CHAPTER XVIII.

WHITE OAK TOWNSHIP.

Early days in White Oak and Stockbridge, by G. K. Stimson; pioneer poem, "Don't Go West"; G. W. Holland's story of White Oak.

First White Child Born in Ingham Tells of First Michigan Pioneering-Mrs. Abby Clark, of This City, Has Spinning Wheel Used to Clothe Family.

Creaking to a standstill, broken under the terriffic strain to which the continual wrenching of the chaotic floor of Michigan's wilderness had subjected it, the immigrant wagon of Daniel Dutcher came to a halt.

Come, my steam-heated friend, leave the contemplation of your obesity and the thought of consternation for your legs, grown defective with too much trust in gasoline and let us journey back into the roadless woods of Ingham county 85 years ago, nnd watch the proceedings attendnnt on the coming of the first white folks to our county.

Hear the patient oxen, the breath issuing almost resonantly from their tense nostrils. How small and inconsequential the few human voices now raised seem in that silence-clogged wilderness, as they counsel what to do. The breakdown is decisive-and there is little need to talk. Miles on, through the trackless woods, the Dutchers must go. The young mother climbs down from the wagon, and taking one child by the hand and carrying the soon-to-be first white child of Ingham county under her heart, goes forward, The father carries the youngest child. Night is fast closing down, but on, through the dark, the Dutchers make their way. Simple little procession, indeed, to the undiscerning, but tremendous in its import when considered as the beginnings of an empire.

FIRST STOPPING PLACE,

Persistence on the pnrt of the travelers took them eventually to

the cabin home of Mrs. Dutcher's parents, already established for a year in what is now Unadilla of Washtenaw county. But that was only a stopping place. The wagon was next day repaired and on they went, in a few days, into the forest that one day was to become Ingham county.

Eventually Daniel Dutcher and his little family came to a halt on the white oak land, on the southern edge of White Oak Township, just over the line from Stockbridge Township, near Lowe Lake. That was in the fall, nnd in December, on the 19th to be exact, 1835, Abby Dutcher, now Mrs, Clark, of 116 South Francis street, still living at the home of her son, Will G. Clark, was born. In this domestic event Ingham county had begun to grow. The first white child wns born within its boundaries.

Hearing today the story of the beginnings of the Dutcher family, in their little clearing mnde on the government land, claim to which had been taken at "ten shillings an acre," one is forced to believe that they had no more vision of the wonderful country they were building than Moses had of his centuries of coming fame when he tended the flocks of Jethro; but both, in their simplicity, wrought better than they knew.

RISKED ALL ON TRIP,

As said, Daniel Dutcher and his family arrived on their claim in early fall and they had nothing but fnst disappearing supplies in their wagon. These had been purchased at Detroit after coming up the lake from "York state." They had $1,500 when they started, and they were risking it all on their great venture. But it was more-much more-than a gambler's chance. The whole capital was invested in an opportunity of hard work. And so it proved.

When Abby was born, in December, the first rude cabin was up. It had no doors and windows, but across one side of the cabin extended a wido fireplace above which rose a chimney of mud nnd sticks. Before their first candles were made, brush, piled high on the big back log, afforded light for the cabin.

Everything was strange and new, but the outstanding circumstance of the pioneer appears to be, from the stories now told of him, that he made circumstances bend' to his will instead of bending to circumstances. 'Pioneer housewives were tenacious,

almost to a fault, of things their mothers had taught them. It was almost no time at all before white bread was made and somehow or other they very early managed to see to it that a cow came to the frontier. Milk they would have. Mrs. Clark well remembers setting out a huge loaf of bread and a pan of milk for some hungry Indians one day when her parents were away. "We threw the remains of the food away," relates Mrs. Clark, from which one may gather that Indians impressed children, even in those days, as being, as we would say. "insanitary." That the pioneers had it in them not to sink to the level of conditions, as they found them, but were willing to battle for their standards of life is instanced in the fact that they would rather travel back to Detroit for white flour than to sink to the level of the Indian way of living. It deserves to be said in passing that the big round loaves of those days were baked in a "bake kettle," long extinct contrivances that used to be buried in coals raked from the fireplace. The cover had a rim or collar to keep the hot coals atop the kettle.

"NORTH TOWN" NOT STARTED.

