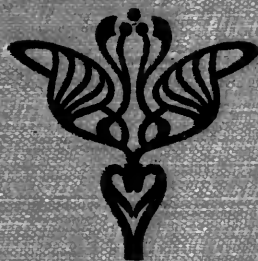


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# Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee



BY J. LORENZO WERICH

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Yours Truly  
J. Lorenzo Werich

# Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee

BY

J. LORENZO WERICH

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To

The Pioneer Hunters and Trappers  
of the Kankakee River Region, of many years  
of faithful friendship, I dedicate this volume,

By the Author.

CHAPTER I  
CATCHING MY FIRST RACCOON  
REMINISCENCES  
OF PIONEER DAYS ON  
THE OLD KANKAKEE RIVER  
CATCHING MY FIRST  
RACCOON

"Oh the hunting days of my youth,  
Have forever gone from me."

I was born in a log cabin on my grandfather's farm near Valparaiso, Indiana in 1860, and within two miles and a half of the historical stream of which I am going to tell you. It was whilst watching the vanishing of a great hunting ground by the reclaiming of the Kankakee swamp lands, or rather making a new Kankakee River, that involves the plot which forms the gist of my story. I have seen the sad face of the old Pottowattomie Indian who was driven

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

from his hunting grounds on the Kankakee, and now we see a shadow of gloom, of sadness, on the faces of the few remaining old pioneer hunters who have spent their early years in hunting wild game and trapping the fur-bearing animals of the Kankakee region.

It is not my purpose to write the whole history of this Kankakee region or to give reminiscences of all the pioneer hunters that have hunted and fished on the Kankakee, in the years past, as it would take a long time to write it, and it would make volumes.

Many hunters have come here from far off cities, New York, Philadelphia; Washington, Boston, Pittsburg, and many near-by cities. I have met and hunted with sportsmen from Europe, and the hunters usually get what they are looking for--plenty of game--as it was the best hunting ground for all kinds of game birds in the United States. This fact I know, as I have hunted as far north as I could and yet be in the United States, and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico,

## CATCHING MY FIRST RACCOON

and west as far as the Rockies, and I have never yet found a place that equalled the Kankakee swamps, for the variety of game to be found there.

To make a long story short, in those days it was the hunters' and trappers' paradise, and no wonder he now feels sad at heart when he looks over this once great hunting-ground now the home of the farmer. He can realize how the Redman felt when he had to give up this region to the white hunters.

When about eight years of age we moved to the marsh and lived in a log cabin on Bissel Ridge. In the summer season my father ditched and made hay. The grass was cut with a scythe. After being cured it was hauled out of the marsh on a brush to some knoll or ridge and there stacked. In the fall father trapped the fur-bearing animals and shot game for meat, while tending his traps. He would dress the skins at night. I helped getting the bow-stretchers ready and in stringing the dry hides. And when snuffing the candle, no lamps or electric lights were used in

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

those days, I would sometimes get sleepy and snuff the wick a little too low and put the light out. A few yards in front of our cabin ran a small creek that spread out over a low marsh, or rather a slough, as they are sometimes called, just below our house. This formed a great musk-rat pond and was also a great place for wild ducks to nest and rear their young. About a mile above our cabin was another musk-rat pond, and this little creek was its' outlet, making it a run-way for the rats from one pond to another. Father gave me two or three old steel traps which had weak springs and which I could set without breaking my fingers, should they happen to get caught between the jaws. I set the traps along the creek where the rats would stop to feed on roots and such vegetation as musk-rats usually feed upon. I caught fifteen rats that fall. One morning I went to my traps and found a raccoon in one of them. My youngest sister usually went with me to the traps and she was with me this morning. To say we were



Trapping My First Raccoon. This is one of the wild animals that dwell on the edge of civilization in the wilds of the Kankakee, where dwelled the author





## CATCHING MY FIRST RACCOON

frightened would be putting it in a very mild form. We had nothing to kill the raccoon with, and would probably not have done so had we something with which to do it. My sister having more courage than I, stayed and watched the coon whilst I ran back home for mother--father was away tending to his traps--to come and help kill the coon. With two big clubs my mother and I soon had Mr. Coon's earthly career ended. It has been more than a half century ago since this happened. I have hunted and trapped some big game since that time, but never became quite so excited as on the morning when I caught the first raccoon.

The scene that morning will be forever photographed on the tablets of my memory. It was at this place I lived when I began my early hunting, commencing to realize the pleasure it afforded me. But of course I had no idea of the hardships which existed in it. We resided here about two years and a half. In the meantime my father bought the Bissel stock, consisting of

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

two-fifths of the stock in the Indian Island Sawmill Company. My grandfather owned five one-hundred dollar shares of stock in the sawmill company. This he gave to my mother. Our next move was to the Indian Island where I spent the next ten years of my boy-hood days.

I will tell you more in another chapter.

CHAPTER II  
FINDING THE MISSING LINK  
THE DISCOVERY  
OF THE KANKAKEE BY  
LASALLE, A FUR TRADER MEETING  
THE POTTOWATTOMIE INDIANS AND  
FINISHING THE MISSING LINK

Look at the map of Indiana and you will see, up in the left-hand corner of the State, a small stream rising in the southern part of St. Joseph county, which flows in a south-western direction and drains the counties of LaPorte, Starke, Porter, Jasper, Lake and Newton. It is also the boundary line between the counties I have mentioned. Years ago the Kankakee was called the eastern branch of the Illinois river, but that theme has been disproved. The Indian name of the Kankakee, from the two words "The-Ak (wolf) and "A-Ki(land) literally means Wolf-

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Land River, from the fact that many years ago a band of Indians of the Mohican Tribe who called themselves "wolves" when driven from their homes by the Iroquois, took refuge on its banks near the headwaters of the The-A-Ki-Ki. Charlevoix, the French missionary, on his voyage down the Kankakee river in 1721, speaks of the wolves. It was from some of these of Indians, whose village was a few miles from the south bend on the St. Joe river, and where now stands the city of South Bend, that the missionary recruited his force for his expedition down the Kankakee, the Illinois, and the Mississippi rivers. The Kankakee is the most historical River in the state. Yet there is very little known of its early history, only that the numerous wild animals which made this region their home made the Kankakee an important fur-trading country. Occasionally a hunter's story of seeing or shooting a deer or wild-cat in the Kankakee swamps is read in the newspapers. The river itself, though not a long one, is beautiful,

## FINDING THE MISSING LINK

winding through marshes, forests, and long tangled vines, among its wooded islands, with here and there there an opening in the forest. It spreads its channel for miles and in many places becomes a lonely, lily-fringed lake. Its bed in the sand and clay forms its course to within a few miles of Momence, Illinois, where the rock crops out and forms a great dam across the stream. This dam was partly removed a few years ago at a cost of seventy-five thousand dollars. The Kankakee region was once a heavy timbered country, but the forest fires have greatly reduced its wood districts. The lofty sycamore and the mammoth elm are still to be found on the banks of the Kankakee, as they were during the time when the fur-laden boats of the French glided down the river. In the early history of this continent it was the custom of Spanish explorers to give it some special geographical features by naming the place they discovered after some Saint in a church-calendar, the day the discovery was made. in this

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

manner it was no trouble to trace the exact course of these explorers along the coast of the continent. It was not so with the French. And for this reason many notes of historical interest, of the early discoveries made by the French have never been written in history. Early in the fall of 1679, LaSalle left the vessel at Green Bay and coasted the shore of Lake Michigan until he arrived at the mouth of the St. Joseph river. Here he built Fort LaSalle and stayed here most all that winter on account of the ice, to await the arrival of Tonti, an Italian officer whom he had brought with him from France as his lieutenant. There were about forty in all as they left Ft. LaSalle early in the spring. As soon as the ice had gone out of the river they ascended the St. Joseph river as far as the south bend about eighty miles, then encamped for a time to await the remainder of the party, which arrived in a few days. Then they took portage across the swamps to the headwaters of the "The-A-Ki-Ki." (Kankakee.)

## FINDING THE MISSING LINK

It was LaSalle's plan and idea, when he left France and sailed from his home in Rouen to the French possessions in Canada, to accumulate a fortune by trading European merchandise to the Indians for their furs and pelts which they got along the lakes and northern rivers. With this object in view he explored many lakes and rivers in what is now Indiana, and established trading posts on the frontier. After establishing trading posts, as I have said before, LaSalle traded with the Indians such articles of merchandise as guns, ammunition, knives, hatchets, kettles, blankets and beads in exchange for their valuable furs. This was the motto of the Indian "You Can Do Me Good--I Do You Good." The Indians soon learned that the Frenchman was a benefactor and not an enemy, therefore in a few years they were carrying on a big fur trade with the Indians on the northwest frontier. Tradition tells us that every wigwam in those days welcomed the visit of a Frenchman, Having carried out his plans so far successfully, this

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

celebrated explorer had another object in view. This was to find the link which connected the great inland seas of the north with the waters of the gulf in the south. He had heard of that wonderful river, "The Father of Waters," which flowed from the unexplored wilderness in the north far away into the unknown Sunny South. With this object before him he set out on an exploring expedition to find a shorter way that would shorten the world's commerce between the East and the West and to his idea he had found the missing link which is our own Kankakee river.



CHAPTER III  
THE MIAMI CONFEDERACY  
THE DEFEAT  
OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES  
AT THE BATTLE OF TIPPECANOE  
WHICH FOREVER SHATTERED THE  
STRONGHOLD OF THE  
MIAMI CONFEDERACY

In 1881 I made a trip to the Indian territory and the Pottowattomie reservation in Kansas. I visited several tribes of Indians, at that time the Indian affairs were under the control of the Federal Government. The purpose of my visit was to find, if possible, any of the old Pottowattomie Indians that at one time inhabited the Kankakee region, that I might be able to learn more of the early history of their hunting grounds on the Kankakee river. I found two very old Pottowattomies that claimed to have lived and hunted on the Kankakee river in their early days.

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

You can not tell how old an Indian is by his looks unless you are acquainted with his habits, but they are octogenarians. At any rate they gave accounts of events that had actually happened when and where treaties had been made. When I spoke of the great tragedy at Fort Dearborn one of the old warriors arose to his feet, threw a blanket around him and began to pace to and fro; finally he said in a saddened voice that he was there. I drew from him some facts that I never before had heard. He told how they felt when Major Irwin passed through the Kankakee swamps, notifying them to be ready to start for their new home beyond the Mississippi river. I obtained much valuable information from those two old warriors. One of them then was a young warrior of seventeen summers. He was with Elskwat-awa, the Prophet, when they sent Winamac down the Wabash river to Vincennes where they went in council circle with Gen. Harrison. Later they both fought and were survivors of the Battle of Tippecanoe.

THE DEFEAT OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES  
which forever shattered the stronghold of the Miami Confederacy. He told how the army was encamped on a tract of marsh land near the river, in the shape of a flat-iron, how they were defeated. There were two men, one white and the other a redman, who worked with all energy to defeat the scheme of Tecumseh and Els-kwat-awa. These were General Harrison and the chief, Winamac. The former sent constant messengers from among French settlers of the territory through all this Kankakee region, counseling peace, and hoped through their strength and influence to disarm all hostile feelings. At the same time the latter, one of the noblest of his race, devoted all his efforts to securing peace. Sometime in May, 1811, a large number of the Pottowattomies from this region assembled at a place called the "Cow Pasture" on the St. Joseph River, and were only prevented from joining the followers of Tecumseh and the Open-Door by the pleading eloquence of the venerable Winamac. A few months later

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Tecumseh departed for the South to solicit aid of other tribes to develop his scheme for a great confederacy. While he was gone Open Door sent out messengers to the Pottowattomie's lands, calling upon the natives to join his forces. A large number of the inhabitants of the Kankakee region formed in line of march and passed down through the prairie marshes to the Pottowattomie Ford, crossed the Kankakee, then on through to the Prophet's town. Winamac was sent to Governor Harrison with a message of peace. This is where the crafty Prophet got in his deceitful work and was now free to effect his purpose. As preparation was made for the war the women and children were sent to the North for safety. Many were hidden in caves in the sand hills along the Tippecanoe River near where the City of Winamac now stands. Others came in large numbers to the Kankakee swamps and remained hidden in its recesses to await the tide of war. Hundreds of defenseless women and children thronged to the shores of our his-

## THE DEFEAT OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

toric river and waited many weary days of watching and long nights of pain from hunger and fatigue for the return of the braves, many of whom were never to come. The result of the Battle of Tippecanoe is well known. The betrayed and defeated Pottowattomies returned to their homes. Many regretted that act against the whites whilst many others were incited by the crafty British to a desire for revenge and here was laid the plot for another great tragedy, the doom of Fort Dearborn. Less than two years after their defeat at the Battle of Tippecanoe, the garrison at Fort Dearborn was attacked and three-fourths of their number killed. The survivors surrendered with the promise of their captors to spare their lives. This promise was broken. Captain Wells' horse was shot from under him. As he fell an Indian ran up and stabbed him in the back and he died in the arms of his Pottowattomie friends. The history of the Fort Dearborn massacre is one of the saddest Indian tragedies of the Pottowattomie

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

lands that was ever placed on the pages of history. We will skip a period of eight years over Pottowattomie land. No events of any great importance occurred then. Indian Territory became a State, Fort Dearborn was again garrisoned. The French held the ascendancy in influence in this region and were held in the highest regard by the Indians. In 1821 the white hunters began to come to the Kankakee region. The day before General Harrison started on his march up the Wabash to meet the Prophet, two young men volunteered to join the army, by the names of Daniel Scott and Mike Haskins. They had a cousin in the army, an officer named Atwood, who was wounded at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Having a broken leg, he was picked up and carried away to the Kankakee swamps, about sixty miles distant, and was cared for by a squaw, taking the place of her son who had been killed. In 1821 Scott and Haskins came north to the Kankakee region in search of their lost relative. As there was a

## THE DEFEAT OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

large estate to be settled back in Ohio it was necessary to know his whereabouts. Scott and Haskins made every effort to find him alive, if they could, or where he was buried if possible. They brought with them such trinkets as the Indians usually wants, such as pipes, tobacco, knives, needles, etc. They got in with the natives by giving them these goods for very little or nothing. By kindness they gained their friendship. Scott opened a store at Bengaul but when the English come they called it Tassnaugh. This was the first trading post in this region and was an ancient village when the French had established a trading post in long years past, before even the Pottowattomie revolt. It was on the old Pottowattomie trail leading from the Kankakee River to the Lakes. In the early summer, after the hunting season was over for the fur bearing animals, the Indians would pack their furs, then with their women and children they would start north for the lakes to meet the French fur trading boats which came

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

down to the lower lake region to trade with them for their furs. During the summer season they fished and picked berries, as these were what they lived on mostly during the heated seasons. In the fall they would return to the Kankakee hunting grounds where one of their main camps was located on a long point of the mainland or ridge that projected far out into the swamp and near the mouth of Sandy Hook. This place was known as "Indian Garden" and hundreds of Indians camped there during the hunting seasons. There was another Indian camping ground a few miles below this on the same side of the river known as the "Indian Island," and of which I will speak later on. Scott having his store on this old Indian trail brought him face to face with hundreds of Pottowattomies, while Haskins camped and hunted for nearly two years and was the first white hunter to camp on Indian Island. Scott sold his store to a Frenchman, then he and Haskins returned to the East. They never heard or got trace of



## THE DEFEAT OF THE POTTOWOTTOMIES

their lost relative, As I have said before immense fortunes were now made by trading with the Indians in all parts of this country. Early in 1821 two men acting in this capacity became well known and remarkable for their wealth and influence through all the Kankakee country. They were Joseph Baille and Pierre F. Navarre. As there is usually in these early time stories a little love and romance, this is what happened to these men. In accordance with the general custom among traders both married daughters of native chieftans. After a time Baille settled on the prairie north of the river in what afterwards was Porter county, and near the site of where Valparaiso now stands. The place was called Baily Town and is still a well-known point in Porter county. Navarre settled at Michigan City for a time and then moved to the banks of the St. Joseph River. Mr. Baille, or Baily as he was generally called, was a native of France. It was in 1822 that he first settled in Baily Town and for the next eleven years he

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

was the only white man within the country limits. His family consisted of a wife and four daughters. As the years passed by he became very wealthy, so much so that he purchased a sloop and was thus enabled to take his children east to give them the advantage of a thorough education and culture. Eleanor, the oldest, took the veil and was for many years Mother Superior of St. Mary's School at Terre Haute, Indiana.

