

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Pushkin Alcott
Newton



tredition®

tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



Project Gutenberg

The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

The Bark Covered House

William Nowlin

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: William Nowlin

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7306-5

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

PREFATORY NOTE.

I little thought when I left my farm yards, horses and cattle in the care of other men, and began to write, that I should spend nearly all the winter of 1875 in writing; much less, that I should offer the product of such labor to the public, in the Centennial Year. But I have been urged to do so by many friends, both learned and unlearned, who have read the manuscript, or listened to parts of it. They think the work, although written by a farmer, should see the light and live for the information of others. One of these is Levi Bishop, of Detroit, who was long a personal friend of my father and his family, and has recently read the manuscript. He is now President of the "Wayne County Pioneer Society," and is widely known as a literary man, poet and author.

W.N.

KEY.

Sketch of the lives of John and Melinda Nowlin; of their journeying and settlement in Michigan.

Thrilling scenes and incidents of pioneer life, of hopes and fears, of ups and downs, of a life in the woods; continuing until the gloom and darkness of the forest were chased away, by the light of civilization, and the long battle for a home had been fought by the pioneer soldiers and they had gained a signal victory over nature herself.

Hope never forsook them in the darkest hours, but beckoned and cheered them on to the conquest of the wilderness. When that was consummated hope hovered and sat upon her pedestal of realization. For better days had come for the pioneers in the country they had found. Then was heard the joyful, enchanting "Harvest Home;" songs of "Peace and Plenty."

Crowned with honor, prosperity and happiness – for a time.

PREFACE.

I have delineated the scenes of this narrative, from time to time, as they took place. I thought at the time when they occurred that some of them were against me.

I do not place this volume before its readers that I may gain any applause: I have sought to say no more of myself than was necessary.

This is a labor of love, written to perpetuate the memory of some most noble lives, among whom were my father and mother who sought a home in the forests of Michigan at an early day. Being then quite young, I kept no record of dates or occurrences, and this book is mostly sketched from memory.

It is a history of my parents' struggles and triumphs in the wilderness. It ought to encourage all who read it, since not many begin life in a new country with fewer advantages than they.

It is said that "Truth is stranger than fiction." In this I have detailed the walks of ordinary life in the woods. In these pictures there is truth. All and more than I have said have been realized. My observations have been drawn from my own knowledge, in the main, but I am indebted to my sisters for some incidents related. Together, with our brother, we often sat around the clay hearth and listened to father's stories, words of encouragement and counsel. Together we shared and endured the fears, trials and hardships of a pioneer life.

This work cannot fail to be of deep interest to all persons of similar experience; and to their descendants for ages to come who can never too fully appreciate the blessings earned for them by their parents and others amid hardships, privations and sufferings (in a new country) the half of which can never be told.

CONTENTS.

- I TALKING OF MICHIGAN
- II DISAGREEABLE MUSIC
- III HOW WE GOT OUR SWEET, AND THE HISTORY OF MY FIRST PIG
- IV OUR SECOND HOUSE AND FIRST APPLE TREES
- V THE JUG OF WHISKY AND TEMPERANCE MEETING
- VI HOW WE FOUND OUR CATTLE
- VII TROUBLE CAME ON THE WING
- VIII HARD TIMES FOR US IN MICHIGAN
- IX A SUMMER HUNT
- X HOW WE GOT INTO TROUBLE ONE NIGHT AND I SCARED
- XI THE INDIANS VISIT US – THEIR STRANGE AND PECULIAR WAYS
- XII THE INSIDE OF OUR HOUSE – A PICTURE FROM MEMORY
- XIII METHEGLIN; OR, THE DETECTED DRINK
- XIV OUR ROAD – HOW I WAS WOUNDED
- XV PROSPECT OF WAR
- XVI FISHING AND BOAT RIDING,
- XVII HOW I GOT IN TROUBLE RIDING IN A CANOE
- XVIII OUR CLEARING AND THE FIRST RAILROAD CARS
- XIX TREES

