A Real Pioneer

LEWIS B. EWBANK

On the irregular floor of ancient ash boards in a house built of native stone gathered from the fields surrounding it in southeastern Indiana stands my grandfather's clock. In that room and another a few feet away across the hall it has stood for more than a hundred years. Before the stone house was built it stood many years in a double log house with a similar hall through the middle in almost the same place.[1]

My grandfather was seventy years old when I was born.[2] He then had lived in the stone house and tended the clock as owner since 1831. He had wound it every night by lifting the weights and pulling the cords through its intricate machinery. He had braided strands of flaxen cord from time to time to replace the fifteen feet or more of weight cord. He had threaded this cord back and forth from its "works" to a heavy weight that supplied its motive power, and thence to the striking apparatus and back to a lighter weight. Occasionally he had oiled it. And every year or so he had taken the clock from its case, removed the long flaxen cord and given the brass machinery a thorough cleaning. If repairs were needed, he made them, as his father in early pioneer days had done before him. This went on, while I watched him from time to time, through my childhood and early youth until his death at the ripe age of eighty-five. Thus he no doubt had watched his father do in a much longer period before he inherited the clock and house. Finally he rested with his parents beside the small stone chapel that when a bridegroom sixty years earlier he had helped his father build in the western wilderness.

The clock passed with the house to his son (my father) who had been born there, where long afterwards he died.[3]

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[1] The Ewbank homestead is in a creek valley west of Road 56 and below the level of the road, about three-quarters of a mile north of the Guilford Consolidated Schoolhouse and the town of Guilford, which is not on the highway. It is approximately seven miles northwest of Lawrenceburg in Section 17, Township 6, North Range 1 West of the First Principal Meridian (the state line).

[2] The grandfather, John Ewbank, was born March 26, 1795, and died September 14, 1880.

[3] John W. Ewbank, the father, was born July 27, 1833, and died March 11, 1911.

Now the owner of both clock and house is that son's youngest child, of the fourth generation.[4] He was a child when his father, the third in line, inherited them threescore years ago. Unfortunately the direct succession bids fair to be broken now, for the present owner is a bachelor, and, though old enough to have had children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, there are none of my own to take up the tasks that I must soon lay down.

Like the clock in the song, this great-grandfather's clock is more than seven feet tall. But so far as I know, it never celebrated the arrival of a bride at its owner's home; and in far more than a century it has kept up its ceaseless ticking, while one after another its owners in succession have been carried away to the churchyard, followed or preceded by their wives and numerous children.

This clock was one of the first things I remember noticing. Its pendulum hangs on a wire more than three feet long, so that it swings substantially once each second, with a resulting tick of grave deliberation. In childhood I often listened to its voice as to someone speaking. Returning recently to visit the clock, it seemed the ceaseless ticking was telling a story. I shall tell the story as I know it from what I have seen and heard, and as the clock might tell it if it could speak.

The first owner, John Ewbank, Sr.,[5] as aldest son, inherited from his parents in Yorkshire, England, a tall clock. It was then very old and known as the family clock. Being a bachelor of forty years, he married a young wife and took the clock to his new home. He proceeded in little more than a dozen years to acquire a family of ten children. Even before the tenth was born business reverses at home and the beckoning promise of a new country in the New World across the sea drew him to America. Lacking means to bring the family with him, he left them to the care of his brother, Edward, and came alone. Here he engaged in buying cattle for the New York market. No railroads or canals then existed in America and there were few roads that were more than

[4] Louis B. Ewbank, the author of this paper, was born September 5, 1864.

[5] This was the great-grandfather who was born in 1751 or 1752 and who died February 12, 1832. The gravestone states that he died in the "81st year of his age," but family tradition has passed down the date of 1752 as the year of his birth.

bridle paths even in the seaboard states. So all his purchases were driven to market on the hoof, with herdsmen for escort.

At that time New York City was a country town on the lower end of Manhattan Island. It had a scattered population (78,000) about one-fifth of what Indianapolis now has (387,000). Indeed, the whole state of New York had (780,000) less than twice as many inhabitants as now live in Marion County, Indiana (461,000). New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia were almost as thinly peopled. But many cattle were pastured in the wilderness, and there were markets beyond the sea, so business prospered. After he had been here two years, he sent for his wife and children. To prepare ten children of ages ranging from one to fourteen years for spending three months between the decks of a small ship which would pitch and toss with every wave, and at the same time to pack the indispensable household goods for such a voyage and provide food for the family while crossing, was no light task.