There have been many treaties made with the Pottowattomies, one made in 1832 and one in 1836. By the former treaties the Pottowattomies conceded to the United States all the country situated between the mouth of the Tippecanoe River, running up the river twenty-five miles, thence to the Wabash river, thence across to the Vermillion river. This was known as the St. Mary's Treaty. By this treaty the Kankakee region formed a part of the domain of the Pottowattomie Indians, although they were of the Miami's Confederacy and the Miamis claimed the land by right of occupancy. The Pottowatt-

## THE DEFEAT OF THE POTTOWOTTOMIES

tomies held possession when the whites began to settle the country and it was with them that the United States government treated in 1836. The remainder of the territory now was on the Pickamick and Kankakee rivers. The Miamis held claim to all the territory in the northwest part of the State. By the terms of the second and last treaty the Pottowattomies ceded all their lands to the United States Government and agreed to relinquish the territory when called upon to do so. This was called the Mississinawa Treaty and was made on the treaty grounds near the headwaters of the Kankakee. The Pottowattomies left the Kankakee swamps for their new home toward the Sunset, to the land that was given them for their own and was theirs as long as the sun shines and the rain falls. But their Great Father at Washington changed his mind and a few years later they were removed to the Indian Territory. The War Department allowed a few to remain, those who had distinguished themselves as friends to the

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

whites during the early Indian troubles. In 1836 a man by the name of Robinson, of French and Indian nationality, was the chief leader, and had absolute control over all the Pottowattomies from the year of 1825. In 1836 he assembled his tribes to the number of five thousand near Chicago for the last time. He was known to his people as Chief Che-Bing-Way. I have thus presented an account of the Pottowattomie's land as it appeared at the time of the whites immigration to this region,

CHAPTER IV  
SETTING STEEL TRAPS  
THE WHITE MAN SETTLING  
THE COUNTRY VACATED BY THE INDIANS  
AND THE FIRST TRAPPER TO SET  
STEEL TRAPS ON THE KANKAKEE

The history of the region of the Kankakee country under the Aboriginies is told. The great Miami Republic fell before the Republic of the East, and it became the obvious destiny of the nations to yield to the strongest race. The year "33" marked the advent of the first white families from the East. The first settlers to arrive were the Morgan Brothers, Isaac and William, who came early in the summer from Wayne County, Ohio, and settled on a prairie, afterwards known as Morgan Prairie. It is on the east side of Sandy Hook and a few miles from

THE PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE  
the Kankakee river. Two years later my Grandfather Dye came from Holmes County, Ohio, and settled on a prairie on the west side of Sandy Hook, which is now known as Horse Prairie. He was the first white settler in what is now Boone township. My mother at that time was only five years of age and she remembers seeing many of the Pottowattomies. Her arrival in the Kankakee country antedating that of my father is more than fifteen years. In the next decade many settlers were found in this part of the country. Game was plentiful and in every cabin was found a rifle or two. From some of these pioneer homes came the early hunters and trappers of this story. Hence, "The Pioneer Hunters of the Kankakee" is the title of my story. In the outset of this story I had in mind only a short story of the early trappers and hunters. But I have detoured out over more territory than I expected. If I were to give a graphic sketch of all the men who have hunted and trapped on the Kankakee it would fill vol-

## SETTING STEEL TKAPS

umes. Therefore I will speak only of a few of the earliest pioneers. As I have said fur traders in those early days became immensely rich and the Kankakee Region in an early day was the greatest hunting ground in the Middle West, especially for the fur-bearing animals. As gold and gems was the magnet that attracted our Hoosier folks to the Far West, so it was the fur trade that brought the early explorers to the Kankakee region. The Indians caught the furs and traded them to the new-comers for trinkets. Then began the greatest trade that this part of Indiana ever knew. New types of persons were brought into existence in the new country by the new trade and it is some of these I am going to tell you about in this new story, as the history of the Kankakee fur trade is one of the brightest pages of its history. In the fall of "45" Harrison Hartz Folsom and Rens Brainard, two young men came from Ohio with their parents. In 1840 they settled on the prairie north of the Kankakee Swamp. Having some idea how

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

profitable a business it was trapping the fur-bearing animals, they embarked in that business. First each of them made a butter-nut dugout. Then they went to a blacksmith by the name of Alyes who had settled in this region in the early "30" and had opened a blacksmith shop on his homestead, and who also kept a cross-road store a few miles east of the Indian Town, now Hebron, and engaged him to make them three dozen steel rat-traps at one dollar each, and four two-spring otter traps, or wolf traps as they are sometimes called, at three dollars each. These were the first steel traps made and set in the Kankakee country. On the first of October they launched their dugouts and trapping outfit off Coal Pitt Island, a small island in the north marsh where for many years Jones and Smith had their charcoal pits. They paddled their dugouts up the marsh along the timber line until they came to North Bend. In the early days it was called Flag Pond but was known to the old river men as North Bend from

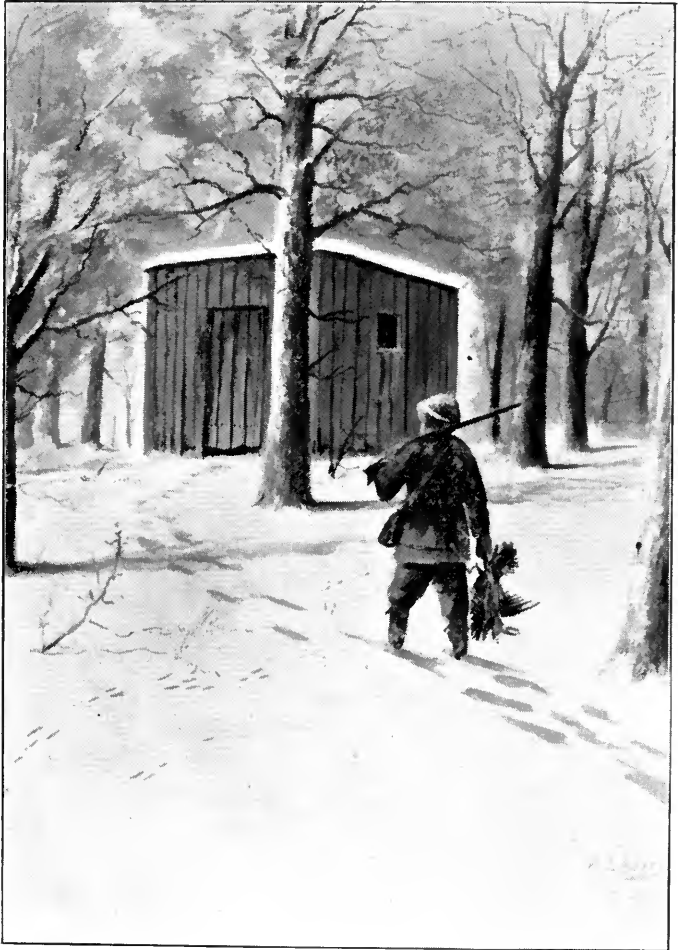


## SETTING STEEL TRAPS

the fact that at this point the Kankakee flows the farthest north of its entire course. At this point there is an opening through the timber to the river. They ascended the river a few miles. When night came upon them they landed on a small ridge near the mouth of Crooked Creek. They soon had a frail camp and a glowing camp fire. When they landed on the ridge Brainard shot two young fox squirrels and with what provisions they had brought with them they soon had a good supper. After supper they gathered up some withered herbage, spread their blankets and lay down for a night's rest in the lone, silent, solitary, stillness of the Kankakee swamps, to be lured to sleep by the hoot-owl, the howling of the wolves and the splashing of the muskrats in the water near the camp. This was the first night's experience of two of the oldest trappers in years of service on the Kankakee. On the following day they set out their traps and looked for a suitable place to build their shanty. Mr. Folsom took part of the traps and went up

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

the river. Brainard took the remainder and went down stream. They returned to camp in the afternoon and reported their trip and prospect of a building site. Brainard had found a beautiful small island near the river on a bayou which he thought would be a very suitable spot for a shanty. Folsom, on his hunt up stream, had found the material to build the shanty. He had found an old wigwam made of puncheon and barks, well dried and smoked. In a short time they had a cozy little trappers' shanty on an island they named "Little Paradise," which is yet known by that name today. This was the first American trapper's shanty on the Kankakee that I have any knowledge of. There were a few French huts and traders' shanties along the borders of the swamp regions for the purpose of trading and trafficking with the Indians and the early hunters. Twenty years prior to the building of the shanty on Paradise Island the fall catch of furs at Little Paradise proved a success. The sale of furs brought something



Pioneer Trapper's Shanty on Little Paradise Island, where the first steel traps were set on the Kankakee in 1845



## SETTING STEEL TRAPS

over one hundred and twenty-five dollars. They invested part of the money in more traps and in the following winter built a shanty on Little Beach Ridge in which they shantied for four seasons. On this ridge they found a hunter's shanty occupied by a man named Ritter, who had built it the year before, in 1846. In 1851 Folsom and Brainard built a shanty on Long Ridge which they used until 1866. Then they sold out and left Long Ridge. Folsom then went into partnership with William Granger. They built a cabin on Red Oak. This cabin was burned in "73." They rebuilt it the following year and used it until he retired from the trapping business in 1883, having spent a third of a century in the Kankakee swamps. Uncle Harl Seymour, as he was called, who had been with him for many years, continued trapping the Red Oak ground until old age compelled him to quit. He left his island home on the Kankakee and spent the remaining years of his life at the home of Mr. Folsom at Hebron, Indiana.

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Brainard, who was with Folsom on his early expeditions on the river and when he sold out on Long Ridge, built a shanty on Grape Island, where he trapped for several years. Then he trapped the Little Beach ground for three or four years. Finally he quit trapping altogether about thirty years ago. Folsom and Brainard were the pioneer trappers who first set steel traps on the Kankakee River over seventy-five years ago. The next decade found many hunters and trappers along the Kankakee swamps. In the fall of 1847 Mose Summers and John Dusenberg glided down the winding Kankakee in skiffs with a trapping outfit and landed at Long Ridge, built a shanty which was the first trapper's shanty on the Ridge. They used this shanty for a number of years. Leaving Long Ridge they shantied on a number of islands between English Lake and Momence, Illinois. This same year Joel Gilson built a log shanty on Long Ridge and followed the trapping business for many years. He had two sons who also

## SETTING STEEL TRAPS

were trappers and trapped many years after their father had retired. There was another old time hunter whose locks were as white as the driven snow when I first knew him. He had settled on Long Ridge in the Fall of 1838, and dug a cave in the side of the Ridge where he lived for many years. Fifty years ago this old hunter was known as Uncle Frank Sweny. He was the oldest residential hunter and trapper on the river, having commenced hunting on the Kankakee as early as 1833. William Bissell, one of the pioneer settlers of Porter county, spent much time hunting on the Kankakee in the early days. In the early Fall of 1847 Heck Goodridge and his brother John built a shanty on French Island. This was the first American trapper's shanty. The French and Indian hunters had settled on this island many years before the arrival of the Goodridges and from whence it derived its name. I will give more of its early history later on. In 1852 John Broady an early pioneer of this region, began trapping

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

on Sandy Hook, also he trapped the Crooked Creek Claim. Later on he owned the Indian Garden trapping ground which he sold to Samuel Irvin in the early seventies. Mr. Broady was a very successful hunter and trapper. He never trapped any after selling out his claims but continued hunting on the Kankakee up to the time of his death which occurred in 1878 from a severe cold from the effects of getting wet by falling through the ice in a bayou, on a very cold day whilst hunting deer. Mr. Broady was widely known as a deer hunter, having led many hunting parties through the swamps in those early days. It was about this time that my father came to the Kankakee region and for many years he and Mr. Broady were hunting partners and have been together on many deer hunts through the Kankakee Swamps. In 1852 Gideon Alyea, son of the old trap maker, built a shanty on Butter Nut Ridge and trapped this ground for many years. Leaving the Butter Nut he built a shanty on what is now known as



## SETTING STEEL TRAPS

Shanty Island. He also built a shanty on Fryes Island and one on Cornell's Upper Island. He followed the business until old age compelled him to retire. In 1847 William--Uncle Bill--Adams, with his parents, settled near Hebron and five years later he went in the swamps as a shanty boy with Mr. Folsom, handling furs. Two years later he went into the trapping business for himself and in "61" he answered the call to the Colors and served his country up to the close of the war. Returning home he went into the swamps again hunting and trapping until some time in the 90's, when he retired. In 1850, Isaac Cornell built a log cabin on Cornell's Island for rail makers who were making rails for him and a few years later an old Indian lived in it and hunted game. In the early 50's Hunter Rice and Harman Granger built a shanty on a small ridge lying between Red Oak and Bucks Ridge, known as Rice's Ridge, and for many years it was used as a trapper's shanty. Many years ago there were some deer hunters

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

camped on this ridge and there was an old canoe there that they would cross the river in to hunt, as there were more deer on the north side than on the south side. One man in the party became dizzy-headed and sea-sick so easily that they had to lay him down in the bottom of the canoe and sit on him to keep him from falling out.

Bucks Ridge was for many years the home of the Brockways. They were a very interesting family, consisting of a father and mother, two sons, a beautiful daughter and a little boy eight or ten years old. They had settled there many years before and seemed to enjoy their wild life, as they were hunters and trappers. From them we obtained some potatoes and corn bread. The youngest of the hunting party fell in love with this young damsel and we thought it was going to be a match, but they did not come to time. They parted with many bitter tears, never to meet again as the mother would not part with her darling child.

## SETTING STEEL TRAPS

After having a good time we all returned home, proud, with plenty of game. Many were the hunts I took after that. I have often thought of what became of that pretty, fair-haired girl of the Kankakee, and for all I know she may be with the angels in Heaven, as I have not heard from the Brockways since. In the language of Maud Muller, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest of these, it might have been,"

CHAPTER V  
DIVIDING THE GAME  
KILLING DEER WITH PITCHFORKS  
AND CORN KNIVES ON BOGUS ISLAND  
AND HOW WE HUNTED AND DIVIDED  
GAME IN PIONEER DAYS

In the cold winter of 1838, many years before Beaver Lake in Newton County, Indiana, was drained, there was an island at the west end of the lake called Bogus Island from the fact that it was the home of the outlaws and desperadoes. Bogus Island, as this island has been known for many years, was the last refuge of the counterfeiters of the picturesque era of our Kankakee life. Here, until comparatively recent years, the robber, the counterfeiter, the horse thief, the highwayman of the swamps and the "bad man" of the frontier found safe retreat

## DIVIDING THE GAME

in this partly wooded island and in the rolling waters of this beautiful lake. Even the Federal officers in pursuit were baffled here. For years the outlaws lived in safety on wild game and at times would raid the country-side to look at a pioneer's horse. With the draining of Beaver Lake, Bogus Island entered upon its final destiny. The island at one place was only about a quarter of a mile from the mainland. In the dry season the water was very shallow and all kinds of game: deer, wolves and fox, could wade or swim to the island. The cold winter froze the lake over and the ice around the island was slick and glaring. with the island full of deer, wolf and much small game. Well all old hunters know that deer or any other cloven-footed animal, when chased, cannot stand or run on glary or slick ice. Consequently they are at the mercy of anyone who comes along. Notice was sent out far and wide over the prairies and sand ridges and hunters' cabin along the Kankakee. Allen Dutcher, Raus Allen, Sam Har-

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

rison, Bill Thayer, Sam McFadden and many other pioneer hunters whose names I have forgotten were there. S. L. McFadden was there with his father and was only twelve years old. In his narrative of the hunt, as he related it to me, he said: "I will never forget it as I came near freezing to death going home from the hunt and we got so deer that we could not take care of them or get them home as we had no means of conveyance in those days. We carried some but pulled the most of them out on a hand-sled. As I have said before, the island was alive with deer. The hunters, trappers and squatters gathered in with guns. The old cap and ball rifle were used. With dogs, clubs, tomahawks, pitchforks and corn-knives the massacre commenced at early morning and at sundown the battle closed. The crowd consisted of about twenty-five men and boys and two women. One of the women killed a deer with a pitchfork. The party in all killed sixty-five deer, seven wolves and two or three foxes, Wolves

## DIVIDING THE GAME

and foxes can run on glary ice so many of them got away, and fully as many deer got away as were killed, by slipping and sliding towards the shore. There were so many that they could not kill them all at once, consequently that gave many a chance to escape. Only one man was hurt in the fight and he would have been killed by a big buck had he not been rescued in time. The buck was killed with a corn knife. The wounded hunter was placed on a litter and carried to his cabin on the Kankakee at what was at that time known as Harrison's Landing. After years the place was called Thayers and was near where the Grangers years after had their trapping shanty on Grape Island. We used to camp near their cabin on the river many years after the big hunt on Bogus Island. That deer hunt beat the world. Now I am going to tell you how we used to hunt and divide the game. After the hunt is all over the most interesting of all is the dividing of the game on the square. Sometimes there is a great deal of

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

skull-dugery in the matter and you have got to keep your eyes skinned and look out for breakers. Now for the mode of dividing the spoil. Before shot-guns were in use and rifles were all the go, hunters' law was that the men who drew first blood took the hide and half the meat, but when shot-guns came in vogue and all had to drive and shoot to kill the deer we thought that the old law as to rifles was not just. So we held a Council of War on the Kankakee one time and, after mature deliberation, we changed it and decided that in hunting altogether with shot-guns and rifles, the man who drew first blood was entitled to the hide but the meat and game should be divided equally among all. When we got ready to divide, the game is divided in as many shares as there are hunters. One turns his back to the game and another points at each pile in turn and also asks whose it is. And the one with his back turned says who is entitled to the pile or bunch pointed at. But sometimes a heavy accent of signal by the one



## DIVIDING THE GAME

who points out is understood by the man whose back is turned. They sometimes give themselves the best pile of game. And I am sorry to say that I have sometimes been a victim of misplaced confidence in that way and cheated out of my fair share of the game. But there was no use to squeal about it as they would only laugh you out of it and say that you ought to have better luck. I have told you how we killed deer and divided game. Now one great question among us was in reference to still or noisy hunting. The Indians always still hunt, that is they keep perfectly quiet and motionless and wait for the game to come along. Or they sneak quietly upon the game. I learned this mode of hunting with the Indians on the Western plains, hunting buffalo and antelope in the open country many years ago. You can hunt with an Indian all day and he will scarcely say a word. With over fifty years experience in hunting both in the forest and in the open country I must say that the white man must take off

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his hat to the Red Man when it comes to the scientific mode of hunting wild game. As a matter of course in driving in thickets, marshes and ridges we had to make all the noise we could to get the deer out. But this was the question. In coming in at night a majority of the hunters would leave loads in their guns, in the day of the muzzle loader, all night and get up in the morning before daybreak and fire them off, wakening the whole country for miles around for the purpose of cleaning their guns and putting fresh loads in so they would not miss fire. Whilst I contended that doing so in the morning put every deer within hearing of the camp on the alert and look out for danger, and the least noise we made in the morning was the best. But a majority decided against me but I never gave up. A gun well taken care of will not miss fire if not shot off for a week, I never did like to hunt with a noisy camp and I most always got the most game by keeping still. One time in moving camp two of the party decided to take a

