

## PIONEER LIFE.

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PAPER NO. IV.

*Clothing of the Pioneers; the Deerskin and Its Uses; Picturesque Costumes—Home-made Fabrics: Linsey and Jeans—Dye-stuffs Used: Butternut, Walnut and Indigo—The Styles of Garments—Pioneer Finery; Ladies and Gentlemen of the Old School—The Quaker Costumes—Footwear; the Introduction of the Boot—The Surtout, Cloak and Shawl—A Traveling Outfit—Superstitions.*

**D**EERSKIN, tanned either with or without the hair, was much in use among the early settlers of Henry county for pantaloons, hunting shirts and moccasins, as well as for gloves and mittens. It is possible that the old rollicking song of

“Leather breeches, full of stitches,  
Leather breeches, buttons on,” etc.

was inspired by the old backwoods article of clothing wrought from “the red deer’s tawny skin.”

A well-tanned and well-made suit of buckskin gave the wearer a rather neat and jaunty appearance that had a very evident touch of aboriginal taste and elegance. The hunting shirt, which could be worn as an outer garment, either with or without a vest, was often made to fit closely and fasten about the waist with a belt, though sometimes it was worn without a belt. It was made more picturesque by heavy fringing around the edges made by cutting the buckskin into thin strings, and occasionally a lover of primitive finery had his shirt and moccasins ornamented with beads and brightly colored porcupine quills by Indian women. The average deerskin uniform was tanned and made by some man in the neighborhood who had some skill in that line of work. They were sewed with thongs of leather or sinews, and would, with ordinary care, last for years. Such a suit was very warm if thoroughly dry, but when wet was distressingly uncomfortable and cold. After wetting, these buckskins had a way of shrinking that was the reverse of pleasant

to the wearer as the nether garment crept upward toward his knees and the shirt contracted about his middle.\* This liability to shrinkage made the washing of such a suit a difficult undertaking, but it was effected by a method of manipulation, pounding and stretching applied to the drying leather. In dry, cold weather the deerskin moccasins with warm woollen socks inside made excellent footwear for out-of-doors service, but in soft snow or wet weather they were worse than useless.

Suits similar to those of deerskin in cut and make were wrought from the brown or blue jeans, or linseys, the hunting-shirt being similarly ornamented with fringes. The dye-stuffs most used by the pioneers were from the hulls of the black or white walnuts and the inner barks of certain trees. In some parts of the State the darker browns of the black walnut prevailed, in other parts the tawny tints of the white walnut or butternut. Henry county was a black walnut province. The more aristocratic color—the color for Sunday and special occasion suits—was indigo-blue, and the woman who knew how to manage the indigo in solution so as to produce the best results was in great demand among those who aspired to handsome clothes. Prepared indigo was an article of commerce, and for sale at the village stores, but some of the settlers' wives raised their own plants and manufactured the dyes for home use. Other dyes were made from madder and copperas, maple bark and copperas, etc. These were made to alternate with the blues and browns in striping and checking the linseys. Cloths and stockings of a single color were often dyed after the weaving, but the better and surer way was to dye them in the yarn.

The early wearing apparel was, mostly, rough and coarse, and not very tastefully made. The principal requirement was to be warm in winter and as cool as possible in summer without much regard to appearance. All the boys and girls and many of the men and women went barefooted from early spring to late autumn, while the small child who was provided with a tow shirt that hung straight from the shoulders to the heels was thought to be sufficiently clad for the warmer seasons. The boys, when they

\*An old-time story is to the effect that one of the early school teachers seated himself behind his desk in wet buckskins and did not rise or straighten himself out until they had dried upon him. He then found himself encased as in a suit of tin, with no provisions for  
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were put into pantaloons, had them full length, like their fathers, except that they were made several sizes too large, for the wearer was expected to grow up to them and even outgrow them before they would be worn out. But the drollest effect was produced when the boy of larger growth donned his first real "Sunday-go-to-meeting" and visiting suit. It was also of brown or blue jeans, better woven and more carefully made than his earlier pants and roundabout had been, but like them overlarge in all its parts. The trousers dragged and folded over his cowhide shoes, bagged at the knees and in the seat, and, in common with the vest, had sufficient girth for two boys, while the coat hung loose at the shoulders and elbows and was turned up at the wrists. A round-crowned, stiff-rimmed wool hat completed a picture of discomfort, self-consciousness, awkwardness and greenness. When trying to be on his best behavior for the gratification of his proud parents he was at his worst in the matter of appearance, and the joy connected with the display was when he was allowed to slip out of his fine raiment and back into his well-worn every-day togs, where he felt easy and at home. The girls suffered much in the same way, and were made old in appearance by the long skirts of their striped linsey or red flannel frocks.