That was thirty years before the first steamship crossed the ocean. It was twice as long before the first Atlantic cable was laid. The ship they crossed in, like most ships of that time, was about 150 feet long and of a few hundred tons burden. There were no such monsters, 1,000 feet long of 40,000 tons burden, as have since been constructed. The inherited clock with its long wooden case was a real problem. The brother, Edward, offered to exchange for it a new brass clock, without any case, which he bought from the manufacturer ready packed in a cubical box of the smallest possible dimensions. As these new "works" cost Edward ten pounds, the equivalent of $50, when only the skilled mechanics received as much as $1 per day, while the ancient family clock had little in its favor but sentiment, the offer was gladly accepted. The new clock works were loaded on shipboard with a few household goods, the ten small children and their mother, their own bedding and food enough for the voyage. This might by rare good luck be made in four weeks but could (as it did) consume three months, depending upon the wind and weather and ocean currents encountered. None of these had then been charted or studied until a generation later.

To this point the clock's knowledge, like my own, is secondhand. It can only know what happened then by having

heard about it from John Ewbank, Sr., and from his wife and numerous children; more especially from the son John, Jr., with whom it afterward spent the last fifty years of his life, including those when he lived largely in the past.

When it arrived on board the little ship, and with the other family possessions was stowed away in the diminutive cabin between decks, the clock's opportunities were increased. It then had time to look about, to listen and to gain information at first hand, as it has had ever since. If only it could, it might tell much of real interest about the voyage, as well as the lives, loves, toils, and homely adventures of the six or seven generations that it has watched pass by. For great-grandchildren of its first owner now have great-grandchildren of their own.

Scarcely were the mother and her ten children snugly ensconced in the few square feet allotted to them of a small cabin built into a lower deck, when she became so violently ill she could only lie still and be waited on by the children. In giving each of the larger ones a separate task, care of the year-old baby was assigned to twelve-year-old John, the future owner of the clock. A brother fourteen years old, another eleven, and one nine with his twin sister, and another sister almost eight did what family work was done, and cared for another little sister and two still smaller brothers, besides the baby.

The mother continued to be violently ill whenever she ventured to leave her couch, so she was out of the picture except as just another to be fed and cared for as an invalid. Fortunately all the children were well and kept well all the way across the ocean. On clear days they would watch the waves as their ship plowed through them, or perhaps see a school of dolphins at play, or the sea birds flying over or perching in the ship's rigging or plunging into the water. In storms they had to keep below with the portholes closed and nothing to see but the timbers of the ship, their own small stock of household goods and similar possessions of their fellow passengers. Refrigerators had not been invented, and even if they had been, would not have been carried on such a small vessel. Ice in midsummer was not to be thought of. Canned fruits and vegetables were then unknown on shipboard. After the first few days out of port, they settled down to a steady diet of ship's biscuits, a kind of cracker,

with salted fish, or even salted meat on special occasions, and a few dried vegetables like beans and onions. A mouthful or two of lukewarm water quenched their thirst. Having food, drink, clothing, and shelter, the children played and romped day after day and week after week, worrying little about what they did not have. The younger children, and especially the smallest boy, Martin, three years old, were much petted by the sailors. They carried him to explore every part of the little ship that to him seemed so huge.

Sometimes, and especially on Sundays, if their mother felt able to talk, the children would listen to stories about the father who had gone away to far-off America two years earlier, before Rebecca was born. Benjamin and Martin had been too small to remember him, and even Hannah, now six years old, remembered only that somebody went away when she was too young to care very much about it. But all were greatly interested now.

These stories, with tales from the Bible, were about all in the way of diversion that was permitted the children on Sundays. For this family, and especially the mother, were Methodists after the strict measure of John Wesley, whose personal disciple she had been in England. One of the strongest articles of their faith was strict observance of the Sabbath, as they called Sunday. For a child to play or sing or even laugh that day in the intervals between the prayers and sermons that were hours long was strongly disapproved. On week days, however, each child was free to play when his little tasks were done. Those too small for tasks might find entertainment where they could, with only time out for eating and sleeping. When storms kept them between the decks with the portholes closed and the big waves turned one end of the ship and then the other toward the sky, a game could be played on the sloping floor of their small cabin. The little fellows would slide across the floor as the ship tossed high on a wave, and turning, would slide back as it pitched into the trough of the sea. Or on sunny days they would climb to the upper deck and visit the steersman or the sailmakers, who never tired of hearing baby voices lisp the broad dialect of Yorkshire.

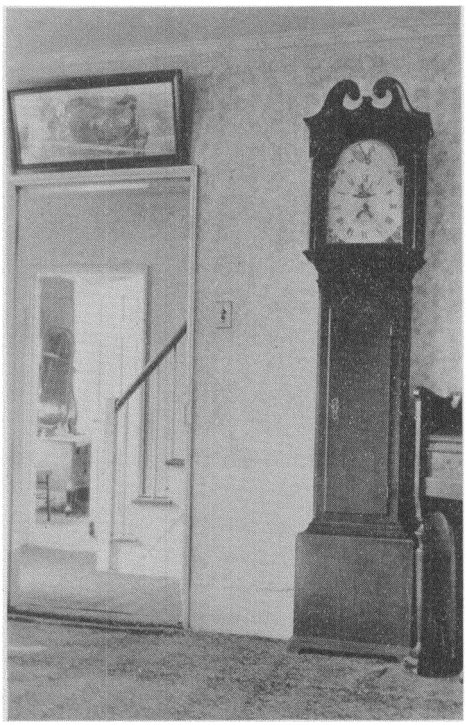
A hundred years of public schools and fifty of studying dictionaries have brought our common speech to a uniformity not dreamed of when adjoining townships on either side of a

river or range of hills in Britain used entirely different names for common implements of agriculture or household use. Saxon and Briton or Dane and Norman dwelling side by side for centuries had not achieved a wholly common speech.