Preceding the Dutcher family, in their new White Oak home, was the Lowe family, of which Heman Lowe was the head; but this did not make it otherwise than that both families were on the actual frontier of Michigan. Mrs. Clark says that, so far as they knew, there were no white people beyond them, so far as the wilderness extended. The beginning of Lansing had not been made. The saw mill at "North Town" was not yet up.

One of the terrors of Mrs. Clark's young life was the wolves, and this terror she says was shared by her mother. Nearly every night before the family could find sleep the wolves had to be frightened away with burning brands from the fireplace. The Indians never gave any trouble to mention, except a little thieving, even though quite a good many of them lived nearby: An Indian trail was the only pathway the Dutchers and their neighbors knew. Lowe Lake of today was a popular Indian resort.

How strikingly those old timers took to the ways of civil government, Almost before their cabins were built they planned on township and county government. The Dutchers settled just north of Stockbridge Township in 1835 and the next year Stockbridge was organized as a township. Even White Oak itself, only four years after its first settlers came, was made a township.

"I tell you, there wasn't a lazy hair in anyone's head in those days," said Mrs. Clark the other day at her son's home, relating how life went with them. "We all worked as hard as we could, and we had some terrible times-yes, indeed we did-but we were all as happy as folks are nowadays and I don't know but happier."

HAS SPINNING WHEEL.

Mrs. Clark still possesses the spinning wheel which *was* a prime necessity in her frontier home. She not only learned to spin but she made cloth as well. She remembers with pride how she made her first husband a full suit of clothes of "black satinette." Our men folks looked just as well as they do now, though we made their clothes from the cloth we had made from wool off our sheep's backs, is Mrs. Clark's belief, whether modern tailors agree or not.

"How were women's dresses made in those days?" Mrs. Clark was asked. "Well, they 'want' as short as they are now, that's one thing!" She remembers the wedding dress she wore. That was when she was a bride of 19. It'was a dark wool delain, with a small white figure. She admits that she and George Wilson (her first husband) did not have much of a wedding. They drove over to Howell in Livingston county, were married there and then went on for a honeymoon of a week with relatives furthef over in Livingston. Coming home the snow was so badly drifted they were overturned from their sleigh.

Young Wilson and Abby Dutcher met when the young man came to help build the new Dutcher frame home which was considered quite a mansion. And so these young people, trusting the future as implicitly as it has been trusted in all ages, were married, little realizing that the great Civil War was coming on. But come it did, and it took the life of the young abolitionist husband, who declared the slaves ought to be free if it meant war He also declared, "I would rather enlist and be killed than drafted and escape."

CIVIL WAR VET.

And death did overtake George Wilson in the service of his country. He *was* of Company H, 20th Regiment. Its scarred

battle flag may still be seen in the Capitol rotunda. Those were grave, dark days, and can the reader wonder that tears still well up in the eyes of Mrs. Clark as she remembers?

It was in connection with her widow's pension that she made her first trip to Detroit, by stage from Stockbridge to Dexter, where she took the first steam cars she had ever seen.

There is a wealth more to tell of Mrs. Clark's experiences, but all cannot be given space here. She came to Lansing to see the first Capitol when it was completed and never came again until fairly recently when she came to live with her son. One circumstance, however, fully characteristic of the times and as marking Mrs. Clark unmistakably as a daughter of Eve, must not be omitted. Hoop skirts came in along about the beginning of the Civil War. The young Mrs. Wilson (then) had to have some too, but thrift was written in big letters in, those days. She improvised to meet the style by sewing wild grape vines inside her skirt.. Oh, those early pioneers were nothing if not American.

After her second marriage, to Elias Clark, they lived for a long time in the village of Stockbridge amd prospered there. Mrs. Clark is the mother of 5 children, grandmother of 19 children and greatgrandmother of 9. Her children were Daniel and Sadie Wilson, the former deceased, the latter Mrs. Burch, of Detroit, and Electra, Will and Lon Clark. Electra is Mrs. Edward Bushnell, of Fowlerville, Lon Clark lives near Unadilla and Will G. in Lansing, is related. The sisters of Mrs. Clark are Mrs. Emery Secord, of Howell, Mrs, Patience Van Buren, of Lansing, and Mrs. Charles Carpentier, of near Stockbridge.

Indeed, there seems to be few living today who have SO fully and characteristically contributed to the raising of Michigan from a wilderness to what it is today.

G, K. STIMSON.

