

INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF MR. EBER WARD, FATHER OF CAPT. E.  
B. WARD OF STEAMBOAT FAME AS RELATED TO MRS.  
E. M. S. STEWART IN THE SUMMER OF 1852.

Read at the annual meeting of the State Society, June, 1883.

In the autumn of 1818 I started with my family from Vermont to go to Kentucky. When we reached Waterford, Pa., my wife was taken sick and in twenty-four hours was a corpse, leaving me grief-stricken among strangers with four little children to care for, Emily the eldest only nine years old. I had relatives at Conneaut, Ohio, and concluded to go there; so I took my motherless children and went as far as Erie in wagons, then hired a small boat and went on to Conneaut. I went to housekeeping and got along very well through the winter. The following spring my brother Samuel was going to Michigan, so I made the best arrangement in my power for my children to remain at Conneaut, and came to Newport on St. Clair river with my

brother and his family, early in May, 1819. We came in a small flat-bottomed schooner called a Salem packet. Our ship was wind-bound at Pt. Au Chein and Sam took his family and went ashore. He found some young apple trees that the Indians had planted, pulled them up and brought them to Newport and planted them; they lived and bore fruit.

In the autumn of 1818, Sam had bought some land there, in company with Father Richard the Catholic priest at Detroit, and built a house on the bank of the river, so when he moved his family he had a home ready for them.

James B. Wolverton, Messrs. Fraser and Knapp, and their families, moved in about the same time. Mr. Wolverton began his log cabin on Thursday and moved into it on Saturday.

My brother Samuel was worth about \$3,000 when he moved to Newport, quite a large fortune for those days.

A year and a half after I came to Newport, I made a contract to deliver at Detroit 100 cords of hemlock bark for tanning. J. B. Wilson was building a saw-mill twelve miles below Fort Gratiot, and I went up there in a small open boat with food, bedding, a jug of whisky, and a mat made of bulrushes for a roof to my shanty. My boy, Eber B., went with me. We had plenty of food and would have been very comfortable, but for the gnats; they were intolerable.

I cut down the hemlock trees, peeled off the bark, and sent it to Detroit in small vessels or scows.

Mr. Wilson could not get help to build his mill-dam, so when my contract was filled I went to work with him, and we two found it a task which was not completed till the summer was almost over.

When the hot weather came on, Eber B. was taken sick with fever; I hired some Indians to take him to Newport in a canoe, but I could not persuade them to travel at night, so the poor boy lay all night on the ground in a burning fever.

Usually, when we went up and down the St. Clair, we would draw the boat out of the water, take out everything, turn the boat over, and sleep under it.

In the autumn of 1822 I moved my household goods from Conneaut to Newport, bringing with me two of my motherless children, Emily, and Eber B., leaving my other two daughters with their friends in Ohio. We were three days making the trip from Conneaut to Detroit in the steamer Walk-in-the-water. We went from Detroit to Newport in an open boat, and I told the children they would probably live to see a line of steamers on the river.

My brother's family invited us to move in with them. I accepted the invitation for a short time, and then moved into a little log cabin. I soon built an addition to it, which gave us two rooms to our house, and we were very comfortable. At that time there were at Newport, William Gallagher, James B. Wolverton, Bela Knapp, Samuel Ward, and myself and our families. Five families at Newport and on Belle River there were five or six French families, all enterprising people, and all owners of farms.

The first year we all got our grinding done at Mt. Clemens, and went to Detroit for our dry goods and groceries. We had plenty of wild meat, and used hulled corn instead of bread till we got very tired of it. Emily was my little housekeeper, she was then about twelve years old, and Eber B. was two years younger. In 1823 my brother Sam, and William Gallagher built a saw-mill and grist-mill, the first mills in that section of country. The same year

my brother also built a schooner of three tons burthen, and named it the St. Clair.

There were a great many Indians passing and repassing on the river during the season of navigation, and quite a large band of Ojibwas had their camp near us, but they were all friendly except Kishkauko and his band; they were very abusive. Kishkauko generally passed through here twice a year from Saginaw to Detroit. He would go into any man's house and take whatever he wanted, and no one dared refuse him; he always had a body guard of desperate looking Indians.

After I had been here four years, my daughter Sally came on from Ohio, and soon after, one day when I was not at home, Kishkauko stalked in and asked for some whisky; we had none, and he went to the barrel of vinegar, turned the faucet, and left the vinegar running, took some bread, and as he and his guard were leaving the house, Kishkauko took his rifle rod and whipped Sally very severely. He was a chief of the Chippewas.

In 1829 I was appointed lighthouse-keeper at Bois Blanc Island, Lake Huron, and soon after my appointment I took my family back to Conneaut, and spent the winter there. In the spring of 1830 I left my daughters at Conneaut intending to take Eber B. with me, but by accident he was left, and I went on to Bois Blanc, and remained on that desolate island alone for two weeks.

There were four or five families on an island about eight miles off, but they could only be reached by water. Eber B., then in his seventeenth year, came to me in his uncle Sam's vessel, Marshal Ney, on her first trip to Mackinaw, and remained with me on Bois Blanc Island till he was of age. We did all our own work except washing, that we sent to Mackinaw. We had quite a large library of historical and scientific works, and plenty of newspapers, and here with what instruction I could give him, Eber B. received most of his early education. Our mails were regular once a month, summer and winter. We always drew our wood in winter on sledges with dogs; the first winter we drew all our wood with one dog. Indians often came on the island to fish, but were never troublesome, nor were we afraid of bands of forty or fifty drunken Indians that came sometimes.

We raised our own potatoes and some for market, and caught about 100 barrels of fish a year.

In the spring of 1833, Eber B. being of age, left the Island, came to Newport and hired out to his uncle Sam. I was alone on the Island a part of the summer and a part of the time a Frenchman and his squaw wife were living not far away. In the autumn of 1833 Duncan Stewart, the Revenue officer, a kind and worthy man, gave me permission to spend the winter with my daughters at Conneaut. This was the first time I had been off the Island to stay over night for eight years. My two daughters Sally and Abby were married, and when I returned to Bois Blanc in the spring of 1834 Emily went with me and remained till 1842, only leaving the Island three times in all those years. Once she was carried to Mackinaw sick and twice she visited her sisters at Conneaut.

In 1842 I exchanged light-houses with Mr. Church at Ft. Gratiot, and moved there. After we moved to Ft. Gratiot Emily had a young girl with her part of the time, I also adopted an orphan boy. I kept the Ft. Gratiot light-house three years, Emily remaining with me all the time, then we moved back to Newport where we have lived ever since."