- XX DRAWING CORD-WOOD – HOW THE RAILROAD WAS BUILT – THE STEAM WHISTLE
- XXI HOW I HUNTED AND WE PAID THE MORTGAGE
- XXII BEAR HUNT
- XXIII GRANDFATHER'S POWDER HORN – WAR WITH PIRATES
- XXIV LIGHT BEGINS TO DAWN
- XXV MAKING A BARGAIN
- XXVI HOW I COMMENCED FOR MYSELF – FATHER'S OLD FARM
- XXVII THOUGHTS IN CONNECTION WITH FATHER AND EARLY PIONEER LIFE
- XXVIII FATHER'S NEW HOUSE AND ITS SITUATION – HIS CHILDREN VISIT HIM
- XXIX MY WATCH LOST AND VISIT TO CANADA
- XXX MOTHER'S VISIT TO THE EAST
- XXXI LEAVING NEW YORK CITY FOR HOME

ILLUSTRATIONS.

"THE MICHIGAN" THE BARK-COVERED HOUSE THE THOMPSON TAVERN HOUSE BUILT IN 1836 FIRST RAILWAY CARS HOUSE BUILT IN 1854

CHAPTER I.

TALKING OF MICHIGAN.

My father was born in 1793, and my mother in 1802, in Putnam County, State of New York. Their names were John and Melinda Nowlin. Mother's maiden name was Light.

My father owned a small farm of twenty-five acres, in the town of Kent, Putnam County, New York, about sixty miles from New York City. We had plenty of fruit, apples, pears, quinces and so forth, also a never failing spring. He bought another place about half a mile from that. It was very stony, and father worked very hard. I remember well his building stone wall.

But hard work would not do it. He could not pay for the second place. It involved him so that we were in danger of losing the place where we lived.

He said, it was impossible for a poor man to get along and support his family; that he never could get any land for his children there, and he would sell what he had and go to a better country, where land was cheap and where he could get land for them.

He talked much of the territory of Michigan. He went to one of the neighbors and borrowed a geography. I recollect very well some things that it stated. It was Morse's geography, and it said that the territory of Michigan was a very fertile country, that it was nearly surrounded by great lakes, and that wild grapes and other wild fruit grew in abundance.

Father then talked continually of Michigan. Mother was very much opposed to leaving her home. I was the eldest of five children, about ten or eleven years of age, when the word Michigan grated upon my ear. I am not able to give dates in full, but all of the incidents I relate are facts. Some of them occurred over forty years ago,

and are given mostly from memory, without the aid of a diary. Nevertheless, most of them are now more vivid and plain to my mind than some things which transpired within the past year. I was very much opposed to going to Michigan, and did all that a boy of my age could do to prevent it. The thought of Indians, bears and wolves terrified me, and the thought of leaving my schoolmates and native place was terrible. My parents sent me to school when in New York, but I have not been to school a day since. My mother's health was very poor. Her physician feared that consumption of the lungs was already seated. Many of her friends said she would not live to get to Michigan if she started. She thought she could not, and said, that if she did, herself and family would be killed by the Indians, perish in the wilderness, or starve to death. The thought too, of leaving her friends and the members of the church, to which she was very much attached, was terribly afflicting. She made one request of father, which was that when she died he would take her back to New York, and lay her in the grave yard by her ancestors.

Father had made up his mind to go to Michigan, and nothing could change him. He sold his place in 1832, hired a house for the summer, then went down to York, as we called it, to get his outfit. Among his purchases were a rifle for himself and a shot gun for me. He said when we went to Michigan it should be mine. I admired his rifle very much. It was the first one I had ever seen. After trying his rifle a few days, shooting at a mark, he bade us good-by, and started "to view" in Michigan.

