

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Corn Husk Tick Good Hotel Bed; \$10 a Month 4 to 6 Hours Sleep; in Timber Jail for Doctor Bill

By Edwin Phelps (1815-87)

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At the close of my last article I was describing the family of Pierce **Taylor**, and stated that the widow of Jacob **Kriss**, daughter of Pierce Taylor, married Smith **Mead** and moved to Wisconsin. I was mistaken in the I name; it was Jabez Mead she married, who I understand is still living in Wisconsin, but insane. Smith Mead died near the Junction in Paulding county.

In mentioning F. F. **Steven's** wife in my last, it reads the sister of Mrs. Mary **Thornton**, when it should have been mother.

Since my last I have learned that Orville **Greer** died in California about four years ago. There was another son of William Wells **Greer**, Joseph by name, who has not been heard from for a great many years; and while I am correcting mistakes I will say that I stated that Dr. John **Evans** died at Ft. Wayne, which was a mistake. He was here on business and was taken sick, but thought he was able to ride home on horseback and started but was too sick to ride and stopped at Thomas **Warren's** and grew worse and died there and was taken to Fort Wayne for burial.

Town's Early Stores

To continue my description of Defiance: Elijah C. **Case** had a store at the corner of Wayne and Front streets where he sold goods several years. He was an old bachelor and eccentric, but finally got married, had some trouble with his wife and sold out his store to his brother Samuel C. **Case**, who many of our citizens recollect, as he became quite a prominent man holding the offices of County Commissioner, County Recorder and Postmaster at Defiance, all of which he discharged the duties of satisfactorily. He

married a daughter of Samuel **Keplar** and settled on a farm in Highland township. Robert **Case**, a brother of his, tended store for him, married somewhere in the State of New York, settled on a farm in Highland township in this county and engaged in the business of growing distilling peppermint. The former is now a resident of Nebraska, and the latter of Hillsdale county, Michigan, and was here not long since visiting a son and daughter residing in this county. S. S. **Case** sold out his store of goods to the Moore Brothers who sold goods here for several years the firm being composed of John L. **Moore**, S. **Moore** and William **Moore**.

First Defiance Hotels

Further up the river, on the corner where Wm. **Hoffman's** furniture store now is, was the residence of Payne C. **Parker** who also was selling goods furnished him by John E. **Hunt** In 1834 he was building a large addition to be used as a hotel. The building was built with a long ell on Clinton street, facing the river and covering the front of the lot on Front street. When I came the building was under roof, the upper floors laid and the lower floors being laid.

Sylvester **Blackman** and Samuel **Wheeler** had just started a saddler and harness shop in the building, and Payne C. **Parker** was keeping a hotel there as well as the store. One feature of it as, there was one large room upstairs some 40 feet long and 26 or more feet wide in which were 8 or 10 beds. The room was sided up, but not lathed or plastered. A tick filled with corn-husks, a pair of mackinack blankets, colored to save washing, and a comforter was considered a good bed in those days.

To Mr. **Parker** I hired out for \$10 a month to tend store, tend bar, act as hostler, wait on the table and do anything else that was wanting—and there was plenty of it—so that from 4 to 6 hours sleep was all that could be got. His wife was one of those masculine women who could work and did work from

4 o'clock in the morning until 11 or 12 o'clock at night, and raised a large family of children, only one of whom is now left, their deaths being hastened no doubt by the excessive hard work she did in their infancy.

One Blacksmith Shop

West of Clinton Street, near where **Mallett's** marble shop now is, was a log blacksmith shop, and farther west, between that and where the canal now is was a log cabin, both of which were occupied by Hiram **Heath**, who was then the only blacksmith in the place.

The brick building now owned and occupied by Henry **Hardy** was built in 1832. Pierce **Evans** had the contract, and Robert **Wassau** and William **Semans** made the brick and laid them up, both of whom were brick masons by trade. That building was finished off for a court room below and divided into two rooms for the offices above. Horace **Sessions** did the most of the business in the clerk's and recorder's offices, and William **Semans** did the work in the Auditor's office at the time I came here.

To Church in Calico

The only denomination having regular services here then was the Methodists who had generally two men on this circuit, the one a married man to whom they paid \$200 per year, and the other a single man to whom they paid \$100 per year; but those were times when if the female members of the church had a clean calico frock with 8 yards in it, and a nicely starched, sunbonnet for Summer and a checked linsey woolsey dress and a quilted hood for Winter they were in condition to go to church and the entire outfit costing in summer about \$5 and in winter \$10.

On the corner of the public square was a jail made of foot square timber, the floor and top timbers being laid close together, making a room 14 feet square and 10 feet high, with the floor, ceiling and walls all of one thickness— one foot. It was afterwards strengthened by

putting on 4-inch plank and another course of timber around the outside, making the walls 2 feet, 4 inches thick. In this the writer was once unfortunate enough to be incarcerated for a doctor's bill which he could not pay. It then being considered a crime to be poor. There are but a few states now in which this barbarous law has not been repealed.

Dr. Jonas **Colby** had a small office where J. P. **Buffington's** drug store now stands, and as he probably did more hard riding than any other man in this county, shall have more to say of him hereafter. I have now described all the buildings in town as near as I can recollect, and in my next I will try and describe the settlement of the country tributary to Defiance at that time.

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