Tunis Quick, A Bartholomew County Pioneer

By His Daughter, RACHEL Q. BUTTZ

One of the early pioneers of Bartholomew county, Indiana, was Tunis Quick. He was born March 13, 1797, near Martinsburg, Berkeley county, Virginia (now West Virginia). He came to Bartholomew county (or what was afterwards this county), in the autumn of 1819. He entered 160 acres of land for himself and his father, in the Haw Patch, seven miles north of the present city of Columbus, where he afterwards helped to build one of the first houses.

With him came Isaac Pancake, a young man near his own age, and also a native of Virginia, who entered a nearby tract of land. Their nearest neighbors were Joseph Cox and family, living about three miles to the southeast, who arrived there in April of the same year, 1819.

The young pioneers each built on his land a small cabin, just large enough to stand up or lie down in comfortably, with a small fireplace in one end. Here they prepared their food, which consisted of a little corn bread, and an abundance and variety of wild meat, which they secured with their rifles from the thick woods which surrounded them. The water for all necessary purposes was carried from Flat Rock, about half a mile west of them.

Plenty of hard work was to be done and they did it bravely and cheerfully, looking ahead to the homes that were to be theirs in the future. At night their rest was sweet and safe, as there were only a few Indians passing through the country then, and they were friendly.

In the spring of 1820, Tunis Quick's father and the other members of his family came from Madison, where they had spent the winter. A larger house was built on the east eighty of the land which had been entered, and the family began pioneer life in earnest.

Quite a number of settlers came on that spring, and the country began to fill up with neighbors in all directions. These pioneers were hardy, honest, industrious and friendly —usually regarding each other's rights to the letter. All had
guns of some kind, and ammunition for all necessary purposes. They even formed a company for training militia, and Tunis Quick was chosen captain of the company. From that time onward he occupied prominent positions. Though he was only about medium size, he possessed unusual physical strength and mental vigor, and his neighbors gladly recognized his leadership.

Corn huskings and log rollings were almost the only festivities in which the early settlers indulged, and at such gatherings whiskey flowed more or less freely. There were few teetotalers among the early settlers, but not many of them drank to excess. They had already made so many sacrifices, and were so filled with the desire to secure comfortable homes for themselves and their posterity, that they did not allow themselves undue indulgences.

Government land had been promised to the settlers at $1.25 per acre. Hard work was a necessity for the pioneers, and money was scarce, but they managed to save enough to pay that price for their land, and a company of them went to Brookville to the land sale in 1820. Here they encountered land sharks, who, even in that early day, were plying their nefarious business—trying to defraud honest, industrious people of their “inalienable rights.” But the early American citizens, among a great many other sterling qualities, inherited independence from their forefathers; so after watching the performance of the land sharks, who were running the land up to $1.50 per acre, they decided to hold the government to its promise of $1.25 an acre for those who had built upon their land, and begun to improve it. Accordingly, they presented a solid front with their rifles, demanded their rights and were granted them without further parley.

In those early days, hospitality was spontaneous and sincere. Travelers were heartily welcomed with the hope that they might become neighbors in the near future. A young man named Joseph Van Meter came on horseback from Kentucky, and stayed over night with Tunis Quick, who had relatives in Virginia named Van Meter. Being distantly related to the same family, and having many ideas in common, the young men both enjoyed the visit. When Mr. Van Meter, who wished to see more of the country before settling down,
was about to start on his way the next morning, he deposited $600 in gold with his new friend for safe-keeping until his return. Being attacked by some kind of fever while he was gone, it was many weeks before he was able to come back. No word came from him in the meantime, but when he was able to ride he returned and found his money safe with his friend. They trusted each other absolutely in the beginning and were the best of friends while they both lived.