I think he was gone six or eight weeks, when he returned and told us of his adventures and the country. He said he had a very hard time going up Lake Erie. A terrible storm caused the old boat, "Shelvin Thompson" to heave, and its timber to creak in almost every joint. He thought it must go down. He went to his friend, Mr. George Purdy, (who is now an old resident of the town of Dearborn) said to him: "You had better get up; we are going down! The Captain says 'every man on deck and look out for himself.'" Mr. Purdy was too sick to get up. The good old steamer weathered the storm and landed safely at Detroit.

Father said that Michigan was a beautiful country, that the soil was as rich as a barn-yard, as level as a house floor, and no stones in

the way. (I here state, that he did not go any farther west than where he bought his land.) He also said he had bought eighty acres of land, in the town of Dearborn, two and a half miles from a little village, and twelve miles from the city of Detroit. Said he would buy eighty acres more, east of it, after he moved in the spring, which would make it square, a quarter section. He said it was as near Detroit as he could get government land, and he thought Detroit would always be the best market in the country.

Father had a mother, three sisters, one brother and an uncle living in Unadilla Country N.Y. He wished very much to see them, and, as they were about one hundred and fifty miles on his way to Michigan, he concluded to spend the winter with them. Before he was ready to start he wrote to his uncle, Griffin Smith, to meet him, on a certain day, at Catskill, on the Hudson river. I cannot give the exact date, but remember that it was in the fall of 1833.

The neighbor, of whom we borrowed the old geography, wished very much to go West with us, but could not raise the means. When we started we passed by his place; he was lying dead in his house. Thus were our hearts, already sad, made sadder.

We traveled twenty-five miles in a wagon, which brought us to Poughkeepsie, on the Hudson river, then took a night boat for Catskill where uncle was to meet us the next morning. Before we reached Catskill, the captain said that he would not stop there. Father said he must. The captain said he would not stop for a hundred dollars as his boat was behind time. But he and father had a little private conversation, and the result was he did stop. The captain told his men to be careful of the things, and we were helped off in the best style possible. I do not know what changed the captain's mind, perhaps he was a Mason. Uncle met us, and our things were soon on his wagon. Now, our journey lay over a rough, hilly country, and I remember it was very cold. I think we passed over some of the smaller Catskill Mountains. My delicate mother, wrapt as best she could be, with my little sister (not then a year old) in her arms, also the other children, rode. Father and I walked some of the way, as the snow was quite deep on the mountains. He carried his rifle, and I my shot-gun on our shoulders. Our journey was a tedious one, for we got along very slowly; but we finally arrived at Unadil-

la. There we had many friends and passed a pleasant winter. I liked the country better than the one we left, and we all tried to get father to buy there, and give up the idea of going to Michigan. But a few years satisfied us that he knew the best.

Early in the spring of 1834 we left our friends weeping, for, as they expressed it, they thought we were going "out of the world." Here I will give some lines composed and presented to father and mother by father's sister, N. Covey, which will give her idea of our undertaking better than any words I can frame:

"Dear Brother and Sister, we must bid you adieu,
We hope that the Lord will deal kindly with you,
Protect and defend you, wherever you go,
If Christ is your friend, sure you need fear no foe.

"The distance doth seem great, to which you are bound,
But soon we must travel on far distant ground,
And if we prove faithful to God's grace and love,
If we ne'er meet before, we shall all meet above."

About twenty years later this aunt, her husband and nine children (they left one son) sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and grandchildren visited us. Uncle had sold his nice farm in Unadilla and come to settle his very intelligent family in Michigan. He settled as near us as he could get government land sufficient for so large a family. With most of this numerous family near him, he is at this day a sprightly old man, respected (so far as I know) by all who know him, from Unionville to Bay City.