## DIVIDING THE GAME

near cut and hunt through the woods and join the camp at night, But they got lost and we fired signal guns and built a big fire. Finally they arrived long after night, tired and weary and almost exhausted. Whilst the men were lost three wild geese flew over them. They fired several shots and succeeded in bringing down one. After hunting for it for some time they found it had fallen in an old deserted well of some hunter or trapper, perhaps the only one around for miles. They brought it into camp, that is the goose not the well, and we moralized on the subject. They might try for one thousand years to kill a wild goose and have it fall into that well again and not succeed. Now was it Providence or Chance that governed in this case? While I want to be a Christian and believe everything that is good and true I could understand special Providence that I hear talked so much about. In some cases a man a half inch too far away is killed and another half an inch another escapes. And by the least little

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thing men and women and poor, little, innocent children, through no fault of theirs. are killed. And others by the most trifling thing escape. I have seen the meanest and wickedest person have a splendid and beautiful day for their funeral and I have seen the friends of the Lord poor and the good Christian people almost frozen to death or drowned in burying their dead. The great moral question with me is, was this earth gotten up especially for the benefit of Men, or was it only an after-thought. The revolution of the sun, moon and stars are perfect to a second. But when we come down to the law governing our little Earth we all imperfection, one law creating, another destroying. It is nothing but a war of the elements and a law of destruction between every living thing. There is no safety or security in any place or thing. It is said what a beautiful act of Providence it was that He created one set of animals and birds to keep one another set down or the world would be over-run with them. This is about the way

## DIVIDING THE GAME

with some of the human family, destroying one another with war and murder while Providence with pestilence, famine and accidents keeps the human family from over-running the earth. I have noticed when a vessel goes down at sea, loaded down with precious freight, that Providence always seems to be on the side of the strongest who are good swimmers, whilst the poor helpless women and little children are lost. If Providence had anything to do with it He would have kept the boat from going down, **S**ome years ago on a western railroad a passenger train conveying a large number of Divines to a Conference or Synod ran over some cattle on a high grade and threw the cars down a steep embankment. Fortunately no one was killed and the Divines came out with a card thanking Providence for their safety. The superintendent also came out with a card and said that if Providence had anything to do with it He would have kept the cattle off the track in the first place. So you see how it goes. In my

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hunting experience for many years I have found more special cases of special Providence for the animals and birds than I ever saw for the human family. I will tell you of a stubbed tailed brindle dog that belonged to one of the party. Whilst out hunting he ran the deer out of a thicket to me and I did not shoot for laughing at one of the boys who was so excited that he could not shoot because the deer ran within a few yards of him. Just at that time the thought came to him that he had left camp without any bullets. His father was some distance away when he called aloud: "Daddy, have you got the bullets?" This frightened the deer and he turned toward me. The dog came up, looked me in the face as much to say, "Aint you ashamed of yourself for letting that deer get away?" And he turned and left me as other friends had left me before, and would not drive any more deer to me until I had redeemed myself. I will tell you how that was done. Another time we were out hunting and as I was on the left flank half a mile from the

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rest of the party I heard a noise and looking around I saw a large buck coming straight toward me and the dog right after him. He came up to within fifty yards of me and then turned off to the left. I got up out of the grass, gave him both barrels and saw every shot strike him in the side. He ran about seventy yards and tumbled. The dog came up and saw what I had done and looked me in the face and wagged his scrub-tail as much as to say, "You are a bully boy with a glass eye and have done the right thing this time and I will stand by you." And he did. He stayed with me all that day. Some say that animals have instinct only and not sense. Talk about instinct, Here is a genuine, clear, solid sense and no fooling about it. I believe that some animals have sense and reasoning faculties as well as the human family and far excel them in some things, protecting their young and obtaining food and shelter for them. I will now relate the nearest special providence and sense in any animal that I ever

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saw. This is the young fawn or deer. When it comes forth it is the most helpless thing in the world and the least animal in the world could kill it. And now comes the most wonderful part of all and is true as holy writ. From the time the fawn is born until it is able to run it has no scent or smell. All kinds of ferocious animals, wolves, wild-cats, dogs, will pass it within a few feet and will not detect it unless they see it. The fawn lies in the most secluded and out of the way places imaginable, and will lie perfectly still all day without moving, in the same place where its mother left in the morning. The doe stays near and watches it all night but leaves it early in the morning and stays away all day, only returning at nightfall to suckle and nourish it, knowing full well that if found near it in day time her presence might lead to its discovery. But what a wonderful provision is providence, sense or instinct that keeps that little helpless animal still, away from its mother all day. You may pass within a few feet of



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them and they will not move. Father told me that while hunting on the North Marsh he stepped over two of them in the grass before they ran, whilst he was looking for a squirrel fox. If you find one when very young you can pick it up and carry it a short distance and then let it down and it will follow you home like a dog and become very tame. Another time we were hunting and the dog ran a deer out of the thicket and we all fired and wounded it, making enough noise to drive all the deer out of the country. We followed the wounded deer a short distance and got it. After hunting around for awhile we started for camp. In the evening our route to camp took us by the same thicket from which we started the deer in the morning. We were scattered out, tired and weary, taking our time to it. One of the party was some distance behind and near the thicket in the marsh. On turning around I saw him aiming at something ten or fifteen feet from him in the grass. He fired and killed what he supposed was a rabbit,

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but he came to find out that it was a young deer that had hidden there all day in the grass near the thicket where we had fired three shots in the morning. All this noise and firing had not disturbed it or made it move, and this is more than a young of the human family could have done without squalling and making a fuss. So it is with the birds. The same special Providence that guides and protects the animals does likewise to the feathery tribes. Rambling through the woods and over the marshes one often finds a covey of quail or a brood of pheasants. To see how the mother bird protects her young; she will flop and flutter to attract your attention from the young birds so that you would think she had both wings broken, fluttering just far enough to keep out of your reach, long enough for the young birds to skulk away and hide in the grass. Take a stroll through the woods in the Springtime and you will smile at the swinging birds with your wise, amused pity, who builds her tiny nest with such

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laborious care, high up out on the moving tree top, only to be blown away by the chilly autumn winds. But are not the homes of the human family, the sweetest homes of our tenderest love built upon just as insecure a foundation, hanging over some mysterious depths, and rocked to and fro only to be swept away into ruin. And yet He who has provided a balmy South as a refuge for the summer birds to which they can fly, has He not provided likewise a shelter for the human family? I might write a book on "Special Providence for Animals and Birds" but I will leave that for the naturalist,

CHAPTER VI  
MY FIRST BOAT RIDE  
MY FIRST FISHING  
TRIP TO THE KANKAKEE  
AND MY FIRST BOAT RIDE AND  
EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH  
A SHOT GUN

To shorten up a story that is already too long is somewhat of a task. When I found that I have considerable more material than I can insert in this little book and unless I cut out some of the details there is dangers of slopping over. Therefore, I will have to hold myself down to the mere facts. Since the newspapers and magazines have been offering prizes for the best fish stories some of the anglers have caught bigger fish stories than they did fish. Just see what this angling game is coming to when a man has to make an affidavit and give advance no-

## MY FIRST BOAT RIDE

tice he is telling the truth before he dare open his mouth about fishing. Just because my pencil happened to slip once when I was describing a fishing trip on the Cottenwood River in Northern Minnesota many years ago is no sign I cannot tell the nude, naked truth if I try hard enough. I am and always have been a "dyed" in the wool crank on fishing ever since boyhood. I began my first fishing in a small creek that ran near our cabin. My first fishing outfit consisted of a red willow pole, a shoestring line and a bent pin for a hook. Grasshoppers, grub worms and angle worms were the bait. Chubs and sun-fish were the kind of fish I caught, if any. Sometimes I would go fishing at night for cat-fish, and do very well until that big swamp owl would hoot "Who are you," and that would end my fishing for that night. The summer that I was eight years old Father took me wrth him to the Kankakee. We were fishing from the bank at North Bend, which I have mentioned before. Whilst we were fishing Mr.

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Samuel Irvin, a trapper, came floating down the river in a skiff. This was the first water craft I had ever seen. Mr. Irvin landed his boat and he and father, being old friends, sat on the bank in the shade talking whilst I was fishing part of the time and climbing swamp trees until I got tired. Finally I made known my desire to ride in one of those things--the boat. Father told me to get in and sit down in the bottom of the boat. I did and then he got into the boat and shoved it out into the stream. We went down around the bend and back to where we started, I have often thought of sitting in the bottom of the boat and grasping the sides so tight that I dented the sides of the boat with my fingers to keep from falling out when there was no danger of falling out unless the boat upset. This was my first fishing trip to the Kankakee River and my first boat ride. Near this same place fifty years later Father ran me on my last duck hunting trip on the Kankakee. He was then over four-score years of age, yet he could handle a

## MY FIRST BOAT RIDE

hunting boat then as well as he did when he gave me my first boat ride. Among the earliest recollections of my boyhood hunting with a gun are a few of my first shots. In 1869 Father bought a new heavy number ten double-barrel muzzle-loading shot gun. Breach-loaders were not so numerous then as now. It was so heavy that I could not hold it to load or shoot. Yet I was anxious to shoot it once. One day I was out in the woods near the house gathering hickory nuts and the dog treed a black squirrel. Father was home and I got him to let me shoot it. He put in a light load as the squirrel was on a small tree and not very high up. Then putting his thumb around a small bush and letting his fingers open, lying the gun on his fingers against the bush, which made a good rest, he soon initiated me in the mysteries of handling a gun. He told me to look along the barrel until I saw the squirrel, then to pull the trigger. This I did. Bang! The recoil knocked me down. When I got up my nose was bleeding quite free-

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

ly, but I went and picked up my squirrel. Father said I was initiated. I am sure it was a labor of love on his part and I made repeated progress under his tutoring. That same Fall I began my practicing on wing shots. Near our house and between the main land and swamp timber was a strip of open marsh. This was a great fly-way for ducks, from the north bend of the river across to Sandy Hook. One afternoon I took the gun out on this fly-way, hid behind some pucker bush, shot and killed the first duck that came along which happened to be a Grey Mallard or Greenhead. I waded out in the marsh. The water was about two feet deep and cold, as it was late in November. It was the proudest moment in my life. I took the duck to the house, Father being away from home. Mother wanted to have it for supper but I would not have it that way. I wanted Father to see it, feathers and all. As I have said, it was the proudest moment of my life when I showed the bird to my Father. It was my first game bird.



## MY FIRST BOAT RIDE

My boyish heart swelled with pride. My greatest desire had been gratified. I found I had acquired the "knack" and from that time on I became a "wing shot." I was the only boy in the neighborhood that could shoot "flying." I was greatly envied by my boy chums. Many of them were much older than I, so much so that one day I overheard one of our neighbors say to his wife, "Werich will ruin that boy by letting him run around totting a gun all the time. They'd a darn sight better keep him at work doing something worth while." A few years later when breech loaders became more plentiful Father bought one and gave me the old muzzle loader, or rather I traded him an old watch for it. The gun and I became inseperable and I would keep it in the parlor if my wife would have permitted it. I thought so much of that old gun that in 1884 I carried it across the Western Plains to the foothills of the Rockies for the purpose of shooting wild game, as it was the best gun to throw coarse shot that I ever saw. For double

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BB and swan shot it could not be beat and for buck shot it was a daisy. It would chamber three number one buck shot and nine made a load. Firing two shots into a bunch of antelope at eighty or a hundred yards certainly made the hair fly. Returning home the following year "85" I cleaned up the old gun and have not loaded it since. That has been more than a third of a century ago. Father had promised to take me duck hunting with him in the swamps just as soon as I could shoot "flying." Many a hunting trip on the Kankakee River he has shoved me and I have witnessed many remarkable shots as well as many poor ones. Father is a man who made but little show of his emotions but I could see a change in his eye whenever I made a good shot, and I knew he was as well pleased as I was. I heard Bill Adams whisper to Jerome Rathborn one time when they were stopping at our place on a duck hunt: "That boy of John's can shoot like the very devil and if he keeps on improving by the time he

## MY FIRST BOAT RIDE

is fifteen he will be the champion shot on the Kankakee." On my last hunting trip on the Kankakee, Father was with me, as mention has been made, and was running the boat, when I made two of the most remarkable wing shots ever made in all my hunting experience. We were going through the mouth of old Sandy Hook when a pair of blue wing teels came flying past about two feet above the water, As all old-time duck hunters know, a teal is the hardest bird to hit of the duck family on account of darting and zigzagging in their flight. I pulled down on them with the right barrel of the gun as they were a long way off and to my surprise they both fell dead, The same morning over in Cornell's Bayou I made another wonderful double shot. We were coasting down the bayou and Father was manipulating the paddle and I the hardware when a pair of mallards rose up out of the timber to my right. The brush was so thick that I could not get sight of either of them until they flew out into the opening. By

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKA KEE

this time they were a long way off, too far to shoot at using good judgment. But I decided to try them. Giving the gun considerable elevation I pulled the trigger and greatly to my astonishment both fell, one dead, the other winged, and before I could give the crippled one the other barrel it skulked off in the pucker brush and I lost it. As I have said before, my Father was at this time over four-score years, and at this writing, 1920, is in his nintieth year. He continued his hunting until the infirmities of age removed him from the swamps. This day finished our shooting. I returned to my home in Logansport, Indiana, and before the duck hunting season opened again I lost my right arm at the shoulder in a railroad accident. This was my last hunt on the Kankakee and for this reason I mention this incident. The reader will remember in the opening chapter that I set steel traps and caught wild game long before I was large enough or old enough to carry a gun, having in all spent over a half century in hunting



**JOHN WERICH**—Born in 1830. The oldest pioneer hunter living, now in his 90th year. Began hunting on the Kankakee in 1852. A few months before this book went to press he shot and killed a tiger cat that measured forty inches long and stood seventeen inches high, the first one ever seen in the Kankakee swamps. supposed to have escaped from some menagerie.



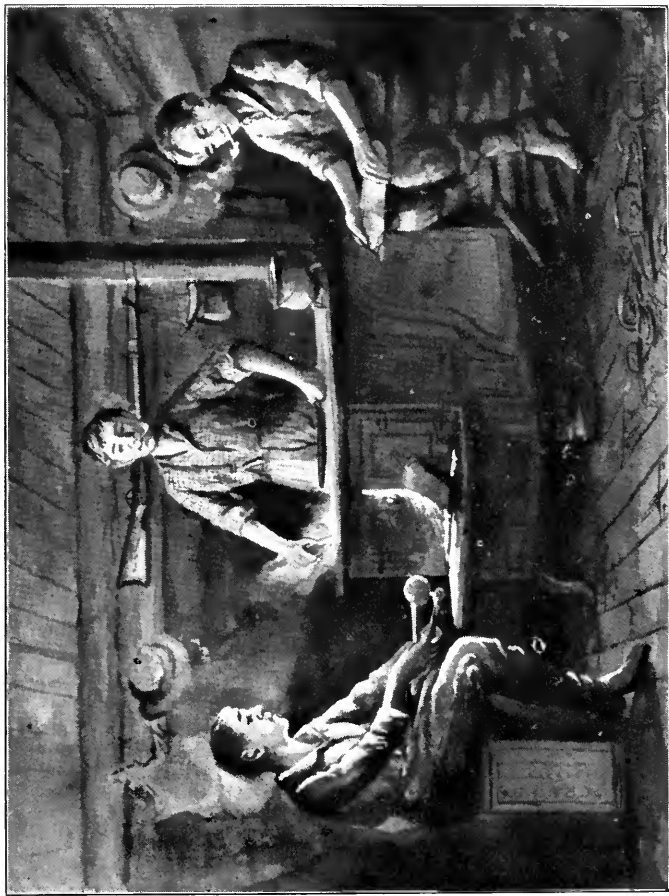
MY FIRST BOAT RIDE  
and trapping on the Kankakee.

CHAPTER VII  
HUNTERS WHO HAVE BUCKFEVERED  
GUNS  
THAT HAVE SPASMS  
AND HUNTERS THAT HAVE  
THE BUCK FEVER

One more story and it will conclude the series of incidents in deer hunting. But all of this is a matter of history to the man who has tramped the woods for years. It is only repeating old stories to tell of the deer that ran too fast for you to shoot. I once saw a tenderfoot hunter jump up a deer at close range and he stood and watched the deer until it was out of sight before he realized he had a gun in his hands. And so it is with others; the duck that always flew behind the hunter as he sat on a musk rat house in a slough and could not turn around, or of the







A Deer Hunter's Lodge on Johnson's Island. Getting Ready for the Hunt.