Wherever one is and in whatever circumstances, time moves on. Even packing the clock in a small square box did not change this. One day thirteen weeks after it left England, this small boat with the large family aboard sailed into New York Harbor and up to a wharf at the Battery. That great metropolis was then a town of diminutive houses and unpaved streets. It was just beginning to bring water by wooden pipes from the vicinity of what is now Fortieth Street to the more densely peopled lower end of Manhattan Island. The rest of the city was still supplied by wells. The first successful steamboat in the world had just begun operating on the Hudson between New York and Albany, and the boy John soon managed to go aboard it, though only to look around.

The family lived across the North River in New Jersey, presumably at the Palisades or other high grounds, for I never heard any complaint about the mosquitoes. John, the twelve-year-old boy-nurse, spent most of his time working in the city of New York. It was a place of cottages and two-story houses built of wood surrounded by ample yards and gardens, but far older then than Indianapolis is now, and looking down with scorn on mere countryfolk. John told in later life of once seeing a lady with a sidesaddle ride a horse up Broadway, which he said was so unusual that clerks, employers, and customers swarmed to the doors and windows as she passed; though not many miles away, beyond the roads that led down to the seashore and river landings, almost the only choice the people then had in traveling was to go on horseback or on foot.

In the New Jersey home the clock was taken out of its packing case and given a new upright wooden case of wild cherry, that it still wears. During the next four years, it had nothing to do but tell the minutes by pointing with one hand, the hours by pointing with the other, and by striking its bell every sixty minutes, and telling the days of each month by the motion of a wheel on its face. The children grew as other children have grown, went to school, and having learned to read, studied about pounds, shillings, and pence, then still currently used in New Jersey and New York. Their father



The Grandfather's Clock

had also to learn the use of the new money called dollars, dimes, and cents, as he bought and sold cattle for every kind of money to be found in a seaport town, continuing to prosper in spite of all.

Tales were in circulation concerning the great Northwest Territory. It was said that lands had been opened for settlement at places along the Ohio River which could be bought from the United States for only two dollars an acre, payable in four annual installments. After the family and the clock had been for four years near the North River, as the Hudson River was usually called, their parents resolved to move to the Ohio River country. It was over fifty years since General Braddock's ill-fated expedition against Fort Duquesne had opened a road from Cumberland across the mountains, which is now United States Highway 40. It was nearly as long since the army of General Forbes had cut the trees and brush from a roadway across the mountains on the present

route of United States Highway 30 from Bedford to Pittsburgh. While these were little more than pack horse trails, neither graded nor paved, a steady and rapidly increasing stream of travel was pouring west over them. Almost the universal practice for emigrants from the northern seaboard was to travel by land across the mountains to some point on the Conemaugh or Youghiogheny rivers, or some other of the headwaters of the Ohio large enough to carry a flatboat downstream, and from there to drift with the current to the chosen destination. When the surface of the ground was dry, horses or oxen could travel ten or twelve miles in a day. This left time for preparing and eating a breakfast cooked over an open fire of logs, and for breaking camp; and, when the lengthening shadows in the later afternoon gave warning, to camp again and prepare supper over other log fires in the same way. When it rained, however, the wagon wheels would sink into the mud until the oxen and horses could go no farther. Then there was nothing to do but to camp and wait for better weather, when the ground should become dry enough that the wagon wheels could be dug out and the journey resumed.

Little did that father and mother dream, while driving a few miles a day through the soft mud, and sleeping in or beneath their wagons or on the bare ground under the trees, that fifty years later their sons and daughters might ride at fifty miles an hour over substantially the same route on railroad trains guided by telegraph messages; or that after another fifty years their grandchildren could ride half that fast over stone turnpikes in gasoline buggies through a land of cities, towns, villages, and farms in instant communication by telephone; or that after a few more years the great-grandchildren and their sons and grandsons might drive in power-propelled carriages at imperceptible grades on cement surfaced highways and through tunnels under the higher mountain ranges instead of over them, at seventy miles an hour or even faster; or, if they preferred, might float through the air high above the tops of the mountains, from New York City to Cincinnati or Indianapolis between a late breakfast and an early lunch.