Now as I have digressed, I must go back and continue the story of our journey from Unadilla to Michigan. As soon as navigation opened, in the spring, we started again with uncle's team and wagon. In this manner we traveled about fifty miles which brought us to Utica. There we embarked on a canal boat and moved slowly night and day, to invade the forests of Michigan. Sometimes when we came to a lock father got off and walked a mile or two. On one of these occasions I accompanied him, and when we came to a favorable place, father signaled to the steersman, and he turned the boat

up. Father jumped on to the side of the boat. I attempted to follow him, did not jump far enough, missed my hold and went down, by the side of the boat, into the water. However, father caught my hand and lifted me out. They said that if he had not caught me, I must have been crushed to death, as the boat struck the side the same minute. That, certainly, would have been the end of my journey to Michigan. When it was pleasant we spent part of the time on deck. One day mother left my little brother, then four years old, in care of my oldest sister, Rachel. He concluded to have a rock in an easy chair, rocked over and took a cold bath in the canal. Mother and I were in the cabin. When we heard the cry "Overboard!" we rushed on deck, and the first thing we saw was a man swimming with something ahead of him. It proved to be my brother, held by one strong arm of an English gentleman. He did not strangle much; some said the Englishman might have waded out, in that case he would not have strangled any, as he had on a full-cloth overcoat, which held him up until the Englishman got to him. Be that as it may, the Englishman was our ideal hero for many years, for by his bravery and skill, unparalleled by anything we had seen, he had saved our brother from a watery grave.

That brother is now the John Smith Nowlin, of Dearborn.

Nothing more of importance occurred while we were on the canal. When we arrived at Buffalo the steamer, "Michigan," then new, just ready for her second trip, lay at her wharf ready to start the next morning. Thinking we would get a better night's rest, at a public house, than on the steamer father sought one, but made a poor choice.

Father had four or five hundred dollars, which were mostly silver, he thought this would be more secure and unsuspected in mother's willow basket, which would be thought to contain only wearing apparel for the child. We had just got nicely installed and father gone to make preparations for our embarkation on the "Michigan," when the lady of the house came by mother and, as if to move it a little, lifted her basket. Then she said, "You must have plenty of money, your basket is very heavy."

When father came, and mother told him the liberty the lady had taken, he did not like it much, and I am sure I felt anything but easy.

But father called for a sleeping room with three beds, and we were shown up three flights of stairs, into a dark, dismal room, with no window, and but one door. Mother saw us children in bed, put the basket of silver between my little brother and me, and then went down. The time seemed long, but finally father and mother came up. I felt much safer then. Late in the evening a man, with a candle in one hand, came into the room, looked at each bed sufficiently to see who was in it. When he came to father's bed, which proved to be the last, as he went round, father asked him what he wanted there. He said he was looking for an umbrella. Father said he would give him umbrella, caught him by the sleeve of his coat; but he proved to be stronger than his coat for he fled leaving one sleeve of a nice broadcloth coat in father's hand. Father then put his knife over the door-latch. I began to breathe more freely, but there was no sleep for father or mother, and but little for me, that night.

Everything had been quiet about two hours when we heard steps, as of two or three, coming very quietly, in their stocking feet. Father rose, armed himself with a heavy chair and waited to receive them.

Mother heard the door-latch, and fearing that father would kill, or be killed, spoke, as if not wishing them to hear, and said: "John have the pistols ready," (it will be remembered that we had pistols in place of revolvers in those days) "and the moment they open the door shoot them." This stratagem worked; they retired as still as possible.

In about two or three hours more, they came again, and although father told mother to keep still, she said again: "Be ready now and blow them down the moment they burst open the door."

Away they went again, but came once more just before daylight, stiller if possible than ever; father was at his station, chair in hand, but mother was determined all should live, if possible, so she said "They are coming again, shoot the first one that enters!" &c., &c.

They found that we were awake and, do doubt, thought that they would meet with a little warmer reception than they wished. Father really had no weapons with him except the chair and knife. I said, the room had no window, consequently, it was as dark at daylight as at midnight. The only way we could tell when it was daylight was by the noise on the street.