## HUNTERS WHO HAVE BUCKFEVERED

flock of wild geese that had lit in the pond in the cow pasture that day he had no gun, If you had pressed your nose against the pane and peeped through the window of a little log hunting camp on an island near Sandy Hook, say about eight p. m., on a November evening forty-two years ago, you would have candle-lighted three young men sitting around an old cook stove. Two of the men were pulling on old clay pipes, and each was at peace with the world as far as I know. Let me introduce you to them. In the opposite picture that guy standing by the stove but usually sitting down in the easiest chair (an old cracker box) to be found in camp, and absorbing the most heat, is my friend Bill Garrison, whom I brought along on his first deer hunting expedition in the Kankakee swamps, Leave it to "Bill." He always grabs the biggest potato in the dish and the huskiest wedge of pie on the plate, and always gets the softest seat in camp. The tall, lanky, leather-faced gink sitting on the woodpile behind the stove,

THE PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE  
dressing a musk-rat hide is Jolly Smith, an all-around camper and fur-dresser and flap-flap flipper, head cook and dish washer, trapper, fur-trader, and a good trailer. I should say off hand that Jolly stands about seventy-three inches in his socks, and when he stretches his neck to rubber after game he is taller'n that. There isn't an ounce of superflous flesh on him. In fact, there isn't much flesh of any kind. Jolly is so thin he would have to stand a long time in bright sun to make a decent shadow. You can see his back from the front if you stare hard enough and I reckon an expectorate who would put a little velocity into his work could spit a hole through Jolly three times out of five. But anybody who picks up Smith for a weak-kneed hunter on a long run makes a mistake. On the trail he is tougher than a boiled owl. The other guy sitting in front of the stove with a bar of lead, laddle and bullet molds, running bullets that hunter is--well, I'm too modest to say who it is. All I will say is that there were three of us

## HUNTERS WHO HAVE BUCKFEVERED

in the party. I have already described two, so you can draw your own conclusions as to the identity of the third. The next morning it was clear and cold, the shallow water around the edges of the swamps was frozen over. We had decided to drive the ridges so one of our party was to take the dog and go up the river on the south side to the flats. Perhaps I ought to explain a little what is meant by the flats. Many French and Spanish words have become incorporated with the English in America that one hardly knows the name of things and places by their right names. The flats is a high, dry swamp, that part of the swamp that is seldom under water except in extremely high-water times. These flats are covered with heavy timber of swamp-oak. In the Fall and early winter they are a great place for deer to feed by nozzling in the leaves and snow for acorns. And that was the head of the ridges and almost a sure place for the dog to take up a trail. On account of freezing up, the deer would run the

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

flats and ridges and they would have to be chased hard before they would run the low swamps. Big Beech Ridge was to be my stand and Garrison on the west end of Peach Island. Smith took the dog to the flats and had no more than got on them when the dog took up a trail. Just after sunrise I reached the east end of the ridge only to see two hunters coming up from the other side. We were strangers, I had never met either of them before, but I never stand on ceremony with a sportsman. An acquaintance was soon struck up between us. They were from South Bend, Indiana, and had a camp on Goose Island. One of the hunters was a grey-haired man, probably sixty-five years of age, and claimed to be an old deer hunter who had hunted and killed deer with the Indians when the Kankakee Swamps were yet the hunting grounds of the Pottowattomies. His partner was much younger. The old hunter was one of those fellows that thought he knew it all and what he did not know about deer hunting was

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not worth knowing. The young hunter looked with great admiration upon his older companion and would do anything that he directed. They had sent their dogs up the swamps. They said that all but one were young dogs and that the old dog did not amount to much. Our dog was a good one, the best I ever hunted with, a good tounge and swift on the trail. They were all the time bragging and boasting on their dog "Spot" for being a good runner. I tried to get them to agree with me on what would be the result if their dog should bring a deer to this point and I should kill it, or if my dog should chase one or more to them and if they should kill it. But they did not want to discuss the subject so it was dropped. A fire was built in the end of an old butternut log and we stood around it and listened for the dogs. We were on the east end of the ridge and in a hollow. On each side of the hollow the bluff is very steep. The hollow was about seventy-five or eighty yards wide. If a deer was headed for this ridge from the east it

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

would run this hollow to get on the ridge. My number ten muzzle-loader, loaded with buck-shot, rested against a tree. The old hunter's gun was a double combination of shot rifle gun, ten guage shot and 30-30 rifle. The young hunter was using a cap and ball rifle. Their guns were leaning against the log. We were sitting around the fire, as it was a cold morning, listening for the dogs when suddenly from away off up the ridges came the silvery voice of a hound. But only for a moment was he heard as he crossed from one ridge to another on the way to Peach Island. A moment and again the bugle notes rang out and warned us that the deer was running the north ridges and would come to this point where we were stationed. The music told us that the dog had reached Peach Ridge about a mile away. Whose dog was making the noise was the question that none of us could tell, but each imagined that he could distinguish the voice of his favorite dog. One thing I was sure of and that was that there



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was but one dog in the chase. About half a mile up the swamp we heard the crack of a rifle four times in succession. We gave up right then and there that somebody had got our deer and that we weren't in it. I sat down on the log again by the fire. The dog was running yet and I told Mr. Spencer, as that was his name, that there was some hope for us yet as the dogs were still running. For the tounding of the hound was coming closer all the time. Just then we heard two reports of a shot gun in rapid firing and I knew it was Garrison for I can tell when he is shooting because he always shoots his "second" barrel first, referring to his quickness with his second shot. Following this we heard the crack of a rifle and again four shots had been fired and yet the hound was coming on towards us. Two or three times since the dog had reached Peach Ridge had I urged my companions to sit down or conceal themselves so that the deer would not be turned. But Mr. Know-it-all and don't-want-

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to-take-advise-from-a-country-greenhorn refused. I told him that advice from a country greenhorn was about as good as that of a city tenderfoot and that their actions do not show very much skill as a deer hunter. I spoke to them again, "Boys, that deer is coming straight to this hollow and will be here in less than three minutes. Let us act like hunters and get behind the log." Just then I saw the deer coming from the other side of the ridge straight to this stand, a big buck, and it was right upon us within twenty-five yards and running like a racer, sailing over old logs and brush with the ease of a bird. At this I fired one barrel and at another leap the deer was behind an old tree so I could not give him the other barrel. The young hunter grabbed up his gun and fired. The deer at this time was less than a hundred feet from him. He missed fire and the deer ran around to the other side of the ridge and while doing this the man with the rifle-shot gun fired two shots and of course missed. By this time I gave him my

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second barrel as he disappeared into a black-berry thicket seventy-five yards away. We all looked dumfounded while we reloaded our guns and finally something was said about old "Spot." But the first dog that came up was my old dog "Trump." His eyes were ablaze with excitement and I called out "here Trump" and with a look of surprise the grand old dog recognized me. Wagging his tail he came up to me to be approved. Meanwhile Mr. Spencer had gone to where the deer had turned past us and found great splotches of blood on the leaves. The dog took up the trail and in a short time brought the buck back by me at the rate of a mile a minute. I was on the top of the slope while the deer ran the edge of the ridge below me. My fusee banged out twice. I held right on that big buck at about one hundred and fifty feet away and the buck kept right on going. Whang-bang went the rifle-shot-gun of the hunter who knows just how to do it. The deer was not more than a hundred feet from him and not,

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a ball or a shot touched him. The dog was giving him a very close chase and when his touncing suddenly ceased I knew what had happened. A moment later I had my hunting knife into the buck's neck long before the first class deer hunter came up. Then the question was, who shot the deer. On examining it, it was found that he had been hit in the shoulder by one buck shot, from my first shot, on the first round as he was running right side to me. He ran until he tumbled over. The three of us had fired nine shots and I learned afterwards it was the same deer that had passed three hunters and that there had been ten shots fired at it before it reached us, making in all nineteen shots in less than ten minutes and only one bullet had pierced his hide. Bad shooting secured for us lots of excitement and fun. A reminiscence I shall always remember. There are a class of hunters that have a faculty of forgetting their unpleasant experiences and exaggerate their joys and success. We divided the game with the

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Goose Island camp and returned to our camp in the evening, but I always remembered my poor shooting as well as the good. We moralized on the question; was it a fault of the guns or had the hunters an attack of the buck fever or was it Providence or chance or did the guns have spasms that governed in this case is something that I could not quite understand. For never before in all my long hunting experience have I seen such shooting as was done on this hunt. I have witnessed many remarkable shots. Geese and ducks have been pulled down out of the sky. Deer have been shot and killed a fourth of a mile away and many other miraculous shots made. I saw Father shoot and kill a hoot-owl one night about nine-thirty when it was so dark that you could not see the tree that the owl was in. A big hoot-owl had lit in a big oak tree near the cabin and commenced to hoot "who-are-you." Father took down the old squirrel rifle and shot in the direction from which the sound came. At the crack of the

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rifle down came something clattering to the ground. I took the dog and found the owl, dead as a knob.

CHAPTER VIII  
TRAPPERS' CLAIMS  
TRAPPERS' CLAIMS  
AND HOW THEY WERE  
OBTAINED. THE BEE-TREE  
SWINDLE AND HOW  
IT WAS WORKED

It was away back in 1868. Think of it. Fifty years ago when I made my first appearance in the Kankakee Swamps. Since then I have hunted in swamps and on mountains, in the big forests and on the plains, but none clings to my memory quite so well as when my thoughts ramble to the days when I was trapping the fur-bearing animals in the Kankakee region. There are many very funny things happened in those old hunting days. I told my early experiences in the first chapter of this book from the angle of a pioneer hunter of the west, although it did not

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all center in the Kankakee Swamps then as it has in later years, for many big hunts that won me fame was west of the Mississippi River, years ago. Whilst writing this story and talking with old friends I have been living over those old days. It has freshened memories of incidents that I have not thought of for years. In the early 60's, during the Civil War, the price of furs of all kinds went up. A mink hide would sell from four to nine dollars each. A good coon skin would bring four dollars and a half, just as it was nailed on the shanty door, and the fur buyer would pull the nails himself. All kinds of furs brought a good price and for this reason many hunters were brought to the Kankakee Swamps. Also many trappers were brought here. Up to this time the pioneer trappers had no established trapping grounds as there was a vast territory along the river covered with water the whole year round which furnished good trapping grounds anywhere. He saw that his rights were slipping from him and that he would soon



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be crowded out of a trapping ground. So some of the old pioneer trappers got together and established what is known as a trappers' claim. Some held certain claims upon rights of permission, others from permission of the land-owners, while still others had bought their grounds. These trapping grounds or claims, as they were sometimes called, were divided by a line running north and south as the river is supposed to flow from the northeast in a southwestern course. So the miles on the river were the base lines of the claims and extended on both sides of the river just as far as it was profitable and ran all the way from two to ten miles in width. Therefore there were a good many trapping grounds lying between the Indiana State line and English Lake. These claims were bought and sold almost the same as real estate and they were about as strong in their stipulation as the Clayton-Bulwort treaty. They have brought many a trapper on the verge of war. Among the early trappers who came in

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the late fifties and early sixties were: Joshua E. Essex, better known among the old-time hunters as "Essex, the Beehunter" from the fact that he was one of the greatest wild bee hunters that ever hunted the Kankakee region. He began hunting and trapping in 1859 in partnership with J. E. Gilson, of whom mention has been made. They built a log cabin on what is known as Butternut Ridge and near the Swift Cut Off. Here he trapped for three years then went into partnership with Charles Cassel and on Shanty Island built a shanty and trapped three years. In the summer of 1862 he enlisted and was enrolled in Company I, 5th Regiment, Indiana Cavalry. He was Quartermaster Sergeant and served to the close of the war, being discharged on June 15, 1865, when he returned and again went into the swamps and continued hunting and trapping until 1880. Most of his time in the swamps was spent in hunting bees. He became famous as a bee hunter. After retiring from the trapping business for many years he

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devoted his time to the bee culture, having in the meantime invented and patented a bee hive which he manufactured and sold. It was a great improvement over the old-fashioned bee hive. In the winter of 1867 Samuel Irvin began trapping and built a shanty on Little Beach Ridge. Eben Buck, an old pioneer river man, was his skinner and fur dresser. It is said that Buck could skin and dress more hides in an hour than any two trappers on the river. In stretching and dressing a rat hide he was an expert. In the fall of '71 Irvin built a shanty on Guinn's Island on the north side of the river and a little below the north bend. This shanty he used for two seasons then found that he had been encroaching upon the rights of another trapper. Then he sold his shanty to Bill Granger. Folsom moved it to Red Oak and placed it on the site of the one that was burned in '73. In the same year Irvin bought another claim or rather two claims, the Indian Garden Claim and the Crooked Creek Claim. This purchase ex-

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tended his trapping grounds up the river as far as Crooked Creek. He built a shanty on Indian Garden near the mouth of Sandy Hook. Late in the Fall of '79, after the fall catch, he sold his claim including shanty, boats and traps to the Sherwood Brothers, Jerry and Holland, for one hundred and fifty dollars. He also realized one hundred and forty dollars from one month's trapping, thus retiring from the business after spending twelve years of successful trapping on the Kankakee. The latch string of Mr. Irvin's shanty door always hung out to all hunters and fishermen from far and near and they were hospitably treated and entertained. The Sherwoods trapped the ground one or two seasons, then sold out and moved to Tennessee. Another very successful trapper in those days was H. G. Castle who began trapping with his cousin, Charles Castle. They trapped in the Shanty Island ground for several years and bought furs. He retired in '82 and engaged in the mercantile business at Hebron, Indiana. By 1882 nearly

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all the old-timers had left the swamps. Furs were getting cheap and hardly worth catching. But a few years later prices began to go up and then the younger generation took up the trapping business. Now as I have gone to the limit of this story or what I promised in the beginning, The Pioneer Hunters and Trappers, I will leave the latter day hunters for the second edition. The reader remembers I said that Essex was a great bee hunter and to my mind he was. But he had many close rivals in hunting for wild honey. Now I will tell you of one of the shrewdest bee hunters that ever operated in the Kankakee Swamps. He said that "there are tricks to all trades" and a stunt that he pulled off and got away with, or rather a "joke" as he called it surely proves the assertion of good or evil repute of past Sawyers or Sawyers yet to grow. Henry B. Sawyer was related to the Mr. Sawyer who many years ago ran the Eatons Ferry and of which I will speak later. This young hunter who originated in Kentucky but later at

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Big Log, Indiana, has friends who have determined that he is a natural born hunter (Kentucky produces a large crop of such). Sawyer was long armed and amiable. From many years of practice in hunting and shooting wild fowls, deer and wild hogs and other game which inhabited the Kankakee region had a fairly correct notion of his own about hunting. Many of the sportsmen from the city would employ him and turn over their camp to him and at night he would teach them local geography of the Kankakee region. In a few years he became known to almost all the sportsmen in the nearby cities. The business of a guide in those days was to push a boat through the swamps, bayous and sand marshes with one, and sometimes two, hunters in it. At times there was much hard work to perform, especially in the fall hunt when the water was low. In a year or two he grew tired of this business and his thoughts seemed to consist as far as might be to avoid work. And here he invented his prac-

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tical "joke," Sawyer was struck on the idea of bee-hunting. As he was well known by all of the old bee hunters along the Kankakee he was welcomed as joyously at a bee hunters cabin as if he were a long missing brother. He was at once made to be at home in the bee hunters cabin on Long Ridge, whilst the old hunter entered with a friendly rivalry with the young hunter in the giving of advice and information. After visiting a number of the old-time bee hunters who resided among the sand ridges along the river, one of them was Honey Bee Sawyer. He thought he had the secret so he began looking for wild bees that stored their honey in hollow trees which were called bee trees. Honey sold at a good price in those days as there were not many hunters engaged in the business. When Sawyer began hunting the wild bees it was in the Autumn of "59". At that time there were several good bee hunters in the swamp among whom I might mention the Steven brothers, Marion and Filander, Harrison Dolson, Joe

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Cason, Had Folsom, Charles Carmon, and a score of others that were very successful bee hunters. They were all old timers who had followed the business for years. Sawyer was green at bee hunting as I said before, but he hit on a scheme that worked and laid the old bee hunters in the shade. He was always a lucky hunter. Good luck seemed always at his hand. No matter what the game was he pursued, he always was sure to bag it, and so the same luck followed him in the bee hunting business. He found two or three trees, cut them, and they proved good, getting from sixty to one-hundred and fifty pounds per tree. Being a good season for honey, as there were lots of wild flowers for the bees to work on, Sawyer conceived the idea to mark every tree that he found that had a hole in it, to mark them all bee trees, generally picking on trees that were easily climbed. He had a pair of climbers made something on the order that telegraph linemen use. He had everything in readiness and just as soon as the frost came



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and killed the flowers so the bees would have to work on bait he was ready for them. As I said nearly every tree with a hole in it had his name on it and it is very seldom that you hear of a marked bee tree being disturbed. Before close of the bee hunting season Sawyer went around to all the trees that he had his name on, climbed them, stuck some honey-comb inside of the tree and smeared honey all around the hole so that all the neighborhood bees would work on the honey, passing in and out of the hole in the hollow tree. This the bees will do late in the Fall when the flowers are gone. After baiting about sixty-five or seventy trees in this way, having three or four live trees, genuine bee trees, he announced his trees for sale and in a few days he had his victim coming. Some settlers from the ridges, hearing of the result of some of Sawyer's bee trees, concluded there was a chance for speculation, so some of them visited the young bee hunter who had a shanty on Buck's Ridge, with a view of buying some of his

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trees. As good luck would have it, it was a warm, sunny day in the middle of October and the bees worked on bait nicely. Sawyer took them through the swamp, over ridges and showed them his stock of bee trees. The bees were working strong, going in and out of the trees, indicating a strong swarm. Sounding the trees with the pole of an axe gave them some idea as to the hollow that the tree might contain. After examining the trees, the party returned to the cabin late in the afternoon--tired, wet and hungry. The trapper who was shantying with him had a kettle of stewed duck, boiled potatoes, bread, butter and coffee, which made a fairly good supper. Sawyer asked them three dollars and fifty cents a tree and showed them the honey that he took out of a tree that he cut. He said he had sold six dollars' worth of honey and if they doubted his statement they could ask Mr. Smith, the man who helped him cut the tree and take the honey out. The settlers hesitated for awhile, but finally said they would give him

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two dollars and fifty cents a tree for sixty-five trees. There were three trees on the north side of the river they did not want. Sawyer did not want to miss a sale so he said that he would cut two trees near the cabin and if they did not get more than one hundred and fifty pounds from the two trees he would take the two fifty. And if there was more than that they were to give him the three fifty. To this they agreed. They went to cut the trees and from the first one they got a little over one hundred pounds of nice honey. The other tree was still better. They soon closed the deal. Sawyer was to help them cut the trees and the time was decided on the first freeze up when the ice would carry them safely, as that would be the best time to get around in the swamp and get the honey out. The bargain was closed and Sawyer received his money, two hundred and twenty-seven dollars for five bee trees, whilst the sixty trees contained nothing but the hollows. Not a bee in the whole sixty trees or for

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a long time afterwards. This was known as the "hollow tree sale." Just before or about the time of the first freeze Sawyer left the ridge and a paper informing the settlers that all kinds of things happen in the Kankakee Swamps, he took the map of the Kankakee valley and departed. A few days later the settlers came and had a bee tree cutting. They cut several trees and did not find any honey nor bees but found a piece of honey-comb on a string inside the tree. This led them to believe that they had been tricked. They went to their homes much wiser, but with no honey. What they said of their experience was never known. A few days after this an old bee hunter asked one of them how much honey they got. He drew a long hunting knife and threatened the inquirer. The other settlers were questioned not at all. It was one of the shrewdest tricks ever pulled off in the history of the Kankakee Valley. His fame as a bee hunter went abroad all over Northern Indiana and he was thence after known as Honey

## TRAPPERS' CLAIMS

Bee Sawyer, and this done on his achievement is not dimmed or forgotten. Father was quite a successful bee hunter and in early days kept the home supplied with wild honey all the year round and from him I got my early training in bee hunting. Although I never hunted for bees very much yet it is one of the sweetest hunts that a man can engage in. I never found very many bee trees and what I did find I found mostly when I was not looking for them. When a boy I used to go with Father when he went bee hunting. In the fall of the year after the frost had killed the wild flowers the bees would work on bait and by putting some honey-comb, stuck on a stick, in some open place, then watch for the bees, and if there are any bees within a half mile they will come to the bait and after they have loaded themselves with honey they will rise, circle around once or twice then start straight for home. Then the hunter gets the line on the direction of the tree. Possibly many of you have heard the old saying,

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

"Straight as a bee line." Well, this is where that old saying originated. A bee never flies a crooked line to its home when loaded.

