went on west through a good farming country, paying our way with work, and on the seventh day from leaving home reached Eaton Rapids and found one of our neighbors who had come to get a grist ground and had to stay over night to get it done, and that he had two bushels of corn to get ground for my mother, that I had shelled just before I left. I asked him what she said about my leaving home. She

told him that I thought too much of my mother to stay away long, and then said to me: "Your mother will be glad, but not surprised to see you return." We slept on the mill floor that night and next day we rode home with this neighbor, where I was warmly welcomed by all our family, fully convinced that my troubles were mostly imaginary, and that there was "no place like home." Verplank was not so well received, his father telling him he had hoped he would not return. In August of that year the "bloody flux" or dysentery raged, and among the many settlers who died, were my young friend John Verplank and three younger sisters. All the people were greatly alarmed, nobody could be had to help take care of the sick and those who died had to be buried at night by the county coroner, without any funeral ceremonies. After my return home from my futile journey away I diligently made up all lost time and learned to value home as never before, gave up all wild boyish habits and notions and concluded it was time to make more of a man of myself and do the best I could at home. So much so that when I was twenty years old my mother and brother obtained means for me to fulfil my long desire of going to California by the overland route with ox-teams, taking a hundred and sixty-five days, with many adventures. In closing this pioneer story I will copy an extract of a letter from my mother written when eighty years old to a grandson, Pitt R. Potter, a business man of New York City who had spent much time in tracing the ancestry of the Potter family and published a pamphlet on it (with promise of more to come) of much value to the relatives. After a sketch of her Michigan life, she closes by saying: "I kept my family with me until they became men and women and neither of my five boys, to my knowledge, have ever used liquor or tobacco, and all have good homes and families." Thus she fulfilled her purpose formed when my father died and kept the family together until she saw them all married and gone and a village of five hundred population built up on the old farm and named after our family, and then went to live with her oldest daughter in plain sight of her old home, where she died at the remarkable age of eighty-three, considering all the labors, trials and hardships she had gone through in a new country. Neither my father or my mother ever united with any church organization, but I believe they were Christian people, believing and doing to others as they would have others do to them, and died as they had lived, in the full belief that all mankind would be ultimately saved.