The roundabout or tailless coat was to the backwoods small boy what the "warmus" or, as it was usually called, "waumus," was to the men, except that it was a much neater article of apparel. Not infrequently it was worn by men. The waumus was made with or without a belt for the waist. Usually it was made like a shirt, and it could be worn as such or over the vest and pants as a coat. The material for it was either red flannel or linsey, plain or striped. It was the lineal successor of the hunting-shirt, as the "sweater" of to-day is of the waumus, and was admirably suited to the needs of the pioneer.

The frock and habit were the chief outer garments of the women. In both, skirt and body were attached to each other, making one garment. The fastenings were hooks and eyes or ordinary brass pins for the habits and buttons for the frocks, which latter fastened at the backs. For a good while silks, worsteds, and even the better linens and cotton cloths, were scarce and high priced, but yet women of the more prosperous neighborhoods were seldom without one or more gowns of bet-

ter material than their own skill could provide. Such dresses were reserved for great occasions and were treasured with care. The home-made materials for women's wear were usually reinforced by purchases of calicoes, muslins, bobinets, and the like. All the elderly women wore caps. These were of various materials, from gaily decorated calico to bobinets and fine book muslins and cambrics. Babies also wore caps of similar material, but not all of them could afford the regulation long skirts that even then seemed almost a necessity to early juvenile existence. In the linseys and flannels of home manufacture there was much display of color, particularly of red, gray, brown and blue, and even in underwear these colors were woven in according to the fancy of the wearer. The tuck and ruffle were much in evidence for relieving the monotony of a plain raiment, and there was more or less evidence of a "fancy" taste, not only in feminine but in masculine circles. The "dude" or dandy was not unknown, and such a one arrayed in summer coat, pants and vest made of prettily figured fabrics, occasionally flashed upon backwoods society. It used to be charged, even, that the dandies of a neighboring county wore calico pantaloons with the legs profusely ruffled, but this, doubtless, was the satire of envy or disapproval.

Turning from the typical backwoodsman to the professional and the well-to-do classes that became more numerous as the country grew, we find a costuming more picturesque than that which has followed it. With this class the swallow-tail coat was as common as the straight-breasted "shad-belly" among the Quakers. This garment, made of blue fuller's cloth or broadcloth (though sometimes made of blue jeans), with trousers and vest of the same, was double-breasted and radiant with a glittering array of brass buttons, and imparted grandeur and dignity to the "gentleman of the old school." Its accompaniment was a majestic "bell-crowned" beaver hat, and a black silk stock or "choker" over stiff buckram swathed his neck, holding up his chin with painful stateliness. This "glass of fashion" was a familiar figure to our fathers.

The women of this class wore capes, mantles and shawls of various patterns and materials. The long cloak of ample folds and the large shawls were mostly in favor for the colder season.

These were, in the earlier day, made from the softer parts of the fleeces by the local spinners and weavers upon warps of flax or cotton to give the fabric greater strength. Within a few years, however, the merchants began to carry stocks of shawls of many colors, subdued or gay, that took the place of the home-made articles. These ranged in size from the neat little shoulder shawl to those that a woman could wrap herself in and defy the storm and cold. The Quaker women preferred soft, fleecy grays or browns, and a distinguishing feature of their attire was a neat shawl or cape of these colors supplemented by a neatly-folded white cambric handkerchief at the throat. There were no ruffles or flounces upon their skirts, and the figures as well as the hues were delicate and in good taste. They eschewed jewelry except, perhaps, a modest throat pin. Their bonnets for public wear were made of silk wrought upon buckram frames in the quaint fashion of the mothers of the sect in England, and in colors were soft grays for the younger women, darker grays and browns for the middle-aged and shiny black for the old. As the fashions did not change, two or three silk bonnets lasted through a lifetime. A familiar dress bonnet among women (other than Friends) was one of Leghorn straw with a flaring front-piece and a curiously-placed crown, the whole resembling an inverted coal-scuttle, decked out with brightly-colored ribbons and artificial flowers. Fashions did not change much in Henry county from year to year during the first two decades of its history, but by 1845 variations in styles and cuts began to be more frequent, and since 1850 they have kept pace with the changes in other things. The introduction of factory goods relieved not a little the absorbing tasks of the women. Before 1840 denims came in to take the place of tow and home-woven linen, and "brown Holland," a kind of finer linen, came into vogue for men's better summer suits. The boot for men and boys was introduced after the opening of the country, when muddy roads and fields made them a necessity, and they were worn almost universally for many years, or until drainage and a drier surface caused a partial reversion to shoes.