A PIONEER POEM'

The following wns sent to the Ingham County Pioneer and Historical Society by G. W. Holland, of White Onk, nnd is copied, not so much for its beauty as to show the opinion people had of Michigan in earlier days. This was written in 1849 by a man long since dead, and is now owned in the family of Mr. Holland. It

was found pasted in an old book his father had that was published in 1848.

"DON'T GO WEST."

"Come, eastern friend, if you'll attend
Unto the counsel of a friend,
I think it would be your best plan
To stay away from Michigan.

"The sawmills they are dangerous things,
Are running fast and slabs they fling;
They kill you or cut off your hand,
And leave you a beggar in Michigan,

"Each Saturday night you want your pay,
Expect your money right away,
But a written order is put in your hand,
That's the way you're paid in Michigan.

"The doctors they are young in skill;
They do no good, but put in their bill.
They tell you they do all they can,
And let you die in Michigan;

"The people they are getting sad
Because their money is all bad;
The banks all broke but two or three,
And they'll soon die with the 'cholerie.'

"The swamps they are all filled with brakes,
And are alive with rattlesnakes;
They lie and watch; do all they can
To bite the folks in Michigan.

"There are a few nice boys, 'tis true,
But, 0, alas,, what can they do?
But if one wants a pretty wife
She can't be found to save his life.

"There are nice girls, I'll own 'tis true,
But, dear me, what can they do?
For if they want a pretty man
They have to leave their Michigan."

WHITE OAK AND THE OLD OAKEN BUCKET.

By G. W. HOLLAND.

We would like to take our young readers into our forest home. A large place was cut into the end of the log house and walled up with stones and clay. The bottom was filled with the same material and bent poles were mortised in the logs and overlays, and with split lath and mortar our chimney and fireplace were completed. Large doors were placed in the center of two opposite sides of the house, with windows each side. A heavy plank floor below and inch lumber for the chamber floor, the gable ends being filled in with long shakes and slabs. Logs the right length for the fireplace were drawn up to the house, then rolled into the room through the big doors, and put on the fireplace for a back log. Sometimes two or more were used at once, the andirons were put in place and smaller logs laid on them. At one end of the chimney was an iron staple used to hold the crane. On this was swung the pot or kettle, which could be raised or lowered by aid of the trammel.

The bread was baked in a tin oven, and the meat and game were roasted by being tied to a string which was fastened to an overlay next to the chimney, the string being twisted tight. A good fire was then built under the roast, the meat given a start and as the atring slowly twisted and untwisted the meat was kept turning over the fire until it was cooked to nicety. Under the meat was a dish to catch the grease. And the goodness of those primitive roasts has never been excelled by any modern processes.

The wool was carded into reels, spun into yarn, then woven into cloth for all the clothing needed by the family.

People suffered terribly with fever and ague in early days, because of the impure water they were forced to use.

Maple sugar season was one of the pleasantest of the year,

for while it meant hard work it also meant lots of fun and enjoyment.

Blackberries were plentiful, and gathering them was one of the pleasures of early days, as was the work of gathering the walnuts, butter, beech and hazel nuts that grew in abundance, while the squirrels would chatter and scold us for interfering with their harvest.

Leeks were plentiful, but we were not pleased when the cows found them, for "leek-y" butter was anything but an enjoyable addition to the larder.

One day in October, 1855, we found three large walnut trees, but a bear and two cubs disputed our right to the fruit. We did not dispute their right to the fruit.

A party soon started out, and Bruin and family were killed the next day by a party of boys near a lake about six miles from White Oak. In the fall of 1862 the black squirrels all, or nearly all, left this part of the country. Land was being fast cleared up, and mowers could be found on many of the farms. Henry Hawley, near Mason, was agent for the Buckeye machine, which was a good one.

Then came the dark and gloomy days of '61 to '65 when wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and sweethearts saw their loved ones go forth to face the rebel bullets. White Oak helped to bear this burden in a noble manner, as they did during the Spanish-American War and the great World War. Her boys have always been faithful to the Stars and Stripes.

White Oak now has fine buildings, some of the houses lit by electricity instead of the old time fireplace. The headlights of our automobiles on our good roads have taken the place of the torches carried over the trails made by the Indians, and we can truly say all honor to the men and women who have transformed the forests and swamps into the beautiful land we now see. Let us cherish their memory as we do that of the brave men who went forth to save our country and keep our flag from ignoble stain. And, when we decorate the graves of our soldier dead, let us not forget the living soldier, for

"The smile that is given,
The kind word that is said,
Gives more joy to the living
Than flowers when we're dead."