It does not appear that any such dreams disturbed the small children who played and ran and shouted until they were tired and then climbed into the wagons to ride. The

parents and older children were kept too busy with camping and breaking camp, preparing food, bringing firewood, cutting trees and underbrush that blocked the road, harnessing horses and putting yokes on oxen, driving the wagons and unyoking the oxen, unharnessing the horses and finding feed and water for both, to waste a thought on what changes the future might bring, or on what their great-grandchildren and more remote descendants might do.

The clock, having been placed in one of the wagons where it lay on its back with its face towards the sky, had stopped. It was unloaded in the late summer near the bank of a shallow creek more than a thousand miles from where they started, as measured by the route they had come.

After entering the mountains, distance had to be sacrificed to elevation, and the wagons followed the windings of streams day after day, forced to be content when half a day's travel around a loop in the course of such a stream would carry them even a little nearer their destination, as measured by the course of an airplane or even by the grades and cuts and tunnels which have since been made.

In the mountains there were long slopes so steep that the travelers had to "double teams" in climbing them. They would leave part of the wagons and some of the family beside the road, while all the horses and oxen tugged at a long chain drawing another wagon. Occasionally a mountain was found so steep that they had to join their teams with the cattle of other emigrants to get up at all. When at last the summit of a pass over the highest ridge of the Alleghenies was reached, and far below lay the valley of the next river in a well defined channel enclosed by banks on the western slope, another problem presented itself. How could wagons that had been tugged up so high by the united efforts of several teams of horses and oxen be taken down again without overwhelming the animals and rolling over or past them to certain destruction? These adventurers did as others had done and continued to do until tracks for wagons at sloping grades were afterward dug along the steep mountain sides from top to bottom. Felling a tree or finding part of one already cut down by somebody else from which a log could be obtained, they chopped off the limbs several inches from the log, which was then fastened behind a wagon as a drag or brake, plowing into the earth deep enough that force

was required to pull the wagon with its drag down the face of the mountain. Little regard was paid to roads in descending, but each driver dodged between the trees as he could, and a helper followed with an axe to cut away any tree or bush that might block progress of the wagon and its log brake.

Not many days after they reached the foot of the mountains on the western side, they came to a river large enough to carry flatboats. It was the Conemaugh that flows to the Allegheny and down it to the Ohio. Here they found many travelers encamped, waiting for boats to float them down the river. Some were trying to build their own boats. Many were awaiting the completion of boats contracted for. Not a few were working for the boat builders while they tried to accumulate enough money to buy or build for themselves. Flatboats already completed, however, could be purchased by anybody with ready money, and our clock was soon on its way down the little river, together with its owner and his numerous family, his horses and oxen, wagons, and all his other worldly goods.

Outboard motors had not been invented. The first steamboat to go down the Ohio River was still in a boatyard at Pittsburgh, half-completed. A loaded flatboat was too large and heavy for oars to be of much use except to keep its bow headed downstream, and to guide it into the current or over to a landing on the shore. Such boats floated with the waters of the stream. Sometimes they scarcely moved where the current ran slowly. Again they speeded at four or five miles an hour around the long bends of the river where the current was that swift. The distance traveled by water was much greater—fully twice as great—as the distance by land in a direct line.

Floating from dawn to dark each day, into the Allegheny River and from it down the Ohio, they tied to a tree on the bank each night. There was no channel save what the river had made for itself, and no lights were on the shore to mark out the way. Books had been published to guide flatboats, with maps which assumed to mark every sandbar and jutting rock or partly submerged snag, and to tell just where the deepest channel would be found, throughout the length of the river. These maps divided the river into short sections, and assumed to mark everything in it. But they had to be interpreted, and collisions with other boats

running faster or slower, or tied to the bank, or casting loose from it had to be avoided. With no guide but their books and their eyes, each flatboat man ventured to pilot his own boat through hundreds of miles of strange waters. As the river was constantly changing—much faster than the guide books did—every statement in them was under suspicion. Almost any day a tree undermined by the current might crash to the water and either lodge there as a new snag, or float away to lodge at some other place. Wherever it lodged it might create not only one new obstruction in the water, or many of of them, perhaps just below the surface, but might also dam up the current and send it to a different channel. New sandbars could form overnight below the mouth of a tributary stream after a hard rain. Piloting a flatboat called for daylight, sharp sight and ceaseless vigilance.

Ordinarily they floated thirty miles or more in a day, so that having driven three weeks through the wilderness to the western side of the mountains, almost as much longer was consumed in floating down a succession of rivers before they tied up at a little group of log huts where Lawrenceburg now stands. Venturesome descendants without the fear of traffic laws before their eyes have driven the entire distance over automobile highways that now run from New York to Lawrenceburg in one long summer day plus part of the night.