One article of apparel that seemed to belong especially to the old-time gentleman was the blue or black cloth cloak, made with or without a cape and with collars of silk velvet. They were

fastened at the throat with a large, ornamental hook and eye of bronze or silver, or with a cord, button and tassel. The body of the garment was of French broadcloth or a cloth of French weave made exclusively for cloaks. For bad or stormy weather the "surtout," or over-all-coat, was used, but for all occasions when a light, stylish upper garment was desirable the cloak was the thing. At a later date the shawl had its day as a gentleman's upper garment, but its fitness as such was never so obvious as that of the cloak or topcoat, and ere long it made its final exit.

*Old-Time Travelers and Taverns.*—When the old-time traveler prepared for a journey, he tallowed up his shoes until they shone, and protected his legs between the shoe-tops and the knees by wrapping green baize leggings about them, tying the same with green strings. He donned his "surtout," or cloak, or made it into a roll to be strapped tightly behind the saddle, and, if the weather demanded, substituted a coonskin cap for the customary "plug." Indispensable adjuncts to the outfit were the bulging leather saddle-bags, equivalent to the "grip" of the modern traveler. This double pouch, which lay across the saddle, could be made to hold almost anything, from a change of apparel to a box of Moffett's anti-bilious pills; from a bottle of whisky or tansy bitters for warding off ague to an extra set of horseshoes. Gentlemen always shaved themselves in those days, and the inevitable part of the outfit was a wooden shaving box with a mirror about the size of a Spanish silver dollar in the lid, and a brush of hog's bristles, together with a mottled cake of sassafras soap.

One class of early settlers always avoided the public houses, and, relying upon Hoosier hospitality, inquired by the way for the houses of members of their church or for people of repute for open-handedness known to have spare beds. Such folks would ride to the farthest corner of the State and back again with less expense than they could stay at home. Others, however, among whom were most of the lawyers, doctors, business men and the more prosperous farmers, stopped at the old-time taverns. He who entered one of these generous hostleries from the discomforts of a hard ride through mud and rain, experienced to the fullest the pleasures of tavern hospitality. He was made wel-

come to a seat beside the cheery open fire. A boy stripped off his leggings, took his great-coat and hat and bore them off to be dried. His shoes were also taken off to be brushed and blacked up, and in lieu of them a pair of "pomps" supplied, along with a glass of something warm to "take off the chill." The "pomp" was a slipper minus the counter which encases the heel, into which the foot could be easily thrust, and though the heel of the pomp flapped loosely on the floor with every step of the wearer, it served very well as a protection and was a comfortable substitute for the wet shoe. Every well-patronized tavern had a closetful of this cheap but convenient footwear.

*Superstitions.*—If a horse tangled its mane and twisted it into loops by rubbing against the stall, it was said to have been ridden by witches. Eggs that would not hatch, cream that would not churn and children that had fits were thought of as "bewitched," and some person in the neighborhood, usually an old woman, was sure to be brought under suspicion as the cause. Belief in spells and power with the evil one also prevailed with many. Negroes were often regarded as possessing mysterious powers, such as the ability to foretell the weather, tell fortunes and effect wonderful cures. The charm doctor existed, and was consulted by sufferers from all sorts of ills, both mental and physical, despite frequent and flagrant dupings. The people themselves practiced a great many spells and charms. They sold their warts or drove them away by rubbing over them notched sticks and hiding or burning the sticks. Some carried buckeyes in their pockets to keep off rheumatism, while others carried potatoes for the same purpose. If a teamster cut himself he smeared the ax or knife with tar from the spindle of his wagon. Asafetida, catnip, southernwood, chamomile and certain other herbs were supposed to ward off contagious diseases if worn about the person. A cure for epilepsy or falling sickness was to split the body of a standing shellbark hickory tree, wedging it far apart, and passing the body of the patient three times through the opening. The wedges were then knocked out, and if the parts grew together the cure was assured. Cows that were poisoned by eating buckeye leaves were jolted on the forehead with the square end of a fence rail or pole. These superstitions were common among the more ignorant in early days.