CHAPTER IX  
RUNNING THE FERRY  
THE PIONEER  
BRIDGE BUILDERS CARRYING  
THE UNITED STATES MAIL THROUGH  
THE KANKAKEE SWAMPS  
IN A CANOE

Away back in the chilly autumn of 1836, George Eaton, with his family, landed on the banks of the Kankakee River at a place known in the early days as Pottowattomie Ford. He built a log cabin on the right bank of the river. He was one of the courageous pioneer settlers redeemed the country from superstition and savagery. He began pioneer life as a ferryman and ran what was known as the Eaton Ferry. He would transfer people from the Porter county side to the sand ridges in Jasper county. At the season of the year when the water was

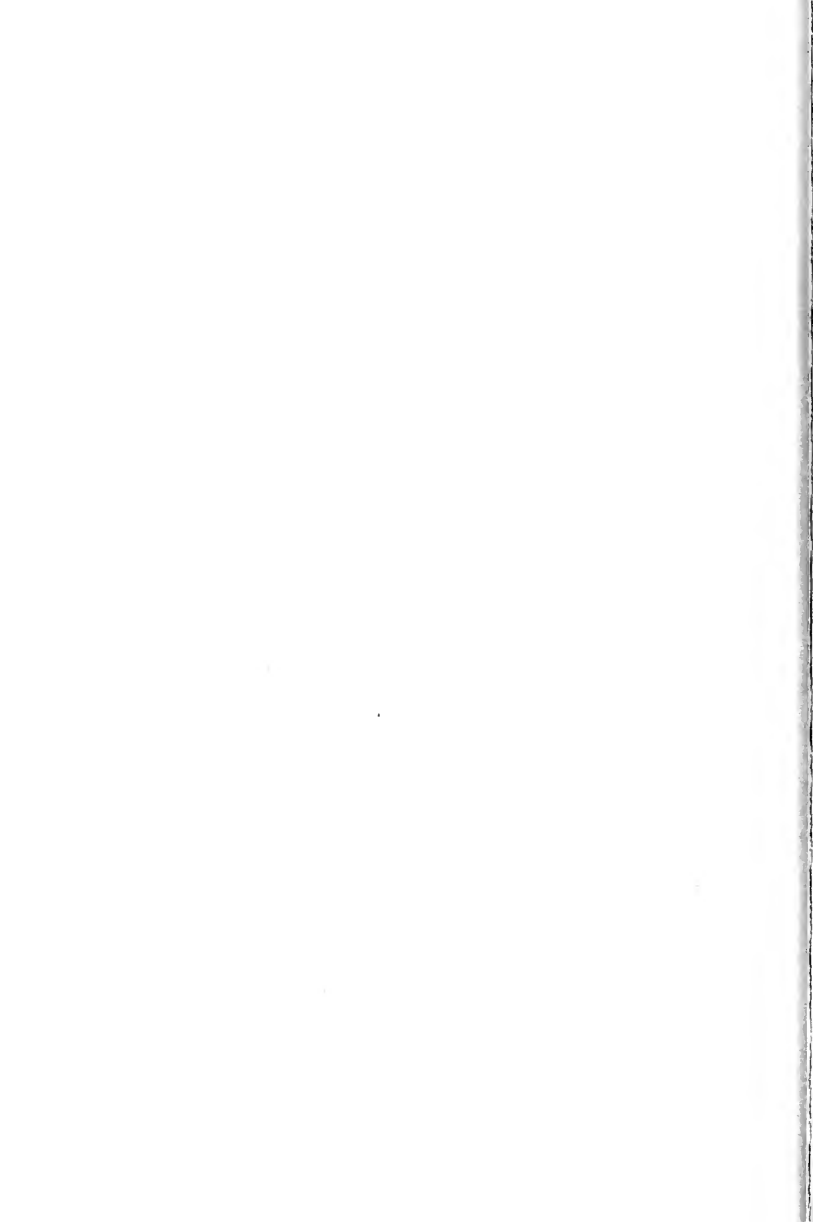
## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

high the distance was about a mile and a half and part of the way was through a dense swamp and a pathless marsh. In 1847 or 1848 there was a United States mail route established between Michigan City and Rensselaer, Indiana, and Mr. Eaton had the contract to carry the mail across the Kankakee Swamps. In the winter time when the river and marshes were frozen up it was somewhat difficult. But in the summer season when the water was low the mail was either carried through the swamps and marshes on horse back or stage. In the winter of "49" Eaton built a bridge across the river. This was the first bridge built on the Kankakee above Momence, Ill. On the following summer it was burned, it is supposed on account of it being a toll bridge. Mr. Eaton continued to run the the ferry up to the time of his death which occurred in 1851. His remains were laid at rest on a beautiful knoll near the landing place. Mrs. Eaton, a woman of remarkable nerve and strength, continued to run the ferry and deliver





Eaton's Bridge, the first bridge built across the Kankakee River at the old Pottowattomie Ford, known as Eaton's Ferry, 1849



## RUNNING THE FERRY

the mail on the south side. At times the water was so high that it could not be carried by stage. As I have said, she was a woman of courage and strength and there were but few men who could excel her, with the oars. One morning about daybreak two men on horseback arrived at the ferry and wanted to be hastily transferred to the main land on the south side. They said they had to be in Rennselaer by noon, as there was going to be a Government land sale at one o'clock that day and they wanted to be there at the opening of the sale. The recent rains had raised the water in the river and marshes that one-fourth of the way across would swim a horse. Through the timber they could ride their horses as the water was from knee to belly deep to a horse. Mrs. Eaton told them she could ferry them over one at a time but it would delay them about an hour and a half or she could take them both over at the same time and that there were places that they could swim their horses and that they could ride their horses until the water

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

got too deep to wade then they could get into the boat and swim the horses alongside the boat. They decided to go together and took passage per "skiff" and horseback riding their horses when it wasn't too deep. In less than an hour they were landed safely at Sand Ridge Landing in Jasper County. This is one incident mentioned which is only one of the many daring feats of this kind in which Mrs. Eaton showed her skill as a boat's woman. Late in the afternoon of the next day the sheriff of Laporte County, Indiana, arrived in the ferry looking for two stolen horses taken from a farmer near Doorville and the description of the men and horses tallied with those that Mrs. Eaton ferried across the river. There is no doubt but that they were the men wanted at Laporte. The chances for getting away and hiding stolen horses in the sand ridges on the south side of the river was much better than on the north side as the country was not so well settled. Many a stolen horse has been hidden away on

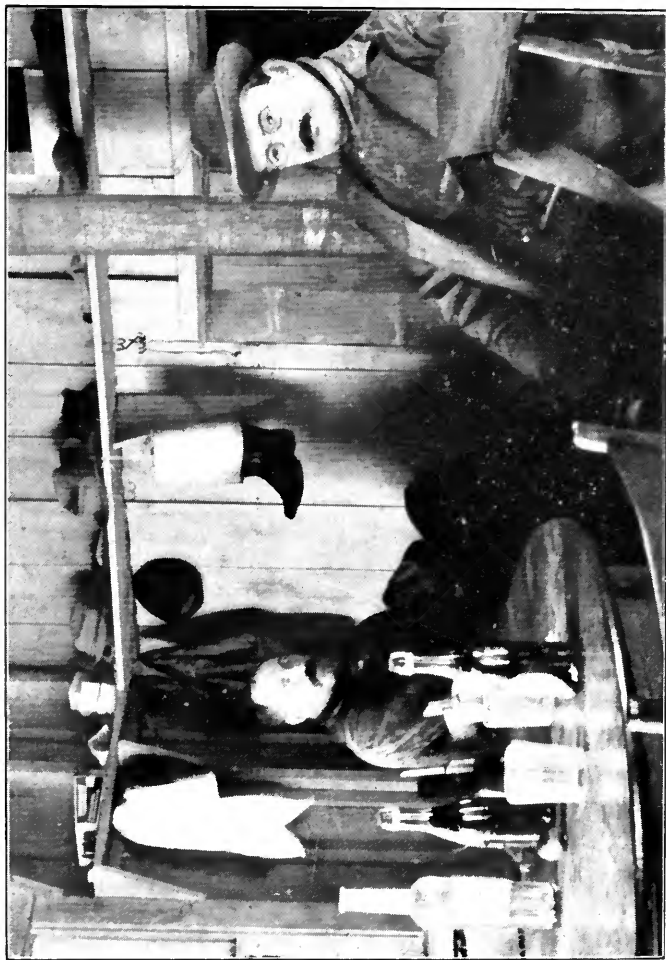
## RUNNING THE FERRY

these swamp islands which were never found by their owners. Horse stealing in those days was a very frequent occurrence. Mrs. Eaton died in 1857 and was buried beside her husband in the family burying ground near the landing. After the death of Mrs. Eaton a man by the name of Sawyer came in possession of the old ferry. He built a bridge in "57." As the bridge was not substantially built the ice and high water of the following spring took it out. Sawyer then ran the ferry again and carried mail for three or four years. He also put up a sawmill on the banks of the river and did a good lumber business. Many of the logs he sawed were rafted down the river. In 1860 he sold out his business to Enus Baum, who operated the mill and ran the ferry for a few years. Baum built a bridge that stayed in and was used until the close of the war when the County Commissioners of Porter and Jasper Counties jointly took over the bridge and made it free. Later on they made a grade through the swamp

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

of timber and sand as far as the timber line. It was several years before the grade was completed across the marsh to the dry land. This was the last of the toll gate system in Porter County. In fact, it was the last in Northern Indiana. When Baum built the bridge it stayed in. This was known, and is to this day, as Baum's Bridge. And yet Eaton built a bridge across the river at the same place fourteen years prior to the building of the Baum's Bridge. It was at this ford that Major Irwin crossed the Kankakee when he was giving notice to all the Indians along the Kankakee Swamps to be ready to leave in the early summer for their homes beyond the Mississippi. Also it was at this ford where General Tipton crossed the river while gathering up the children of the forest to their far-off hunting grounds toward the sunset. In 1878 a party of hunters from Pittsburg, Pa., built a club house at the bridge and they put on the river a small steamer, "Little Rhoda" which played between English Lake and Long Ridge.





Interior View of Louisville Club House



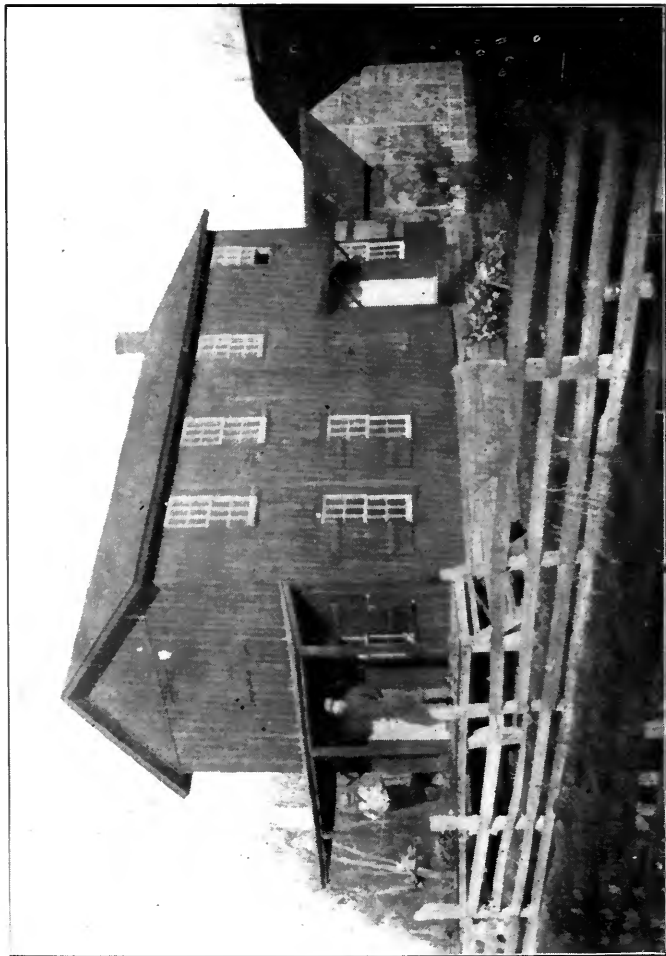
## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

get a shot at a web-foot duck, and many years hunting on this stream have brought me face to face with many good fellows that belong to the hunters' fraternity. Some of my most pleasant recollections that were printed on my memory were scenes around a hunters' camp. I have often regretted I did not keep a diary for many of the talks around these campfires are worth recording.

## RUNNING THE FERRY

There was another party of hunters from Louisville, Kentucky, who built a club house at the bridge in the fall of '78 known as the Louisville Hunting Club with Wm. Thompson, of Louisville as President and H. Parker Rice and Aaron P. Ferman, of Hebron, Indiana, as hunting guides and club house managers. Parker, better known as "Dock" among the hunting circles, became associated with the Louisville Club in their annual fall hunt of '76 and at that time they camped in a cotton shanty or rag-house as they are sometimes called, near the Prairie Bend. The next season they built a shanty where now stands their magnificent building which was erected in '78 by Dock Rice, architect and builder. On the following year, '79, another club house was built by a hunting club known as the "White House Club" with George Wilcox, of Baum's Bridge, as manager and hunting guide. In the hunting season of the feathery tribe many are the sportsmen that gather along the marshes of the Kankakee to





The Louisville Club House at Baum's Bridge, built in 1878

CHAPTER X  
LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES  
FIRING  
THE MARSHES TO  
DRIVE THE GAME OUT.  
HOW THE INDIANS ROAST A DEER HEAD.  
THE LAST OF THE  
POTTOWATTOMIES  
ON THE KANKAKEE

The readers remember that in a previous chapter I mentioned that a few of the Pottowattomie Indians were permitted to remain. Now I will tell you what became of Mingo, the little Indian boy. One of the most wonderful stories of all is a prairie on fire, which is one of the grandest sights in the world. I have seen, in the fall of the year in a dry time, the Kankakee Prairies on fire, the time of the sear and yellow leaf when all nature is about to put off her garb of green and put on the white-snow. The Indians sometimes would set the grass on

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

fire to drive the game out. If there is any wind going it sweeps like a mighty hurricane and carries everything before it. Sometimes you can burn the grass around you and escape before the raging billows of fire reach you. "One time many years ago," says an old hunter, "Aubbeenaubbee and Mingo, an Indian boy, and myself, were out hunting in the tall grass and weeds on the marshes about two miles from the river. We had killed a deer and had just cut it open and taken out its entrails and were preparing to skin it and cut it up so that we could carry it home, when we heard a roaring and crackling noise west of us like the coming of a mighty storm. Aubbeenaubbee, with terror depicted on his face, said that the prairie was on fire and that we must get out. As the wind was blowing hard from that direction we knew that it would soon be upon us and we knew that there was no salvation for Mingo in the tall grass as he was small. In the twinkling of an eye we opened out the deer and shoved Mingo in and then

## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES`

closed it up like a clam. Aubbeenaubbee and I then broke and ran for our lives and of all the running and tumbling and summersaults in the tall grass beat the world and all the rest of mankind. I took a straight shoot for the river but Aubbeenaubbee took off to the left of me and reached the pond or slough with some water and musk-rat houses in it and he rushed in and hurriedly tore off the top of an old musk-rat house and jumped in and was saved. After running hard and being almost given out of being overtaken by the fire I reached a creek near the river where there was some water. I crossed over and was safe on the other side of the Jordan. Then I stood with wonder and amazement at the glorious sight of the ocean of fire rolling by and some deer and wolves rushed by me in their fright to escape the scorching elements. But I paid no attention to them. After the fire had passed by it had left nothing but a blackened pall. I started to find my companions and found Aubbeenaubbee with his head