Pushing back from the river along the valley of what was beginning to be called Tanner's Creek, named for a trader whose two boys had been carried away by Indians twenty years before, the clock's escort soon found two adjoining half-sections of land that suited them. These lay across the valley on either side of the creek, forming together a square mile, just beyond the home of an earlier settler who had gone deepest into the woods in that direction. A deserted squatter's cabin, such as hunters and trappers had built for temporary shelter at many places in the western woods, was near the north end of these half-sections on the bank of the creek. Here the family spent the pleasant days of late summer and early autumn, when the clock was unpacked and set up on the cabin floor.

Another site half a mile farther down the creek, near the center of this embryo farm which reached to the top of the ridge on each side of the creek, was chosen for a home.

The work of cutting logs to build a house and barn, and the clearing of ground for a garden went forward in earnest. The four older boys were now aged from thirteen to eighteen years, respectively, and the oldest girl, twin sister of the thirteen-year-old boy, passed for a young lady. More than one of the girls who had come to the Northwest Territory in the preceding twenty years, and some even as late as twenty years afterward, were married by the time they were thirteen, though this girl waited another five years to marry. After being married, the very young folks, like their elders, would begin housekeeping in a pen of logs, with a roof of clapboards or "shakes," held in place by weight-poles laid across them. This provided shelter whenever needed. At other times, however, domestic life, with its cooking, dining, laundry work, soapmaking, grinding corn or sweet acorns for bread, and many other household activities, was conducted under the trees in the open air.

An intimation of what was then deemed necessary to comfortable home life in the woods is revealed in a law that had been enacted in Indiana Territory in the year (1810) before they arrived. Besides "necessary" books of the professional man and tools of the mechanic, few of whom ventured into the deep woods, a debtor could hold as against an execution on a judgment in favor of his creditors, "one milch cow and calf, one sow, one bed, bedstead and bed clothing, one pot, one kettle, one dutch oven, one frying pan, and one axe."[6]

The clock's companions, recently from Europe and the Atlantic seaboard, were not content with bare necessities. Not satisfied with benches such as served for furniture in many frontier cabins, they had chairs made by an English cabinetmaker who arrived in the settlement, some of which are still in use at the residence. They built two structures of logs, each about sixteen by twenty feet in size, standing eight or ten feet apart, and having provided for each a floor of split logs or "puncheons" smoothed with an adze, near the ground and a like floor seven or eight feet higher, they carried the logwalls up so as to form a loft that enclosed this second floor above each of the lower rooms. Then they

[6] *Acts of Assembly of the Indiana Territory, 1810* (Vincennes, 1810), ch. xxv, as reprinted in *The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1809-1816*, edited by Louis B. Ewbank and Dorothy Riker, *Indiana Historical Collections*, XX (Indianapolis, 1934), 133.

boarded up the space between the log structures to make a hallway both above and below. The lower hallway had doors at front and back of heavy oak planks laboriously sawed out by hand. With a stone chimney and fireplace at that end of each room farthest from the hallway, wide enough to hold firewood four feet long, they had a house ample for the family of twelve. Together with a log summer-kitchen and the log barn and giant forest trees outside, it was even capable of expansion to meet the extreme demands of backwoods hospitality. There were no stoves until many years later, and all the cooking was done at open fires and on beds of coals in the big fireplaces.

Besides being the family home for twenty years this log building for half that time served also as a chapel where the circuit rider preached when he came, and especially every Sunday when the clock's master, as class-leader in the old Methodist sense, gathered his family and a few neighbors together for inquiry, instruction, exhortation, admonition, and encouragement. Every month or so, on whatever day of the week the circuit rider might appear, all of the ten children would go in different directions through the woods to notify neighbors whose children, in turn, would pass the word on to others. "Early candle lighting" was the time usually fixed for evening gatherings before watches were generally carried. At that witching hour, as they interpreted it, the Methodist families from two or three miles away and occasional neighbors would gather to hear a sermon. Sometimes Baptists would join in their devotions but not often, for denominational lines were closely drawn. Those who were neither Methodists nor Baptists usually fiddled, danced, and played cards, and were considered by the church people as reprobates.

If he came at the end of the week and remained till Sunday, the circuit rider and any of the congregation, up to fifty or so, would remain overnight. These would include old or crippled guests to whom a walk of a mile or two or three and back would cause hardship. All the guests would sleep as they could, the women in the house. Such men as could not find a place somewhere on the floor inside the house would go to the barn or out under the trees. All would breakfast next morning on such homely fare as the backwoods afforded. Any overflow crowd would be sent to

other cabins within a few miles from which they would return for "morning class" by six or seven the next day. More than once a bishop of their church honored the home of these pioneers by preaching in front of the great stone fireplace.

The Sunday activities were not all inside the house, nor were all devotional in a religious sense. A detached room that served as a summer kitchen, together with the wide outdoors often used as a dining room, was also the scene of earnest devotion of a different kind. There the daughters and their young friends, like Martha, were "cumbered with much serving," while their elders "sat at the Master's feet and heard His word." For the religious meetings were punctuated by calls to dinner long before the sun was at meridian, and to supper long before darkness fell. Those girls and young matrons were expected to bake and boil and fry and serve such quantities of food as would give a modern housewife heart failure just to think of it.