Joseph Van Meter went back to Kentucky, but so attractive was the new country, that he and his brother-in-law, William Jones, soon decided to make their future homes in Indiana. In 1821, while on their way to hunt a location there, they met an acquaintance at Louisville, who was returning from the Reserve, as it was often called. He was seated on a wagon-tongue and shaking violently with the ague. Between his chattering teeth he said to William Jones: "Bill, turn around and go back. Go back to old Kaintuck. The darned ager will shake you to pieces up thar in Indiany." But possessed of the invincible pioneer spirit, instead of turning back they went forward. They were much pleased with the new country and bought farms adjoining each other in the rich bottom land on the west side of Flat Rock, and almost opposite Tunis Quick’s farm, which was on the east side of the river. They built their homes about a half mile from Flat Rock, and both became prominent citizens. The Van Meter family have all passed to their reward, and John L. Jones, a prominent farmer of the county, is the only remaining member of that Jones family. He still owns the farm which was selected by his father when he arrived here from Kentucky in 1821.

Quite a settlement now began on the west side of Flat Rock. A large family named Records, moved from Ohio, and settled one mile and a half east of the present site of Taylorsville. In this family, Tunis Quick, who was now nearly 25 years old, found a sweet, blue-eyed, sunny-haired girl of 17, who soon became the choice of his heart. Her name was Susanna Records. She was attractive in person, more so in character, and their marriage, which occurred in September, 1822, was a happy one.

By that time the house had been enlarged and improved, and the young couple were quite comfortably situated for
pioneers. Some glass window lights, which were a novelty in the neighborhood, had been put in, instead of the greased paper, through which the light came but dimly in those early homes. A board floor was also laid instead of the dirt floor which was common at that time. Pieces of wood were inserted between the logs of the houses, extending far enough into the room for the width of a bed or table and on these were laid boards to be used for such furniture. Rustic benches and stools, made from forest timber, served for seats at first, but it was not long until chairs and other furniture of various kinds were made in the neighborhood. The first chair owned by Tunis Quick, and the only one in his home when he was married, was made by Mignon Boaz, a Baptist preacher, who lived near, on the bluff bank of Flat Rock.

The pioneers were not dependent upon material things for happiness. Their lives were full of heroic purpose, and the pioneer women were helpmates for their husbands in the truest sense. They spun and wove flax, cotton and wool into cloth for table and bed linen, and to make garments for their rapidly increasing families. Some of them were very expert in dyeing wool and cotton, in fast and beautiful colors. Also in weaving different patterns for table-cloths and counter-panes. Such energy and industry as was shown by both sexes, was not without reward, and soon “the wilderness blossomed as the rose.”

The march of progress was rapid with the passing of the years. Orchards were planted, crops of many kinds were raised, and neighbors vied with each other in a good-natured way in making improvements. Fever and ague were prevalent, and sometimes an epidemic of flux, or some other dreadful disease, carried off their little ones, and some grown people, so that they had their full share of sorrow as well as joy.

As early as 1821, the Flat Rock Baptist church was organized, and not long afterwards a log house of worship was built on the bluff bank of Flat Rock. Near the church, a little cemetery was begun, and less than a mile away, there was soon another burying place for the beloved ones who were passing away.

Pioneer preachers proclaimed the gospel, sometimes with
much performance of physical power and salutary spiritual effect. A Bible and hymn book could be found in nearly every home, though other books were very scarce, and novel reading was considered quite disreputable, for, to the pioneers, life was indeed real and earnest.

Schools were taught by men who came from the indefinite east for that purpose, for no woman would have been considered able to control a school. There was discipline in the schools and also in the homes of those days—sometimes too severe; but better perhaps for the formation of character than the laxity of government which prevails at present.

As the years passed by and families grew larger, additions were built to the houses, more of the comforts of life were enjoyed, and the duties and responsibilities of citizenship were also increased and recognized.

Columbus was the seat of justice, and justice was sometimes administered in very peculiar ways by officers there; and in various parts of the country.

Jack Jones, who kept a tavern, called “The Jones House”, on the southwest corner of Washington and Second streets, was elected justice of the peace. A fight was going on at a furious rate in front of the tavern when Tunis Quick arrived on horseback. He greeted Mr. Jones by saying: “Jack, I thought you were elected to command the peace.” “And I will”, thundered Mr. Jones, as he rushed out to the woodpile, and seized a large limb which had been cut from a tree. Pushing his way through the crowd which had gathered, he ran in between the combatants and shouted in stentorian tones: “I command the peace”, and peace was immediately restored.

