

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 2

USUAL OSBORNE: A description of an early settler as told by Jonathan Alder. Usual Osborn came to Jefferson Township from Kentucky in 1796.

“ Alder said that Osborn was a kindhearted man, although he was what was then called a regular old bruiser yet he would inconvenience himself to accommodate his neighbors. He was remarkably strong and muscular, but not quarrelsome; yet it was by no means safe to cross his track. He would fight at the drop of a hat, and I never knew him to get whipped. The first winter he and his family came they had not a sign of a bed to lie on. He had a large box, sufficiently large for him and his wife to lie in, and in the fall they gathered leaves and filled the box. They had two blankets; one of these they spread over the leaves for a sheet, and the other they used to cover with. This constituted their bed for a year or two after they came to this country. The children had to shift for themselves. In the evening, the two oldest would gather a large quantity of prairie hay or grass, take it into the house and pile it in a corner, and then the three little fellows would crawl under it and sleep until morning; then gather it all up and take it out and give it to the cows. This is the only bed the boys had for many months.

Osborn's wife was one of those worthless kind of women who never do anything when it should be done, and consequently was always behind. There was plenty of everything required to make soap, yet she was out of it nearly all of the time. I have frequently known her to take honey to wash her clothes with. Honey makes a good lather but not equal to soap. On very cold days she was in the habit of driving her cow into the house to milk her. Mr. Osborn turned most of this attention to trade and traffic in a small way. Though not quarrelsome, no man need spoil for a fight when Osborn was around. There was a man by the name of Chard who had some grudge at Osborn. One day in the winter, when Osborn was mending his shirt, Chard came to his house. He told Osborn that there was a little difficulty between them and that he had come to settle it. ‘Very good’ said Osborn, throwing down his shirt and springing to his feet. They made a few passes at each other, when Osborn clinched Chard and threw him into the fire. A neighbor who happened to be present rescued him from his perilous situation before he was much burned. No sooner was he out of the fire and on his feet than he took to his heel and ran off as fast as possible.”