Always the circuit rider, the bishop, if one were present, or the presiding elder, as the district superintendent was then called, and the local preachers who, after riding the circuit for a few years, had married and settled down to cultivate farms and rear families, and such old or infirm persons or visitors from a distance as could not well come afoot, brought horses with them. These were the charge of the young men and boys of the family and their companions, who preferred the open air with light work to devotional exercises inside the house. One of these local preachers rode a bay mare that when tied up would lean back on her bridle and break loose. Then she would roam about looking for choice food or pasture, and cause the boys much trouble to catch her again. To insure security, they finally put one end of a log chain around her neck and fastened the other to a young elm tree that grew on the creek bank. The little mare pulled back and when nothing broke she pulled harder until she threw herself down the creek bank and hung by the neck from the bending tree. The boys had not meant to kill the preacher's mount and were much alarmed, but enough of them soon gathered to lift the mare so that the chain was unhooked, after which she lay at the foot of the bank both sadder and wiser than before.

For years afterward, her owner boasted that while his riding mare had troubled him much by breaking her bridle,

she never did so when he rode her to church meetings at Brother Ewbank's home. Neither the boys nor the clock told of this adventure until the local preachers, the circuit rider, and the parents had all passed to their long home, and the grown-up boys had ceased to fear discipline, parental, or ecclesiastical. The elm tree lived and thrived for nearly a century afterward, until its stump was five feet across and its branches sheltered almost a fourth of an acre of ground. Then it was killed by minute insects working under the bark. In the meantime, the creek had cut itself a new and deeper channel a hundred yards away, and had filled its old channel and almost obliterated the high bank.

The new home was at the edge of a former "deadening," an acre or two in extent. Somebody, fifteen or twenty years before, to judge from the size of the second-growth saplings, had killed the large trees and cut down or dug out enough of the undergrowth to make a small field. The old trees had probably been burned down, as the few remaining stumps and snags were blackened and charred. A patch in which to plant a little corn and a few vegetables between the seasons for trapping furbearing animals might be prepared with less labor by fire than with axes and grubbing hoes. It was then fifteen years since the wilderness along the Ohio River for a few miles west of the Great Miami had been surrendered by the Indians for settlement by white men. Hunters and trappers had swarmed over it, intent on killing game and selling furs, without either the means or the inclination to buy land from the government and open farms. The Indians, and the hunters and traders who lived among them, had trapped and hunted over those hills and valleys for many years. French traders had bought their furs, taking them down the Ohio River and its tributaries and then paddling back with their purchases.

The newcomers had just finished constructing their log house, aided by all the other settlers within a radius of several miles, when they heard most unearthly noises from the direction of the Ohio River. Scarcely had they recovered from the alarm caused by these mysterious sounds when they heard rumors of a great array of Indians under Tecumseh and the one-eyed Prophet, his brother; of a military expedition against those Indians from the Wabash country 150 miles away, commanded by their governor, William Henry

Harrison; of Indian depredations at Pigeon Roost and other places; and of a battle near the Tippecanoe River where the Indians were defeated. Soon afterward an earthquake shook their house so that the dishes rattled in the closets, and the tongs and shovels clattered on the hearth. Sad news came up the river that the village of New Madrid in southeastern Missouri had been all but destroyed, and a tract of land eighteen miles long in Tennessee had sunk and become the basin of what is now the Reelfoot Lake. This earthquake was said to have been preceded by the same noises heard on the Ohio River. The Ewbanks were relieved soon after to learn that these latter noises were made by a steamboat, the first ever to descend the Ohio River and then the Mississippi, up which it was not able to return. Having often heard and seen a steamboad on the Hudson River at New York, they were not frightened nor taken in by tales current among the settlers that the monster which made such horrible noises had caused the earthquake. The Indian scare persisted into the "War of Twelve," as it was called, and two or three of the sons from this family saw service as Rangers or woodland militia, but without casualties.

At first the newcomers had to depend chiefly on the forests for their living. There were no grocery stores within many miles nor any money in circulation with which to buy groceries. A few bushels of corn were purchased for seed and for an occasional taste of corn bread in one of the forms of hoe-cake, Johnny-cake, or dodger. There were also acorns and nuts and many kinds of wild fruits, and the roots of many plants were eaten as food, even in the fall and winter. Maple syrup, or tree molasses as it was called, could be had for the labor of making it. The abundance of meat on a pioneer's table depended only on his skill and diligence with gun and traps. There were great flocks of wild turkeys and many other kinds of wild fowls. Deer roamed the woods in herds. Bears were frequently seen. Squirrels and other small animals could be found by a sharp-eyed hunter within a stone's throw of his home, if not in every tree. The streams were full of fish, and neither seining, spearing, nor "gigging," was prohibited.