A similar case occurred in Flatrock township when Tunis Quick was justice of the peace. A man who lived nearly a half mile away, was in the habit of coming home drunk and whipping his wife. Tunis Quick, who had remonstrated with him in vain, finally told him that people were too much disgusted with his way of doing to allow it much longer, and that if he did not put a stop to it, somebody else would be treating him just like he treated his wife.

Not long afterwards, in the dusk of a drizzly day, just as the evening “chores” were all done, the abused wife was heard
screaming at the top of her voice. Tunis Quick turned his coat wrong side out, drew an old broad-rimmed hat well down over his face, and proceeded to administer justice in a most emphatic way, by giving the man a well-deserved whipping. The wife interfered at last, and was in the act of pulling the hat off the head of her deliverer, who immediately started away, in a different direction from his home, adding as he went that next time he would give the culprit more of the same kind. The next morning the man came down "to swear out a writ before the squire", but as he was unable to tell who "assaulted and battered" him, the case was dismissed.

In those days, letters were like angels' visit—few and far between, and highly prized. They were written on large sheets of paper, one page of which was left blank. The letter was then carefully folded, with the blank side out, properly addressed, and sealed with a wafer, but was sent without postage. No letters could be delivered, however, until 25 cents postage was paid by the would-be recipient.

One day in the Columbus postoffice, Tunis Quick saw two sisters crying. They had recently been married in Kentucky, and had come with their husbands to settle in Bartholomew county. When asked the cause of their distress, they replied that a letter was there from their old home, and they had no money to pay the postage. It was only a neighborly kindness for one who had 25 cents to pay the postage and deliver the letter. Tears were dried, earnest thanks were expressed, and though the money was soon repaid, sincere gratitude found expression, through different members of these families, for more than one generation.

Before any railroads were built through the country, the pioneers hauled the products of their farms to Madison or Lawrenceburg, and brought home necessary commodities of different kinds. Quite a number of men usually went together, with wagons and four-horse teams. They camped over night by the way, sometimes sleeping in their wagons, and sometimes on blankets, spread on the ground, under the trees. The journey was long and tedious, but there were compensations. Some of the men had a fine sense of humor,
and a good relish for jokes; so the time generally passed very pleasantly.

It was "the rule of the road" that empty wagons should always "turn out" for loaded ones; but a man whom they sometimes met, boasted that he never had "turned out" for anyone, and that he never would "turn out". As the party of men around the campfire one night, were talking about the surly one they expected to meet the next day, Tunis Quick said, "He will turn out for me, tomorrow"—and he did. Soon after the party of men started on their journey the next day, they saw the churlish one approaching with his empty wagon in the middle of the road. As soon as he was near enough, Tunis Quick fixed his eyes upon him, and called to him that if he did not "turn out" of the road, he might expect just such treatment as was given to a man the day before. When the loaded wagon came alongside the empty one, the man said: "How did you treat that man yesterday?" "I turned out, myself", was the reply amidst hearty cheers from the rest of the party.

The roads at that time were bad in many places, and it was almost impossible for loaded wagons to travel outside of the beaten track. No vehicles except wagons were obtainable in the new country, neither could they have been used in but few places; so travelers went either on foot, horseback, or in wagons.

Tunis Quick liked to relate the experience of himself and his wife when they visited her parents. At first, they both rode on a little Indian pony and if Flatrock was high, they crossed it in a canoe with the pony swimming behind. As their family increased they each rode a horse, carrying a baby in front, and as the children increased in numbers and size, the larger ones were mounted behind. Once the wife's horse laid down in the water, and when she was rescued by her husband, she was holding her baby boy in such a close embrace that he was almost unconscious. Later, when there were more children, if the whole family went visiting, the horses were hitched to the wagon, chairs were set in for the parents, and the children were seated on straw in the bottom of the wagon.

Men who rode on horse-back when it was muddy, wore
leggins, made of thick, heavy cloth, and reaching from the
tops of the feet to the knees. They were buttoned or tied
securely, and were quite a protection from wet, cold and mud.
The men also carried saddle bags, which held changes of
clothing, or other necessities.

