

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Shirleys and Hudsons First Settlers on
Auglaize; Benefactor Sells Corn Cheap
to Poor; Harvest Minus Whiskey

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In writing these articles on the early history of the settlement of Defiance and adjacent counties, I have endeavored to be correct, but I find that there is often a slip in the recollection of men and things more than fifty years ago, and I find in nearly every new article something to correct in some previous one.

In my last I stated that John **Perkins** erected not only the first mill in old Williams County, but also the first in what is now Williams County. In the latter I was mistaken, perhaps, as about the time he built the mill at Lafayette, Isaiah **Hughes** and Samuel **Holton** built a mill on Firlo creek in St. Joseph township.

Litigation Over Mill

Which was built first I could not now say without reference to the records of the courts of Williams County, as Mr. **Hughes** and Mr. **Holton** had a lawsuit about the mill which was pending in the common pleas court of Williams county when I came here and was decided in the Supreme court of that county. This mill was so near the Indiana line that one or both of the parties engaged attorneys from Fort Wayne which brought here Henry **Cooper** and another lawyer whose name I have now forgotten.

This case was warmly contested, although the amount of money involved was not large; but in those days a little money was made to go a long way. Lucien P. **Ferry**, of Fort Wayne attended court here some, but whether engaged in this case or not I do not now recollect.

There were only two families living on the little St. Joseph River in Williams County at the time I came here and those were both

widows, the widow **Craig** and Widow **Fee**. The widow **Craig** soon moved away, and the widow **Fee** afterwards married a man by the name of **Coy** and lived to a good old age.

1812 War Stragglers

Another error I want to correct. I stated that Dr. John **Evans** moved from here to Fort Wayne. He moved from here to Troy in Miami County where he stayed about three years and from there went to Fort Wayne. He had large business interests here and at Fort Wayne and Troy and was here a great deal, and always made it his home when here at the Widow **Hilton's**. Upon one of those occasions she told him that he was away from home so much that it was a chance if he did not die away from home, and true enough it was so.

This widow **Hilton** mother of Brice **Hilton**, who is about all the one who has any distinct recollection of matters as long ago as the first settlement on the rivers. Although there were a few scattered along the rivers prior to 1822, they were mostly stragglers from the war of 1812 and from the surveying parties of the government.

As I have before stated the Maumee and Auglaize was first settled in 1822 or thereabouts, and the plan I laid out for these sketches was to commence with the earliest settlers and bring them down in chronological order to the recollection of most of the old settlers now living, or say about 30 years ago, but I find difficulty in ascertaining who came on to the rivers during the years 1822, 1823 and 1824.

Joshua **Hilton** and family came to Defiance in 1822, late in the fall, and then there were only one or two families between here and Fort Wayne. One of those living about five miles this side of Fort Wayne, and the other about Delaware town.

Lands of Shirley Sons

About the same time the Shirley and Hudson families came on to the Auglaize. Judge Robert **Shirley** settled on the Auglaize just

across from the head of Jefferson street and lived and died there. He had several sons. The oldest Nathan, settled about two miles this side of the Junction, and cleared up a large farm where Townsend **Newton** now lives, but afterwards sold out and moved about two miles nearer Defiance, where he died at a good old age. Elias **Shirley** settled and cleared up a farm about three miles from Defiance and lived and died there. His wife was a Hudson, sister of our townsman, Shadrack **Hudson**. They raised quite a large family of children, all of whom are dead or scattered.

James **Shirley**, another son, settled on the Maumee river, near Delaware Bend Station, on the B. & O. railroad, cleared up a large farm, and raised quite a family, none of whom lingers around the old homestead. James Shirley's widow still lives on the old homestead, although afterward married to Charles **Speaker**, and her two daughters by that marriage are living near her.

Robert Shirley, another son, purchased land nearly opposite Charloe on the Auglaize river, where he died within the last two years. He was the last member of the Shirley family, unless it be a daughter who married a Methodist preacher by the name of Austin. She was living not long since. Another daughter married Thomas **Warren**, who raised a large family of children of whom all have left the Maumee for sunnier climes.

Hard Work, Worry, Fatal

John Shirley, the youngest boy, stayed with the old folks until after their death, and endeavored to keep the old homestead, but it was rather a heavy load for him. and hard work and worry finally killed him. The old home has gone into the hands of strangers and has been divided and subdivided until there are now as many owners as there were at the time of the old Judge's death. John Shirley was never married but, I had forgotten to mention that Robert **Shirley**, junior, married another Hudson girl, and that Nathan Shirley

married a sister of Thomas Warren's so that the families were pretty generally connected.

Nearly all of them were strong Methodists, and all temperance men who could manage to reap their harvests without the customary barrels of whiskey. They were all hard-working men and generally considered honest, although some of them were given too much to litigation. Two of them especially seemed to be in their element when they had a lawsuit or two on hand. Nathan and James **Shirley** figured largely in the early records of Williams County, not only as defendants, but plaintiffs, and Elias and John were not far behind.

The Hudson Family

Close allied to the Shirley family, were the Hudsons. James **Hudson** settled just above town on the Auglaize and a part of his old farm is in Rural cemetery. He was a mason by trade, worked considerable in Fort Wayne, and I believe lived there a while. His sons James A. and John W. are living here with us, and Jacob **Hudson**, was another son, is living at Bryan, Lew and Abram two sons, are dead and sleeping quietly in sight of the old homestead. Abram **Hudson**, brother of James settled on the opposite side of the river above the Shirley farm near the so-called English bridge, a part of which farm is now owned by Mrs. **Karr**. He had a strong antipathy to marriage but was charged with being the father of several children whom he supported, whether his or not.

Shadrack **Hudson**, the father of Shadrack R. Hudson, settled about a mile from the Junction on the southeast side of the Auglaize on a very good farm, which he occupied until his death. He was considered one of the most trustworthy men of his day, and good to the poor. One year he was favored with a very large crop of corn when it was almost a failure on other farms, and the price ran up to \$1.50 per bushel, but he sold to all who came wanting it for bread at 50 cents per bushel,

and purchasers were limited to 5 bushels apiece. Speculators tried various ways to get his corn to make money out of it, but he was on the alert and they did not succeed.

Feared By Indians

John **Hudson**, another brother, bought and settled on a farm opposite Charloe in Paulding County, and raised quite a large family, but unlike the other early settlers when the settlement began to thicken and neighbors near he got the western fever and in 1845 he gathered his family together and left for Oregon, where he ended his days many years ago. Then the Shirleys and Hudsons formed a neighborhood of ten stalwart men whom the Indians respected and with whom they did not like to quarrel.

S. R. **Hudson** residing here is the only surviving member of his father's family and it is but justice to say that those early settlers were nearly all honored by their neighbors with the offices of Associated Judges or county commissioners and performed their duties faithfully. The Shirleys represented the Whig party, and the Hudsons the Democratic party in politics in those days when the parties were thus divided.

In my next I will try to sketch the settlers on the Maumee above Defiance.

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