Cutting second-growth trees of more than three inches across the stump, digging out the smaller saplings and underbrush, and burning them in huge piles of brush and logs

to prepare a few acres for planting in the spring furnished occupation through the fall and winter. Enough of the trees had to be split into rails and laid up as a worm-fence to enclose the garden and grain plot, the panels zigzagging almost at right angles with each other. These fences were built higher than a man's head, for there roamed in the woods not only bears and flocks of turkeys and herds of deer that were all fond of corn, but also domestic animals of every kind, horses, cattle, swine, and even sheep. It was not to be until seventy years later that the law of Indiana would require owners to restrain by fences or tethers their domestic animals on their own premises and to guard the crops of others from their depredations. Everybody then adopted a "mark" for his hogs, cattle, and horses, either by branding each animal with a hot iron, cutting its ears or tail in a peculiar manner, or providing other means of identifying it. Then they turned all of them out to forage for a living on any unfenced land. The thrifty farmer adopted definite times for giving his animals grain and salt, which taught them to come often to his barn and not stray too far away. Cows readily learned to come home at milking time. A large bell on a staid old cow served not only as a signal for the younger cattle to follow, but gave notice where the herd could be found if they were too slow about coming in. An old mare sometimes carried a bell in the same way to locate and bring home the colts and other horses. Many animals practically ran wild until fully grown.

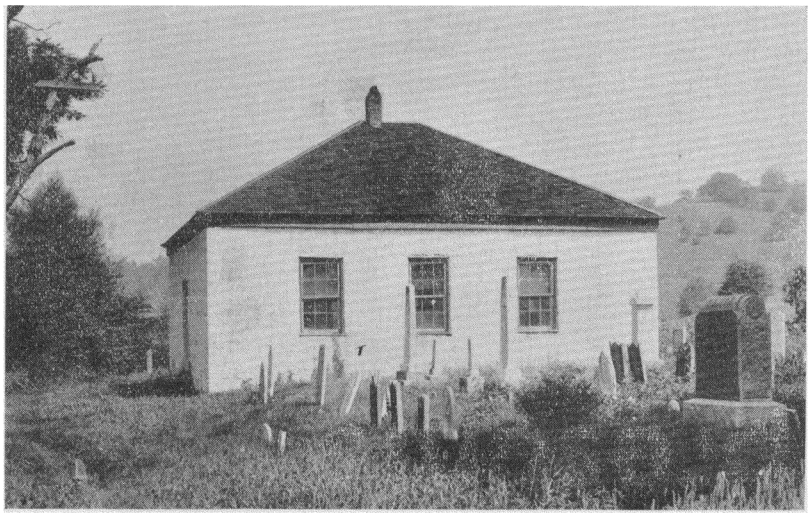
A small reward for killing wolves had been offered before these settlers arrived, and only two weeks after Indiana became a state this reward was doubled upon presentation of a petition by John Ewbank and others, as the *Journal* of the state senate recites.[7] The bounty for killing wolves within six miles of "any of the settlements" was increased to one dollar for each puppy under two months old, and two dollars each for all two months old and upward. The scalp of each wolf with the ears entire had to be produced and affidavit made of the hunter's belief as to the wolf's age. But the law is silent as to how the exact age of a wolf puppy should be ascertained. Two dollars, the wolf bounty, was the price of an acre of government land wherever situated from 1800 to 1820.

Besides hunting, seining, and spearing to supply their

[7] *Journal of the Senate of Indiana, 1816-1817*, p. 8.

tables with game and fish, and ranging the woods for substitutes for bread and syrup and vegetables, the settlers had a Herculean task to clear and fence a few additional acres each year for planting corn, small grains, vegetables, and other crops. The face of the country was entirely covered with giant forest trees with the undergrowth among them. Before a field could be planted the large trees had to be cut down, or at least killed by cutting through the bark all the way around them (girdling), so that the leaves would no longer shade the ground; and the smaller saplings and bushes must be dug out by the roots. Then the brush had to be collected in immense piles, which were later burned. Many logs from the trees that were cut down were split up for fence rails or used in the building of house and barn or stable. The others were cut and split into four-foot lengths to use in the house as fuel or they were rolled into huge heaps and set on fire. Many trees that were only deadened were left standing while crops of Indian corn, small grains, vegetables, and hay were planted and harvested among them for a few years, until the limbs and trunks became dry enough that they were set on fire and burned down. A few acres were added each year to the cultivated fields.

After ten years John Ewbank, Sr., gave for a neighborhood cemetery and the site of a chapel the half-acre of



The Chapel

ground surrounding the cabin that his family had occupied for the first few months. His church class, now grown to a congregation, built a stone meeting-house which, with the cemetery surrounding it, much enlarged, is still in use.