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KAN KAKEE

stuck out of a musk-rat house, all right except a little scorched about the head. But he was glad to get off with that. He crawled out of the old musk-rat house and started to look for Mingo as we had great fear for him, fearing that he had been roasted alive. We found the roasted deer and knocked at the door and to our great delight Mingo called out, 'Sit down you are at the right door' And we opened the deer and behold, he was safe and sound, although he said it was red-hot for him for a short time. The deer was roasted to a nice brown on the outside and we sat down and made a square meal off of him. Then we cut it up and carried it home and we had enough to eat for sometime without cooking." The finest bill of fare that I ever saw was to pass over the burnt district just after a big fire had passed and you could find all kinds of game; coon, rabbits, and sometimes prairie chickens and ducks, nicely roasted and many a meal have I made of them when out hunting and hungry. I will tell you how the In-



## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

dians cooked their meats and the way they roast a deer head. It is the finest and most delicious in the world. They dig a hole about a foot square and about a foot deep and make a hot fire in it and keep it burning until it is nearly full of red hot coals. Then scrape out the coals and ashes. Wrap the deer head with the skin on in wet leaves and place it in the hole and cover it up with the hot ashes and coals and leave it until it is roasted through, then take it out and the skin will peel off and leave a clean, tender meat. Brains and tongue are all nicely cooked and that throws whale tongue in the shade. You can cook fish just caught in the same way. You wrap the fish in a wet paper of any kind and lay the fish down and cover it up with hot ashes and coals just as you would a roast potato in the ashes. After it is done take it out and the paper and skin peels off and leaves the juicy meat for you to place your pepper and salt and eat it. It is the finest thing in the world. You just try it sometime when you are out camping

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

on the Kankakee and you will never get tired of it. One time on the Kankakee we were out fishing for pike and in those days we had no such fishing outfits as are used at the present time, such as skimmers, trolling hook or Johnson grabbers or Hildebrandt's spinner and many other patented fishing hooks and artificial baits. We had to make our lines and hooks in those days and in fishing for pike or pickerel in the Kankakee we had to have strong lines and stout hooks and bait with a big fin of one of the fish caught. If you haven't such a bait use a large frog or minnow and keep it moving, as a pickerel seldom bites at a still bait but always takes it on the wing and go for it like lightning and splashes water in your face like a flying sea horse. Then we would pull them in out of the water. One day we caught nine pickerel that measured altogether fifteen feet. We cooked them all up for supper and with bread and butter and coffee the nine of us ate them all up and all of us said it beat the world and all the rest of

## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

mankind. Just think! Nine men eating fifteen feet of fish. Another time we were fishing on the Kankakee and caught many red-horse, buffalo, and suckers. We ate so many fish that some of the boys could not change their shirts for three or four weeks. Now all old hunters and fishermen know that suckers and red-horse are a very bony fish but just as good as any and some like them best, only they are so full of bones. I will tell you how we fixed them and they were alright. Take a sucker and clean it nicely, then lay it on the stump or log and with a sharp knife cut it cross-ways into pieces about an eighth of an inch long stick the pieces together with cornmeal and fry. It is alright and the bones will not trouble you or get cross-ways in your throat. And at that they are far better than German carp. One time we were fishing and caught a lot of carp when some guy came along and gave his idea and directions as to planking carp. His directions were: Get a nice big carp and clean it in good shape. Put it on a hardwood plank, salt

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

and pepper it well, then spread a layer of butter on the top. Cover this with strips of bacon and cornmeal. Slip him in a hot oven and when done to a brown take the outfit back of the shanty and throw the fish away and eat the board. I'll say that baked suckers and trimmings you will find more palatable than any hard-wood board or carp. I will assure you that. If none of these dishes don't appeal to you especially, just try something else. Many years ago, but to be exact, it was the cold winter of 1843 and the coldest winter ever known, there was a party of deer hunters camping on the Ridge. The snow was very deep and the weather so cold that it was almost impossible to get out and hunt for game. The ice in the river was so thick that they could not cut a hole through it with an axe so they pulled a lot old logs on the ice and set them on fire to melt a hole through it. After a night and a part of a day they got a hole through it and all kinds of fish, pickerel, bass, salmon, and even snapping turtles bounded out of the ice and they

## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

had fish to last them until the weather moderated. One old snapping turtle that came out was so large that when they dressed and cooked it, it made soup enough to last them a week. The ice did not break up that Spring until away in April. Some hunters crossed the river on the ice seventeenth of April that Spring. I will tell you now of some of the Indians that were left on the Kankakee and what became of little Mingo, the Indian boy. Mingo was the last Pottowattomie on the Kankakee. He had been captured by the Sioux and carried away to the Northwest. The old chief, the father of Niagara, did not like Mingo and was not inclined to confer the honor on him he had so fairly made, Niagara was his favorite child and she must be the wife of some distinguished personage. But the old chief was doomed to be outwitted by his daughter as many a father is in matters of this kind. At a time when the chief was absent holding a council with a neighborhood tribes of Sioux, Mingo picked out two of the chief's best horses

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

on which to escape with his girl to his own tribe. Niagara was ready and when the village was sunk into profound sleep she met him in a sequestered place, bringing a supply of provisions for the trip. In a moment they were in their saddles and away. They were not less than three long sleeps from his own people and would be followed by the Indians as long as there were any hopes of overtaking them. By morning, however, there would be a wide space between them and their pursuers and would make their escape entirely practicable if no mishaps should befall them on the way. The first night or next day in the evening they reached a camp of trappers and hunters and among them were old Kill-buck and LaBonta, Frenchmen who were trapping and buying furs, and from whom I obtained this narrative while camped on the Kankakee many years. The trappers were very much surprised to see two young Indians, a young man and a squaw, ride up and alight in the midst of them, apparently much fatigued and

## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

way-worn. Their presence required a prompt explanation, as they might belong to some marauders in that vicinity, who might give trouble. The young Indian made the pretext of friendship but he might be the spy of a hostile band who were meditating an attack on them, but what means this pretty young girl who is with him. War parties are never encumbered with women and the faded condition of their horses to some extent allayed their fears, as it was evidence that they were on a long and severe journey. Old Kill-buck interrogated him as to his object and destination and learned that he was a Pottowattomie and a remnant of the tribe of the Kankakee and Wabash Rivers, and who had been taken captive about a year before by the Sioux, and was carried away by them to their villages up in the northwest until a chance to escape to his own tribe presented itself. The young girl with him was Sioux, for whom he conceived a fondness while among her tribe. The attachment was not only mutual but that

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

they might consummate their bliss they found it necessary to elope. They were now flying to his native village to which another night's ride he thought would bring them. As they seemed very much fatigued and were out of provisions, the party very promptly tendered them the best they had which was consumed with good relish by the two lovers, and after they had enjoyed a little repose Kill-buck drew from them the incident and story just related. The trappers tried to persuade them to stay until morning and enjoy the refreshments and rest which they needed so much, but he replied that they had not slept any since they set out on their flight, nor did they even dare to think of closing their eyes before he should reach his own home. He knew that he would be pursued as long as there was the faintest hope of being overtaken and he also knew what his doom would be if he again fell into the hands of the Sioux. Having remained in the camp a short time, the two fugitive lovers were again on the wing flying over the green



## LAST OF THE POTTOWATTOMIES

prairies of the Kankakee marshes by the light of the moon. A full and beautiful moon animated and sustained by the purity of their motive, and the hope of soon reaching a place of safety and protection. They said they had good horses, good hearts, good weather, good country to travel over and above all a good cause and why not good luck. Kill-buck learned afterwards that they reached his home in safety and lived happily for many years. And that was the last that was ever heard of Mingo Doranto, the last of the Pottowattomies. Lenia Leota, his sister, was taken captive by some other hostile Indians and carried off to the far west toward the sunset and her fate was never known nor never will be until the great day of judgment. But like the stars that shed their glory ore a dark and troubled sea, like some long forgotten story cherished are thou still to me. There were two or three other Indians that lived and hunted and trapped on the river. One old Indian, Sheubana, lived on French Island and he was related to old

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Peashaway, who for many years lived on an island in the north marsh near the Cumbertand lodge. Sheubana and Peashaway lived on the head waters of the Kankakee near English Lake. When I last heard of them, the three Indians mentioned were the last of the Pottowatomies on the Kankakee.

CHAPTER XI  
HOME OF CHIEF KILLBUCK  
FRENCH ISLAND  
FOR MANY YEARS THE HOME OF CHIEFS  
SHEUBANA AND OLD KILLBUCK  
WHEN SETTLED BY A FRENCH  
FUR TRADER NAMED  
LA BONTA

The first white man to settle on French Island was a French fur trader by the name of LaBonta. He settled here for the purpose of trading and trafficking with the early hunters and trappers who had settled along the Kankakee at that time. As I have said before the War Department granted a few of the Pottowattomies, those who had been friendly to the whites, permission to stay in the Kankakee Region, There were two or three French families on the island who had settled there years before and for this reason it derived its name "French Island."

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

There were four or five Indians living on the island at this time and among them lived an old Indian and his aged squaw by the name of Sheubana. He was at the Ft. Dearborn massacre and saved a great many of the whites. He was over eighty years of age when found on this island by the white hunters in the winter of 1858 and of whom I obtained this narrative. Sheubana lived with his squaw and two little grandchildren in a wigwam on French Island where LaBonta found old Killbuck dead in the winter of 1857. "One day" said the hunter "whilst a couple of us were out hunting we passed the wigwam of Sheubana and found his poor old squaw and the children in great distress. They informed us that Sheubana had started down the river to hunt and been gone for three days and they knew that something had happened him or he would have been back. As they were out of meat and nearly starved we fed them the best we could and called out all our force and started to hunt for him. We had

## HOME OF CHIEF KILLBUCK

not gone far when one of the party heard a noise and going to the spot found the poor old Indian fast, with one leg in one of those traps that were used in those days. In looking for game in the woods and brush he ran against the trap and sprung it and got caught and being old and feeble, could not extract himself. And there the poor old soul had lain for three days and nights in the cold and rain without shelter or anything to eat, and the storm and the winds had beaten on his aged head. We shed many bitter tears over him. We extracted him as soon as possible and placed him on a litter made of sticks and barks and carried him as carefully and tenderly as a child to his wigwam. One of the party on returning had killed a deer which they carried along with them and they placed Sheubana and the deer at the door of the wigwam like Longfellow's Hiawatha had placed his deer at the feet of Minnehaha, the Laughing Waters. It would have done your soul good (if you had one) to have seen those

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Indians rejoice at the return of Sheubana. And it was then I could understand that beautiful saying in the Bible: 'There is greater rejoicing over one that is lost and found, and there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents and is saved than the ninety and nine who went not astray.' Suffice to say, they took as good care of Sheubana as they could and visited him every day. We had some linaments and salves, sticking plasters—as hunters always go prepared for accidents and we applied them freely and he mended quickly. But we had to leave and before leaving we left them everything we good spare and plenty of game. I afterwards heard that he got well, lived and died on the headwaters of the Kankakee. May his soul rest in peace." Many years ago this island was the hiding place of a bunch of counterfeiters and which part of the gang were captured at Bogus Island some years ago. In the Fall of 1859 Uncle Harl Seymour was trapping the French Island ground, in the bayou between the river

## HOME OF CHIEF KILLBUCK

and the landing. He was setting a trap at an old rat house in the bayou when he made a discovery. In sticking a talley stake in the old rat house it struck something hard and sounded hollow, like striking a stick against an old box. He removed the top off the rat house and found a small iron box covered with rust, sand and moss, from which rats used to build their houses. From the appearance of the box it had been hidden away in the bayou for many years and the rats had built quite a large house over it. In opening the box it was found to contain an outfit of counterfeiting tools, dyes, plates, leads and things that are used in the making of bogus money. Possibly this outfit belonged to part of the gang that was captured on Bogus Island in the early sixties. There are many dark, mysterious stories connected with the early history of this island. Many years ago a man by the name of Beeler was hunting in the swamps and his dogs ran a fox into a hole on the island and in digging out the den for the fox he dug up the

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

remains of two white men that had been buried for a number of years by unknown hands where history does not reach. In the Fall of 1844 as Rens Brainard was hunting on the river he discovered the body of a man lodged against some driftwood near the French Island Landing. He recognized the body as that of John Drago, a German who lived near the island. Drago had been murdered and two pieces of an old iron pump tied to his body and then cast into the river to be buried in the still waters and peaceful sands, with no marks of his last resting place. But the old iron pump that was used for a weight was not heavy enough to hold the body down to the sandy grave in which the murderer had placed it. The body arose and lodged against some old driftwood. Mr. Brainard reported the finding of the body of a man in the river at French Island to the Jasper County authorities who came and took up the body and made a postmortem examination and found that he had been murdered. To conceal the



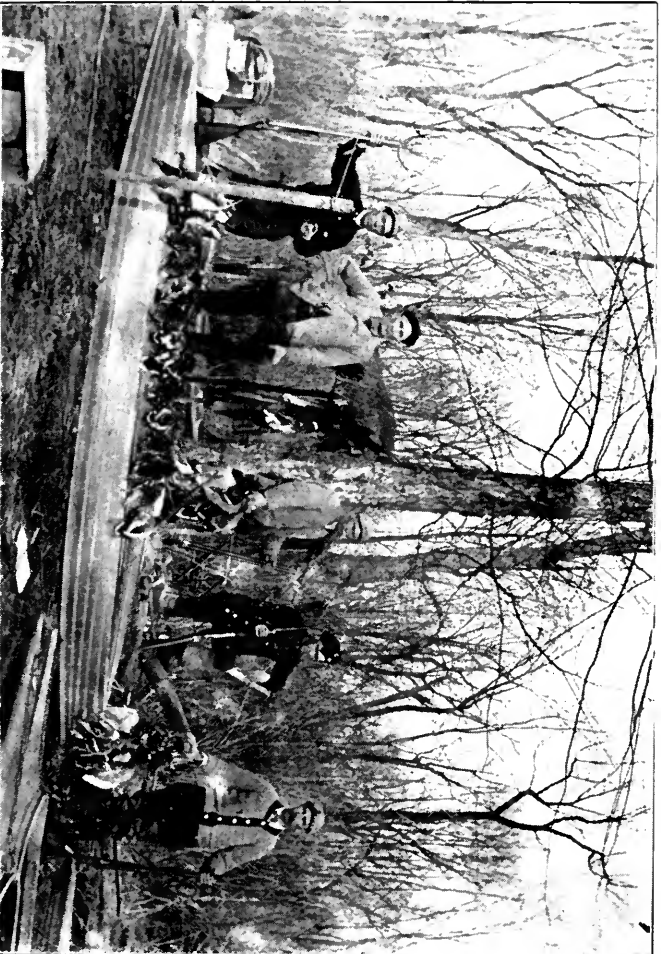
## HOME OF CHIEF KILLBUCK

crime, the body had been sunken to the body of the Kankakee River. The friends of the deceased soon went to work to solve the mystery and bring the murderer to justice. Strong suspicion led to the arrest of a Bohemian named Weberon Warteno, who lived near the island. Circumstantial evidence was strong against him. He finally confessed that he committed the crime and was tried in the Circuit Court, found guilty and was sentenced to be hung. On February 26, 1886, in the court-yard at Rensselaer, Jasper County, Indiana, he paid the penalty of the crime, thus ending the life career of Weberon Warteno, the murderer of John Drago.

About a mile and a half up the river from French Island and on the opposite side of the river is a big knob, too small to be called an island, that has more history to the square foot than any island on the river. Having an area of about 150 square feet and is in a dense swamp forest about 150 yards back from the river. It was a hard place to find for one who

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

is not very well acquainted with the location. Years ago it was known as Deserters Island from the fact that during the dark days of the rebellion it was a hiding place for deserters and fugitives from justice. Along in the eighteen nineties there was organized at Hebron, Indiana a hunting club known as the Columbian Club from the fact that the Columbian World's Fair was going on in Chicago that year, so they called their organization the Columbian Hunting Club. There were eight charter members of the old club, all business men of Hebron. J. C. Smith, president, George Gidley, secretary and treasurer, Jerry Sherwood, George Margison, Chas. Miller, Bart Siglar; L. E. Ripley and Ira V. Fry. They built their clubhouse on the little island that I have just described and called it Camp 6 to 2, from the fact that there were six democrats and two republicans. Two years later the membership had increased to sixty-two members, then the name was changed to Island Sixty-two from the fact that there were sixty-



In camp on Island Six to Two. Just in from the Hunt.

Left to right—Roy Childs, Barney Ross, Ed Riley, Harry Castle, Ira V. Fry.



## HOME OF CHIEF KILLBUCK

two members in the club and the big knob or island is known by that name to this day. Of the eight charter members of the old Columbian Hunting Club all have crossed over the divide but three, Siglar, Gidley and Fry. The island has long since been deserted as the swamp fires swept over the island some twenty years ago and destroyed the clubhouse, yet now and then a camp was made on the island during the duck shooting season, as shown in the cut. The island 6 to 2 is pretty much like Goldsmith's deserted village, forlorn and desolate, yet there are many happy memories that cluster around this little island camp of hunting days in the years gone by.