The women wore riding skirts to protect their dresses.
These riding skirts had large pockets on the left side, and
were very convenient for carrying necessary articles.

Tunis Quick and his wife kept abreast of the times. They
interested themselves in having the best teachers for their
children and in keeping up religious services in the Baptist
church, and other places of worship. They also encouraged
the teachers of singing schools, or any other specialties which
they thought would be for the good of their family or the
neighborhood.

They bought improved utensils to use in their home and
on the farm. They bought one of the two first cooking stoves
that were brought from Madison. Also one of the first
bureaus, bedsteads, tables and chairs of various shapes and
sizes.

Their library was very small at first, but was gradually
increased, as occasion demanded. A few law books were
necessary, and to these a book of history or biography was
occasionally added; and besides they had the Bible and the
hymns of Isaac Watts, each of which is a library in itself.
Isaac Watts was a favorite poet with some of the pioneers,
and they read or sang his hymns with pleasure and enthu-
siasm.

The first newspapers for the two political parties in Indi-
a were the State Sentinel for the Democrats and the Indi-
a Journal, later the Indianapolis Journal, for the Whigs.
Both papers were published in Indianapolis and both were
read with much interest; for the pioneers were patriotic and
political.

Tunis Quick was a Whig until the Republican party was
founded, when he became a member of that party. But he
was never a bitter partisan and always treated his opponents
with courtesy. He was always interested in public affairs,
and was often asked to write wills, settle estates and be
guardian for orphan children; in all of which he was honest,
capable and trustworthy, winning the respect and gratitude of the interested parties.

At that time there was a probate court “for proving the genuineness and validity of wills, their registry and such other proceedings as the law prescribed, preliminary to the execution of the will by the executor.” For this court there was a judge called “a judge of probate”, or “probate judge”. This office was satisfactorily filled for six years by Tunis Quick.

He was also a member of the state legislature for two terms. Some of his letters, written to his wife during that time, in 1840, '41 and '42, are still cherished by members of his family. These letters are written in a firm, plain hand, and in the dignified style of a gentleman of the old school, reminding one of the letters of George Washington. He addresses his wife in most endearing terms, and sends messages to each of his children, counselling them to be obedient to their mother. He shows the most tender concern for the entire family, including the parents of his wife, who were members of his household.

He mentions the business of the legislature as “necessary work for the good of our country”, involving some hardships and sacrifices, and especially the absence from home, adding that he does not wish to make such a sacrifice again. He is determined, however, to do his duty to the best of his ability while there, and speaks of his colleagues with respect and admiration.1

He was much interested in having the railroad built from Madison to Indianapolis, as he was tired of riding forty miles on horseback, through the mud, from his home to Indianapolis; and hauling grain and goods with a four-horse team, back and forth from his Bartholomew county home to Madison and Lawrenceburg. Some members of the legislature very bitterly opposed building the railroad, and declared that it would never pay expenses; but the “ayes had it”, to their great satisfaction, and inexpressible benefit to their posterity.

The characters of such men as Judge Quick were invaluable during the pioneer work of the county and state. One who knew him well said: “Judge Quick had his full share

1 See letters at close of this article.
of the pleasures, responsibilities and hardships of pioneer life, did his whole duty as a citizen; and as much as any other man in developing the county from its primitive state to its present condition.” To this was added by another admirer: “His courage, activity, intelligence and uprightness have never been questioned.” His wife was a true helpmate, and in every way worthy of such a husband. They lived happily together for more than sixty years on the farm which was bought at the “land sale” at Brookville, in 1820.

They had eleven children, eight of whom lived to maturity. It was one of Judge Quick’s ambitions to give to each one of these children “a quarter section” of good land, which he accomplished, besides accumulating some other property. One farm of more than eighty acres, which he owned, is now all inside the corporation of Columbus, and a part of it is known as “Quick Heirs Addition.”

But the accumulation of property was not the chief aim of Judge Quick and his wife. They lived honest, industrious, Christian lives, both being members of the Baptist church. Theirs was a successful life in the truest sense, and they “entered into rest” full of years and honors, and affectionately cherished in memory.