When our pioneer, after living twenty years in the log house, built and moved into the residence of stone where his great-grandson now lives, only patches of cleared land had been opened in the thousand acres of forest he had acquired. These clearings were dotted with stumps, especially

The Ewbank Home

of the larger trees. The stone house had a brick oven built into the room designed for a kitchen, in which a fire could be built and drawn out after its walls were thoroughly heated, thus preparing the baking of a week's supply of bread and pies which could be done at one operation.

After another fifty years when the son John, who was my grandfather, passed away, the work of "clearing" the fields still continued. After a hundred years, there still were stumps to interfere with plowing and cultivation. Within less then ten years after they came, the older sons and daughters had begun to marry, and were provided with separate

homes, barns, fences, and clearings. Soon the home on the bank of the creek was grandfather's house and the tall clock was grandfather's clock, a distinction they maintained for a full century.

The small fields dotted with giant stumps that spread their roots just below the surface to trip up unwary plowmen could not have been cultivated in the present fashion. Farm machinery as we use it was then unknown, but modern implements could not have been operated over and among the stumps if they had had them. Plows were of wood with possibly a cutting edge of metal which only scratched the surface of the soft leaf mold. Corn was planted in holes dug with a hoe, and covered with dirt drawn over it. Potatoes and like vegetables were planted in the same way. The principal tool for cultivating all crops was a hoe. If there were not too many stumps, perhaps the corn might be planted in rows and cultivated with a single-shovel plow drawn by one horse ridden by a boy or led by a man. Small grains were sowed broadcast by hand and dirt was drawn over them by dragging a bush (often a thorn bush) back and forth. The few stalks of corn produced were cut off and carried to the barn where the ears were husked. When the wheat or oats or rye or barley was ripe, it was reaped with long curved knives called sickles. A workman holding the sickle in his right hand would cut off a handful of straws that he drew together and held in his left hand. Another man, or perhaps a woman, would follow, collecting a small armful of these bunches of straw, which had been cut and laid on the ground. They were bound into a sheaf with a band made of straws plucked from it. When any such small grain had been harvested, it was threshed by spreading it upon a smooth floor of boards, or perhaps of dry earth, and by beating the heads with what was called a flail. This consisted of a stick much like a broom handle, with a shorter heavy club tied to the end of it. By causing the club to swing at the end of the handle and strike the heads of grain, it could be made to loosen the grain of wheat or rye or barley or oats from the chaff and straw. The straw was raked away, well shaken to get the grain out of it, and the chaff and grain were placed in baskets and set aside until they could be winnowed by the wind. When the wind blew hard enough and just right, the chaff and grain were tossed up for it to separate by blowing

the chaff away while the grain fell to the floor. Threshing and winnowing a bushel of wheat was considered a fair day's work, though an occasional workman could thresh two bushels.

Great-grandfather did not live to see the transition from the sickles to the cradle, which is a sort of scythe equipped with fingers against which the straw would fall when cut by swinging the blade against it. Reaping machines drawn by horses were invented after his death, and in the course of many years were developed into self-binders that cut the grain and bound the sheaves with wire and afterward with twine. Several of his grandsons had grown to be men before threshing separators were invented, and two of them purchased and operated the first separator that was ever used on the "Home Place" or near there. It only beat the grain and chaff loose from the straw, to be winnowed by a fanning mill turned by a hand crank. These fanning mills were invented about the same time as the separator, but the fans and screens were afterward built into the threshers. Further developments of the past century have brought us to the "combine," which reaps, threshes, and separates the grain at a single operation, while a tractor draws it across the field.

The clock has also watched the development of schools from the primitive ideal of pupils seated on a log, facing the master seated on another, to our centralized system where children are carried in auto busses six or eight or ten miles to schools where the eight grades are taught in different rooms, and a four-year high school course is added. Such a school stands almost within sight from the windows toward which the clock's face is turned. The pack-horse trail on which this clock was brought up from the river, passing for miles along the rocky bed of the creek, developed into a dirt road (often mud) along the top of the creek bank west of the stone house, afterwards into a stone road on the sidehill east of it, and finally into a state highway paved with concrete and asphalt.

After forty years a railroad was built a mile away. After another fifty years a telephone was installed in the room with the clock. It has witnessed and heard in succession the phonographs operated with little wax cylinders, victrolas that had flat circular disk records, and radios that automatically produce strange noises by day or night. It

has seen in succession the children and youths who spent hours at a time playing with these new inventions afterward bring children of their own to follow the same routine. It has seen a succession of housewives arrive as blooming young brides, and half a century later carried away to their long rest as aged grandmothers. It has listened to hopeful prophesies of optimism and to dismal wails of pessimism.

Through it all the clock has kept a straight face, attending strictly to its business of telling the time, only thoughtfully observing tick-tock and punctuating the passage of each hour with strokes on its bell.