## CHAPTER XII

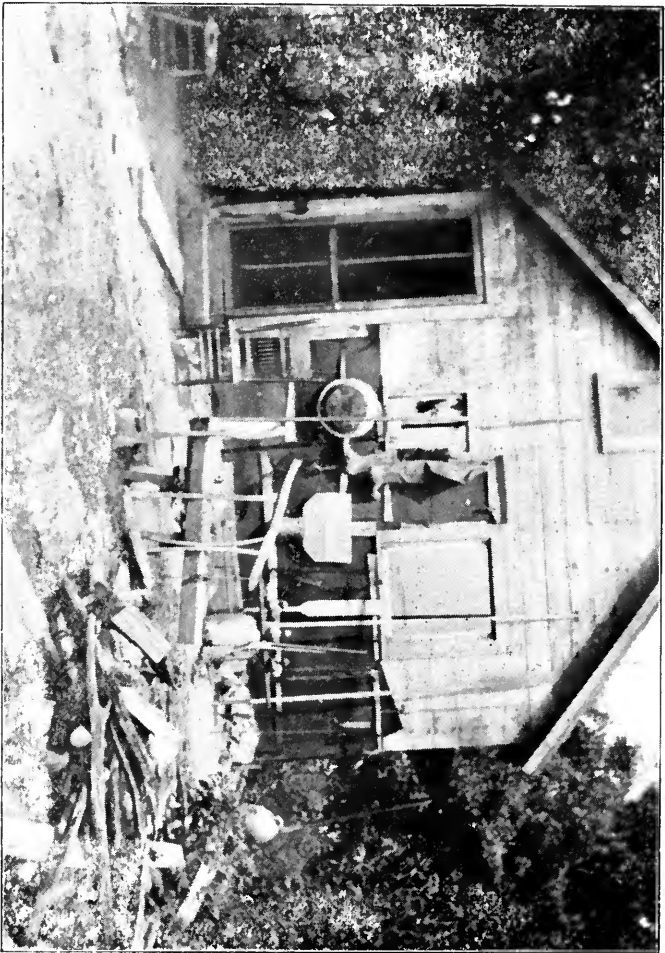
### INDIAN ISLAND

INDIAN ISLAND FIRST SETTLED

BY THE WHITES. SOLD TO A SAW MILL  
COMPANY WHERE THE FIRST STEAMBOAT  
WAS BUILT ON THE KANKAKEE

Indian Island in an early day was known as Mike's Island from the fact that there was a white man by the name of Mike Haskins who hunted with the Indians and camped on this island and whom I mentioned before. It was better known as Indian Island and was for untold ages the hunting and camping grounds of the Pottowattomie Indians. It is one of the oldest inhabited islands on the Kankakee and there was no Indian camp between the headwaters and the mouth of this historical river that had a better fortification than Indian Island,

A Typical Trapper's Shanty on Indian Island







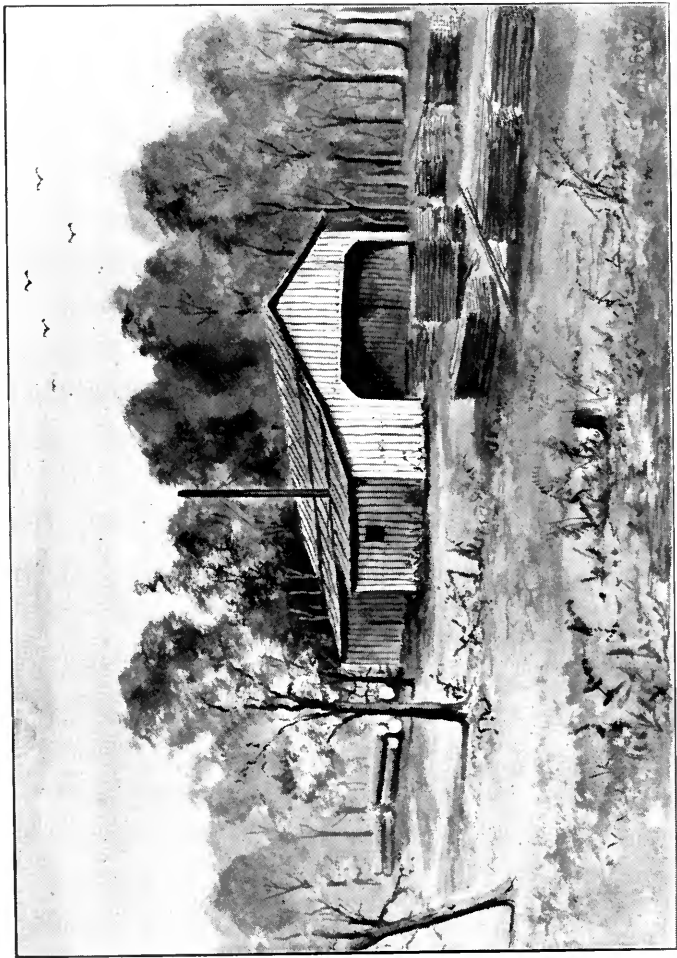
## INDIAN ISLAND

Haskins was with General Harrison on that famous march up the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers and it was this white hunter who fired the first shot at the Battle of Tippecanoe. On a misty, moonlight night in November, 1811, Haskins was on picket duty and as the Indians made their attack on the camp in the night by crawling upon the sleeping army. In the early part of the night it had been raining but along about midnight it broke away and the clouds were thin and scattering. There was a full moon and as the clouds were light they moved very rapidly and at times the moon shown in its full brightness. As the Indians had just been supplied with new guns and hatchets they were still very bright. The Indians made their attack about three o'clock in the morning and as they skulked and crawled upon the camp Haskins saw something glisten as the moon shone through the thin clouds and knew what it was. He pulled his gun to his shoulder, took aim at the glistening object, pulled the trigger, and an

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Indian bounded up out of the grass and yelled. This aroused the others and the battle began and the result of that shot is well known. The reader remembers I told in a previous chapter what brought Haskins to the Kankakee Swamps. In 1854 Aaron Broady Sr., and his son, John, entered the land. The land of which the island was originally a part belonged to the State and contains one hundred and twenty acres. The island itself only contains about thirty-five or forty acres. In the early days before the country was drained it was surrounded by water nearly the whole year round and the only way of getting to the island was with boat or by wading in from the north side. In the dry season when the water was low you could drive in with a team but in the winter season when the marshes were frozen up, getting in on the ice was the best time. The Broadies each built a log cabin and cleared up about ten acres and put it under cultivation. The island at that time was heavily timbered. The Kankakee swamps





The Indian Island Sawmill, 1866

## INDIAN ISLAND

were originally covered with a heavy timber, hard wood. On the dry land was found many varieties of oak and hickory, while on the bottom or swamps which were covered with water is the white and black ash, red and white beech sycamore, elm, soft maple, white cottonwood, white and yellow birch, and three or four varieties of swamp or water oak, whilst on the ridges is found the white and black walnut, three species of dry land oak, sassafras, paw-paws, waw-hoe, prickley ash, red haws, iron wood and dog wood. Most of this timber was valuable saw timber and on this island was a good site for a saw mill. So in 1866 a company was organized and known as the Indian Island Sawmill Company. It was made up of prairie farmers who owned swamp lands. They bought the island from the Broadies, paying them five thousand dollars in cash for it and in the winter of '66 when the marsh was frozen up they put the sawmill on the island and soon had it in operation. First they sawed the lumber to

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

build the mill and to put up a house for the mill boss and his men to live in. The house was built of white oak throughout except the floor and that was of white ash. The building is sixteen by thirty-four feet, one story, and is box sided with one by twelve inch white oak siding. The house has never been painted and is in good condition and in use at this writing. 1920. Several years ago there was a lean-to built on the east side of the house and in this building is where I spent ten years of my boyhood days. The mill business was good. In the winter when the swamps were frozen up thousands of logs were brought to the mill and sawed into lumber. But getting the lumber off the island was somewhat of a task as there were only certain times of the year that it could be hauled out to the dry land. In 1868 John Bissell and Ira Cornell, two of the heaviest stockholders in the I. I. S. M. Company, built and put on the river a steamer, The White Star, for the purpose of transporting lumber and cord wood down to



My Island Home on the Kankakee where I spent ten years of my boyhood days.

The house was built in 1866 by the I. I. S. M. Company



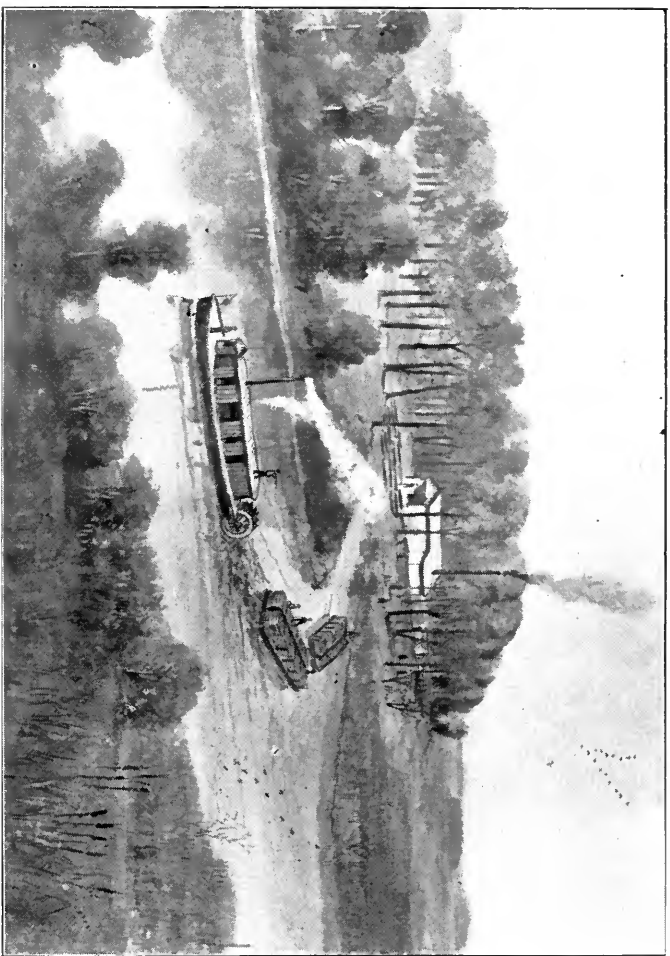


## INDIAN ISLAND

Momence, Illinois, and other points along the river where there was sale for their product. The island is about one hundred rods from the river and in order to get the steamer and flat boats from the island to the river they had to dig a canal eighteen feet wide and four feet deep. Father was put on the job as superintendent and with a gang of men with shovels dug what was known then and is to this day as the Bissell-Cornell steamboat canal. Adison E. Buck, of Hecron, Indiana, was the master boat builder. For several trips up and down the river Father was the pilot and John Bissel, captain. The freighting business on the Kankakee did not pan out just as expected and in the early seventies the steamer and flat boats or scowes, as they were called, were sold to a Momence party and fitted out for a pleasure boat. In '71 Father bought the Bissel stock in the I. I. S. M. Company which contained two-fifths of the shares in the company. The reader remembers that it was here where I left them in the opening chap-

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

ter of this story and it is only right and proper that I take them with me to my island home on the Kankakee. It was way back in the hazy and smokey old days of October, in 1871, those days that now seem to belong to another century and another manner of living. These were the days you could hardly see the sun on account of the dense clouds of smoke that would settle over the lowlands and thousands of acres of Kankakee marshes and swamps were on fire not only here but thousands of acres elsewhere were burning and not only the prairie, marshes and forests, but cities and towns were passing away in smoke. The year '71 was known as the dry season. The river was very low, the lowest it had been for years. The swamps and marshes in many places had dried out and the filling of self-moved earth of past centuries that had washed in from the highlands, sediments and decayed vegetation. This took fire and burned everything down to the sub-soil. Thousands of acres of marsh land were burned out in



The White Star, owned by Bissell & Cornell, the first steamboat on the Kankakee:  
loaded with lumber, coal and wood bound for Mokence, Ill., 1868



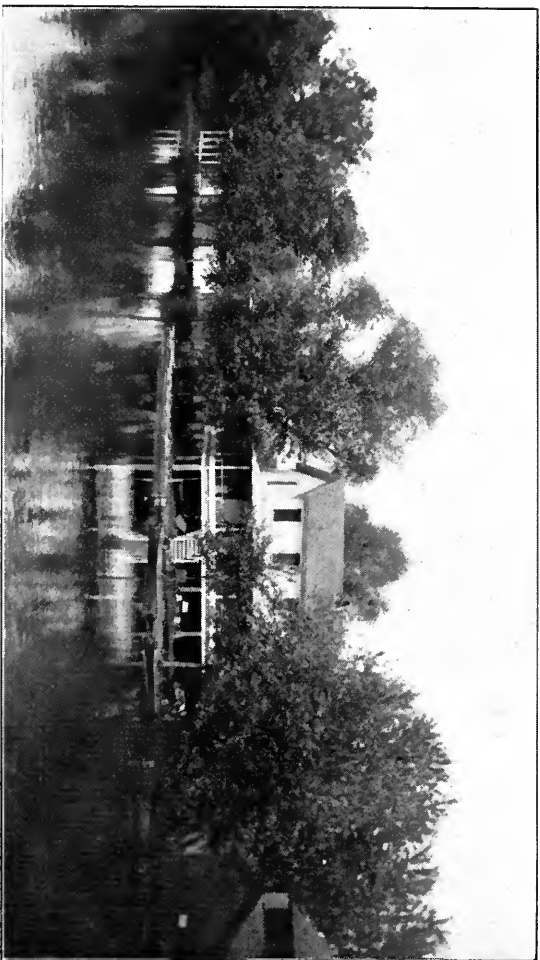
## INDIAN ISLAND

this way, leaving deep holes covering an area of two to twenty acres in a place and from one to five feet in depth and when filled with water made many small lakes and ponds. The day we moved to the island, October 9, was the hot day in Chicago, the great Chicago fire. It was on this island that many scenes of my boyhood experiences were painted on memory's canvas, as it was here that I began my early experiences hunting with a shot gun. During the early seventies and eighties this island was a great camping ground for hunters coming from far and near. I have met with hunters from all parts of the country who came here to shoot wild geese and ducks. In the Fall of '75, H. J. McSheehy, of Logansport, Indiana, made his first hunting trip to this island and the acquaintance of this newspaper man grew into inseparable friendship. It was Mr. McSheehy and his party that brought the first breech-loaders to the island and the next year his hunting partner, the late John Condon, a millionaire race-track man of Chica-

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

go, brought to our place the first air pillows that I ever saw. It was in a hunting boat on the Kankakee marshes and near our place that I first met one of Indiana's most famous writers, General Lew Wallace. He was with a party of Indianapolis hunters and was stopping at the Indianapolis, Terre Haute and Rockville club houses at Baum's Bridge. I might mention scores of Indiana hunters who have at some time in the years past hunted on the Kankakee.

Getting logs out of the swamp was very uncertain owing to various conditions of the swamps. Sometimes the swamp would freeze up early in the winter with high water and before it froze solid the water would leave the ice making it shelly and when the ice was in this condition it was dangerous getting around with a team. Under these conditions logging was no good that winter. Finally Father sold the saw mill to some parties in Valparaiso and they moved it to the big woods near Chesterton, Indiana. About 25 years ago Father sold the



Rockville, Terre Haute and Indianapolis Club House built in 1879. To the left is shown in part the White House Hunting Club Building, of Pittsburgh, Pa., built in 1878 at Baum's Bridge





## INDIAN ISLAND

island to Mr. Henry Kahler, of Chicago, who fitted up the place for a hunting and fishing resort. In 1908 a party of Chicago sportsmen organized what was known as the Kankakee Valley Hunting Club with Frank Nahser, president, Dr. P. M. Hoffman, vice-president, and Henry Stevens, secretary and treasurer. The club leased the hunting rights on several thousand acres of swamp land and built their clubhouse on Indian Island, where some of the members of the club made hunting trips to this place every year until the swamps were drained and duck shooting became a thing of the past. Then they sold the club house and it was taken down and moved away.

## CHAPTER XIII

### GRAPE ISLAND

TRAGEDY ON GRAPE ISLAND.

A TYPE OF TRAPS THAT WERE USED  
BY THE PIONEER HUNTERS FOR CATCHING  
WILD GAME BEFORE STEEL TRAPS  
WERE INVENTED.

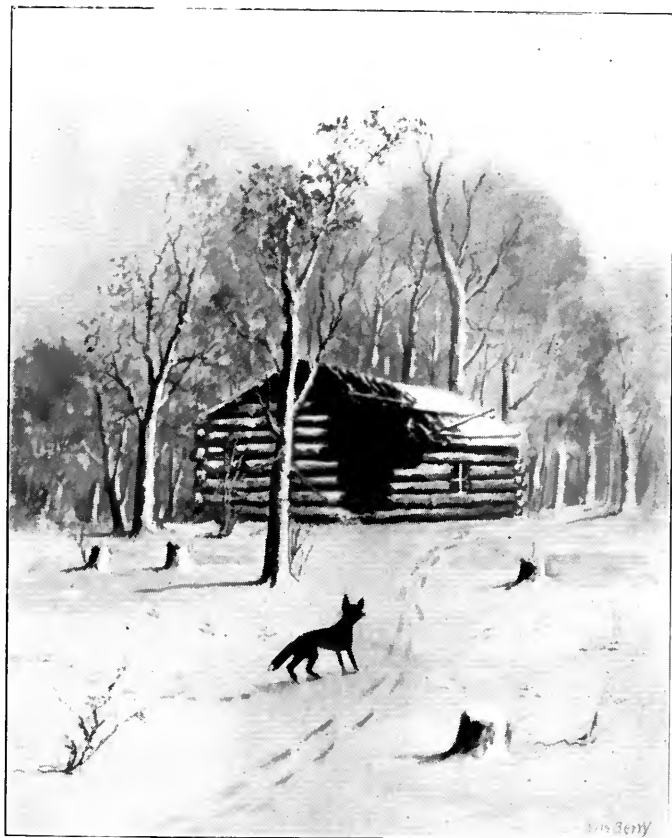
The history of Grape Island is a history with a dark page in it. Grape Island, as well as many other swamp islands, never made any permanent settlement but it was inhabited by hunters and trappers during the hunting season. The island was first inhabited by white men as early as 1844 by a man named Allen Dutcher; who built a shanty and hunted wild game and caught the fur bearing animals in rude traps. A few years later he used steel traps. Many other old time hunters have made this island their temporary home during the trapping season. The

## GRAPE ISLAND

tragedy on Grape Island put a dark page in its history, as there was one of the most cold-blooded murders committed on this island that was ever known in the history of the Kankakee Swamps. Early in the fall of 1876 John France and James Cotton, two trappers, had bought or traded for the Grape Island trapping ground. They built a log cabin, using green cottonwood logs and they covered it with a board roof. Prior to this, for many years they had been trapping the south marsh below Long Ridge. Their grub box was getting low, so Mr. France went to Hebron, Indiana, to get grub-supplies and he stayed at Hebron over night. The next day he returned to the island and found the cabin burned. The roof and part of one side and end was burned. On investigation he found everything inside burned and among the ruins he found the charred body of his partner. There was found a bullet hole in his skull, indicating that he had been murdered and the cabin set on fire to cover up the crime and destroy all trace of evidence.

