

# A Tale of the Whitewater County<sup>1</sup>

By NELLE DECKER HUBBARD

During a period of years, embracing the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, a great many families left North Carolina for the Old Northwest. A number of them settled in southwestern Ohio and in adjacent areas of Indiana. Among these colonists were several of the Whitakers. A sister of William Whitaker came to Clermont County, Ohio, in 1797. A few years later she married Boaz Thorp, also from North Carolina. They came to Indiana Territory at about the time of the breaking out of the War of 1812. Not later than 1813, they settled in the Whitewater country in what is now Wayne County, near the present line between that County and Fayette.

This Thorp family was among the first to locate in this neighborhood. The original family to occupy land in the same congressional township was one by the name of Simonds who arrived in 1811. The tradition is that there were three children in the Thorp family when they built their Indiana cabin home of the usual type. The father proceeded to subdue the forest and cultivate the virgin soil. He produced a comfortable living for his family. The land entered by Thorp, as described by the owner and occupant of the same tract in 1895, lay near Simonds Creek, a half-mile northwest of the present town of Milton and ten miles north of Connersville, the present county seat of Fayette County.<sup>2</sup> In the territorial period of Indiana, the Redmen still lingered on the borders of the settled country, being loth to yield their favorite haunts to the possession of White pioneers.

In the fall of 1814, as accurately, perhaps, as the date can be known, the Thorp family was stricken with a sad bereave-

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Hubbard of Brazil, Indiana, having read the story contributed by Mrs. Thurman, "The Fall Creek Tragedy", was moved to send in this story of the spiriting away of the little Thorp girl. Mrs. Hubbard is writing a history of the Hendrix family. Her mother was a daughter of John Hendrix, a pioneer related to the Thorp family. The story here published will form a part of Mrs. Hubbard's volume, and all rights are reserved by her.

<sup>2</sup> It seems there can be little doubt in regard to the location of the tract as indicated above. However, there is a tradition in the Whitaker family that Boaz Thorp lived on the West Fork of Whitewater River, about a mile and a half slightly northwest of Connersville. The Rev. Sharpe stated that the home was located about two miles above Connersville near the West Fork (History of Fayette County, 1885). The land entered and improved by Boaz Thorp, and where the child was stolen, was purchased by John Callaway, and his son George W. Callaway now owns and occupies it.

ment. The eldest child, a daughter, was stolen and carried into captivity by Indians. Tradition puts the child's age at four years. At the time of her seizure, the little girl was out at play with the other children who returned to the cabin crying and trying to relate what had happened.

The mother's grief was great and her lamentations attracted attention from the Simonds family. The alarm was given, the father was quickly found, and, aided by neighbors, search was instituted. The moccasin trail was soon discovered in the soft earth along Simonds Creek and at the crossing. The tracks led off toward the East Fork of White River. The searchers went beyond this stream, perhaps as far as Muncietown. The child wore at the time of her capture a blue gingham dress, then regarded as a fine garment.

In a *History of Fayette County*, published in 1885, reference is made to the statement of a Reverend Sharpe of Lebanon, Ohio, which he repeated to a citizen of Connersville, in which he claimed that he was a guest in the Thorp home when the little daughter was carried away. The Rev. Sharpe was a pioneer Methodist preacher, riding the Whitewater Circuit at the time, according to his own testimony. He remembered the event as having occurred either in 1813 or 1814.

The bereaved father, Boaz Thorp, spent several years in a protracted search for his missing daughter. He traveled over a large area in the guise of an Indian trader, visiting Miami and Pottawattomie tribes in their villages and encampments. The long quest proved unfruitful, but the family continued to hope that some day the lost daughter might be found. To get away from scenes that stirred up such sad memories, the family, after some years, moved to a new home in Fayette County.

After the lapse of many years, Mr. and Mrs. Thorp were led to believe from information received that their daughter was still alive and with the Miami Indians in the Wabash country of north-central Indiana. Thither they went in the hope of finding the object of their affections. They were rewarded by finding the daughter, now grown to womanhood, near Ashland, Wabash County. She was the wife of a Miami Indian, Captain Dixon. She was identified by a scar on her body, which had been caused by the dropping of a coal of fire from the mother's pipe when an infant. The young woman was questioned, but showed not even the faintest recollection

of her early child life at the frontier home in the Whitewater country. Neither did she manifest any desire to leave the people among whom she had lived.

Captain Dixon was a profligate, dissolute, and thriftless character. The daughter of Boaz Thorp was said by her white neighbors to be a kind and affectionate wife and mother and polite towards her neighbors. She made some exertions to educate her children. In 1850, or near that time, Captain Dixon, in a drunken row with a Pottawattomie Indian, who used a heavy garden hoe as a weapon of defense, suffered a fractured skull. He died the following day. A party of his tribe hauled his body home on a sled. Shortly before or after his death, his wife ended her strange career by her own act. She committed suicide by drowning herself in the Mississinewa River at the mouth of Grant Creek, about a half-mile distant from her Indian home.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The parents of Mrs. Dixon, Boaz Thorp and wife, continued to live in Fayette County. Mr. Thorp died in 1841, or about that year, and was buried in the Clum Cemetery in Columbia Township, which is southwest of Connersville. Mrs. Thorp died a few years later and was buried by the side of her husband. What became of the other children is not known to the writer. Dr. Benaiah Thorp Callaway of Elwood, Indiana, was named in honor of the bereaved family, the Thorps being highly esteemed by their neighbors.