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And as I said, the logs were green, therefor the cabin did not completely burn down. The purporter of this dastardly crime was never apprehended. Many theories were advanced for the motive of the crime but no facts, and it was the general supposition that he was murdered for to obtain his money, as they had recently sold their furs. They had chosen this particular time while one was absent from camp. Now I will tell you how the Indians and old pioneer trappers made their rude traps in early times. They would take a small log, eight or ten inches in diameter, and fifteen or eighteen feet long and split it about half or two-thirds of the way. Place the log on the run-way on the banks of a creek or river or wherever game is likely to pass and then take another small log or heavy stick for weight and it on top of the split pole and then about two feet from the end where the game is to be caught. Drive down two stakes, one on each side of the pole to keep it in place, and two more at the other end the same way, and for



Ruins of a Trapper's Cabin on Grape Island where  
James Cotton was murdered and burned  
February 7, 1877



## GRAPE ISLAND

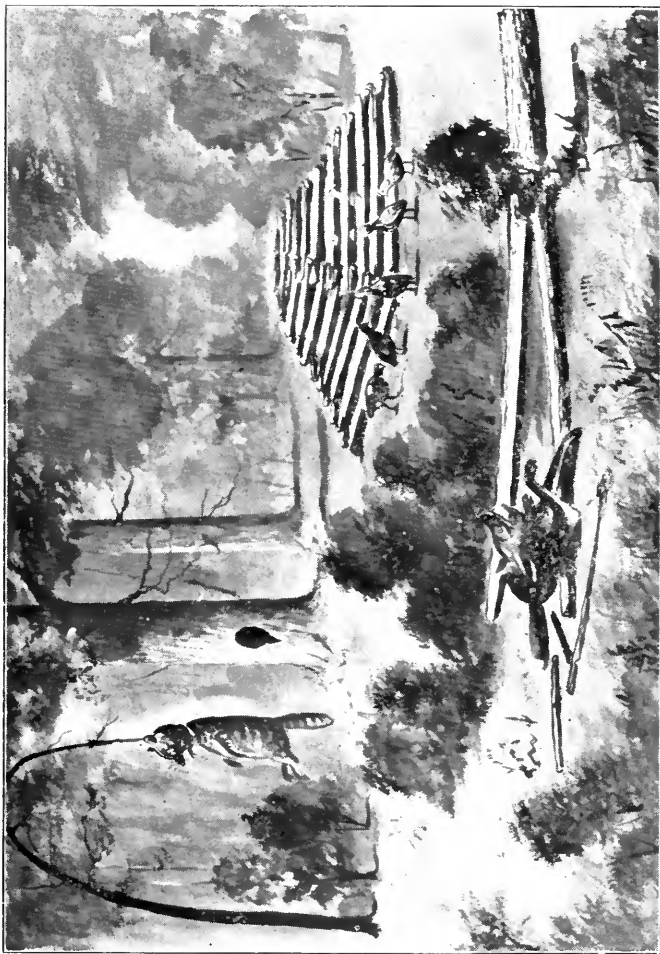
the same purpose. They then made a common stick trigger out of wood like you use to set quail traps, only much larger, called a figure 4. Then raise up the end of the split stick the necessary height, set the trigger and place the bait on the long stick and woe unto the wolf, fox, wild-cat, coon, mink or any other animal that takes hold of the bait or touches the trigger, for that springs the trap and down comes the upper sticks on the lower stick which is kept in place by the stakes on each side and catches the victims between them. That rude trap was rightly named when it was called a "Dead Fall" for in the morning you will find your game dead without the use of a club. We generally find no cause of blame or negligence on the part of the trap, but generally find the victim was either deaf, dumb or blind, and no cause to run in the way of a trap. We exonerate all that is attached to the traps from our blame for their sad misfortune. Another rude trap that was used for catching wild game without the use of

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spring or trigger in those early times was to cut a hole in a hollow tree about fifteen inches from the ground large enough for a lynx, wolf, fox or wild-cat to put his head in. Cut a crevice ten or twelve inches long below sloping almost to a point at the bottom, then hang your bait in the hollow the hole and wait for the results. Mr. Lynx, wolf, fox or wild-cat comes along, puts his head in the hollow for the bait and as he comes down to get the bait his head and neck comes down the crevice. In the morning you will find your game dead without the benefit of clergy. Another was the snare trap, or swinging trap, as they were sometimes called, were among the first used on the Kankakee in early times. They would take a sapling and bend it so as the top would reach the ground and it was held in that position by means of one stick trigger. A stake was driven in the ground and squared on two sides. One side of the stick had a notch cut in so as to fit on the square side of the stake, the other end was fastened to







Some of the rude traps that were used by the early hunters and trappers on the Kankakee before steel traps were invented

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

the sapling by a hook notch. The bait was fast to the trigger so it could not be moved without pulling the stick out of the notch in the stake. To the sapling they would fix their snares made of buck-skin strings, such as was used in those days. Then they would make quite a number of loops and place them all around the bait, so as the game could not get the bait without putting its head through one or more of the snares; and woe unto the wolf or any other animal that touches the bait, for that pulls the stick out of the notch in the stake that holds the sapling and when you return you will find your game swinging in the air several feet above the ground as shown in illustration. One more of these famous old-time game catchers that was used on the Kankakee long before steel traps were in use or even thought of were what they called a game-pen. It was built of logs--top, sides and bottom. It was built in a side hill or bluff, up to the level of the ground. Then they had a trap door on top. The top of the pen was covered

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

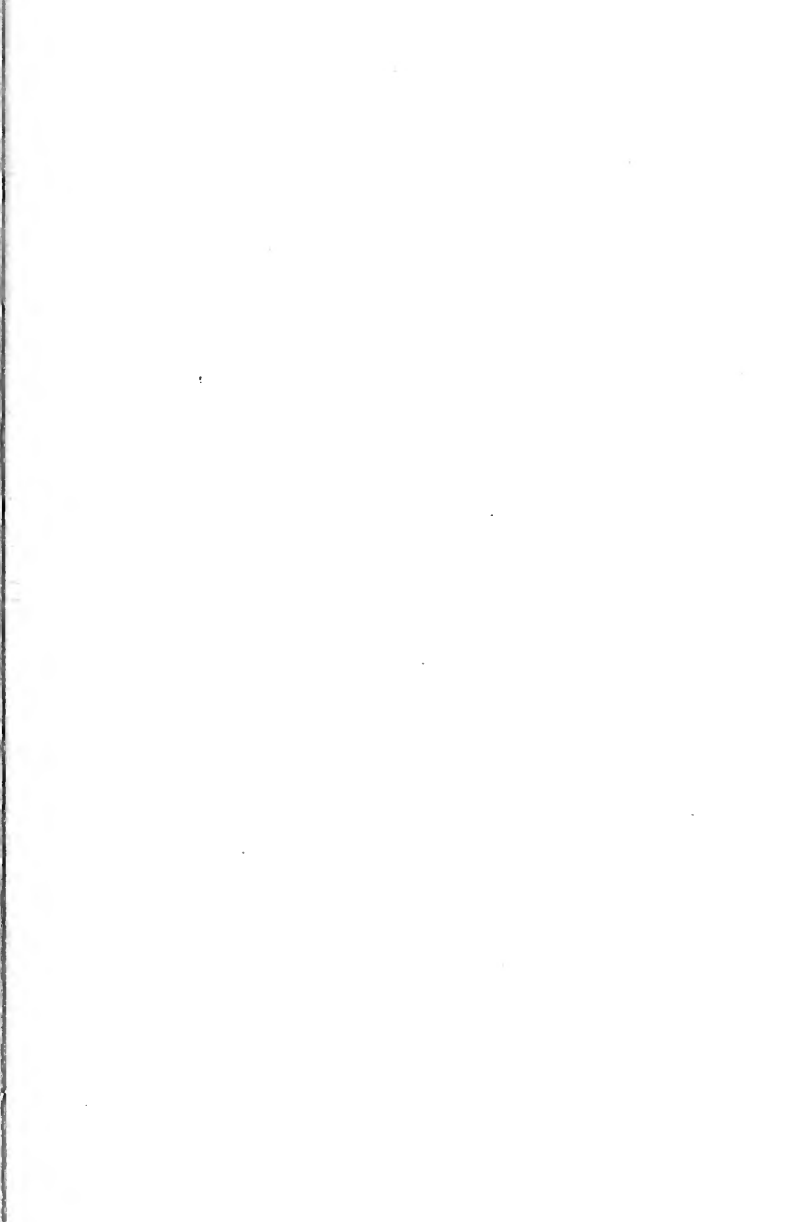
with leaves or grass to hide suspicion and over the door they hung up the bait, usually a piece of venison. When a hungry wolf, lynx or fox came along they would stop to feed on the bait and they would have to pass over the trap door. When they were about to take hold of the venison the game would step upon the door. It would turn and down they went into the pen. In early times when there was plenty of such game along the Kankakee swamps it was not an uncommon thing to take three or four wolves out of the pen at one time and sometimes a mixed lot of game is caught, such as wolves, foxes and wild-cats. Many years ago some trappers had a trap of this kind on a little island in the North Marsh and they took out of the pen at one time two wolves, three foxes and a wild-cat. In an early day it was said that a few panthers were caught in this way on the uplands, as the panther did not inhabit the swamps on account of the water, as they were not much for water. But a number were caught in the big woods near

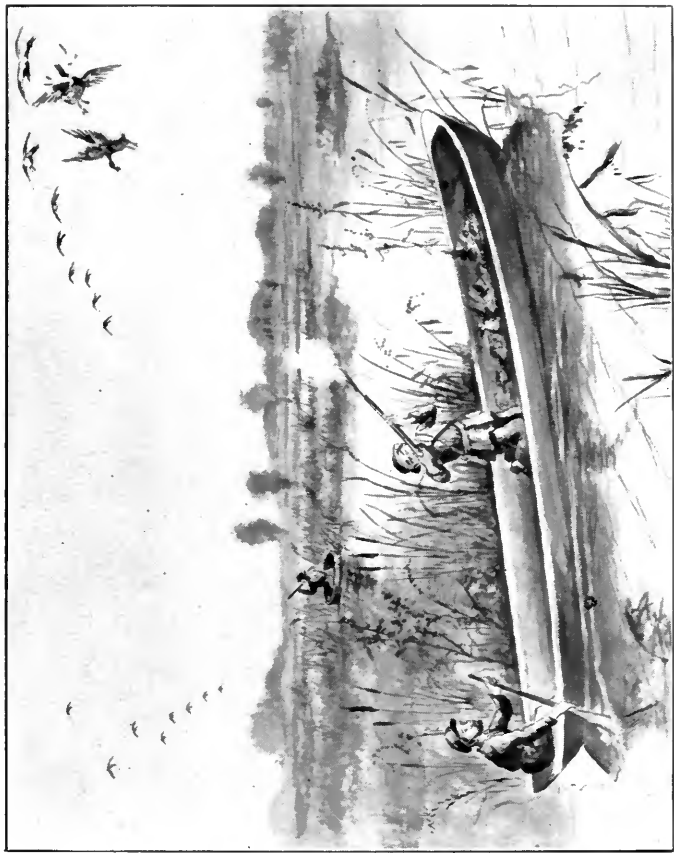
## GRAPE ISLAND

Lake Michigan. When the steel traps came in use the old rude traps were almost forgotten and are remembered as a thing of the past. About thirty-seven years ago I built and used a pen trap on the foot-hills of the Rockies to catch mountain lion and bear. I also built and used a dead-fall on the Kankakee to catch a red fox that was so cunning I could not catch it with a steel trap. All old trappers know that a fox is the most cunning animal in the world to catch in a steel trap. I will tell you how we used to catch wild turkeys in a trap. We would build a pen out of poles eight or ten feet square and two feet high, and cover it with poles and brush. But before building the pen begin about ten feet from one side and dig a trench, tapering it under the edge of the pen just deep enough for the turkey to get in by stooping down. You continue the trench on inside of the pen a couple of feet until the trench is not more than six or eight inches deep at the end. You then scatter corn in the trench to the end and around in the pen.

## GRAPE ISLAND

The turkeys come along and see the corn. They start in the trench, eating as they go along, and stooping under the edge of the pen and jumping up on the high part for the corn and there they are. The poor simple things never think of jumping down and passing out again as they came in. There you have them. I must say that I never could see much providence, sense or instinct in this matter and it is a worse case than any of the traps in the business that I know of.





My First Duck Shooting from a Boat and a Barrel House Blind  
on the Kankakee Marshes



CHAPTER XIV  
BARREL-HOUSE BLIND  
SHOOTING  
DUCKS FROM A  
BARREL-HOUSE BLIND. THE  
FIRST TUB SHOOTING ON  
THE KANKAKEE  
MARSHES.

Of course you remember where the last chapter ended. Methinks I hear some old-time hunter say; "You bet I do." These reminiscences of deer hunts related left enough old time recollections to keep me from forgetting as long as I live where the last chapter ended. It happened during the winter hunt of seventy-four and the story of what transpired and some other experiences have been told in trappers' shanties and in hunters' lodges. As I have promised at some time to tell you how we shot geese and ducks on the open marshes, so here goes. My

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

first duck shooting trip to the South Marshes was made in October, 1872. As a boy of twelve years I had done a little shooting in the ponds and on fly-ways at our island home but never had been out on a big hunt like this before, as I termed it when any mention was made of this trip. I found the hunting entirely different on the big, open marsh than what I was used to around the island. Ducks were not very plentiful on the marsh that fall so my first hunting trip was of short duration. A year or so after this I was sitting in a trapper's shanty behind a stove, it was a cold winter night, listening to hunters' yarns and stories, told by a party of deer hunters who were in camp on the Island. They were spinning hunters' yarns and discussing the excellent hunting conditions of the Kankakee region, as two members of the party were old-time hunters of the swamps for many years. While the old story-teller had stopped to get his wind, Bill Jones, a marked hunter, turned to me with the question: "How would you enjoy a duck

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

hunt on Wolf Lake just as soon as the ice goes out?" In less than ten minutes the trip was all arranged and the start was to be made as soon as the ice was out of the marshes. Wolf Lake was noted for its early duck shooting on account that the ice goes out sooner than it does on the shallow water marsh, as the winter snows and soft winds will soon melt it out long before it does on the shallow water where there is more grass and willows frozen in the ice that holds it down under the water so that the sun and winds never touch it. It is a long time going out. These marshes have attracted the attention of sportsmen from all parts of the country who would pilgrimage to this region year after year to shoot geese and ducks. It was very seldom that a mistake was made by coming to this place for successful duck shooting. The hunters pulled down their birds with distressing regularity, although it is practically prairie shooting which is so deceiving to the novice. From this fact that in later years the shooting is done from

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

a portable blind called a sink-tub and which is commonly called tub-shooting - rather than from a boat or a blind. In the fall shooting there is plenty of grass, flags and marsh willows growing in the shallow water marshes for a blind but when the marshes froze over the grass is set on fire by hunters to drive the game out and after the fire has run over the ice covered marshes everything is burned off slick and clean above the ice so in the Spring shooting there is nothing for a blind. As the days of the long, cold winter were passing and the clear, sunny days of Springtime had come and melted the ice out of the marsh I began to get restless, more so as the days lengthened into Spring. I knew well it was the call of the wild, as it gets hold of me about every Spring and Fall and when I was a boy it got me oftener than that. Finally I hit upon the absolutely right thing in my estimation; a practical, sensible sink tub. It consists of a kerosene barrel by sawing the top of the barrel off at the bulge. Then I went to a blacksmith shop and

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

had two rings made and bolted to the barrel for stake rings and with two stakes four or five feet long with hooks on driven in the ground and then hooked into the rings on the barrel to hold it down, just leaving the top of the barrel high enough above the surface so that the water could not splash over. In case the water was shallow a hole was dug to lower the tub to the water level. If the water was not too deep the hunter would wade out to his blind, otherwise he would be rowed out in a boat. In shooting from a sink tub blind one has to shoot over decoys and a hunter with a good call and a bunch of decoys was pretty sure of a string of birds to take to camp. By the time the ice was out of the marsh I had everything ready for the start. The ice usually goes out about the tenth to the twentieth of March. Sometimes it is earlier than that and sometimes later. Finally the day for the start came. We made camp on a small island in the marsh near a large island called Round Grove and near a large, open body of

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

water called Goose Pond, which bordered on the swamp timber line. After supper I set my barrel house blind and had all made ready for the morrow. I lay down on a marsh hay bed to dream of the long line of quacking ducks coming to the decoys. I was up early the following morning. Placing a dozen wood decoys in a basket with my powder flask and shot pouch and with my No. 10 double barrel muzzle loader on my shoulder I departed for the blind which I reached before sunrise. In going through the marsh to the blind I ran across the remains of an old blind that had been used the year before with a stake driven in the ground and a half circle board. Part of the head of a nail keg was nailed on the stake still standing. With my hatchet I cut the stake off at the water's edge and put it in my barrel house blind, It fitted nicely and made a good seat. I placed the decoys about twenty yards in front of the blind. Stepping inside the barrel I picked up my old fowling piece. placing caps on the tubs, snapped

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

them to make sure that the tubs were clean and dry. I always did this before loading a gun that had not been used for sometime. Then carefully loading with four drams of powder and one and one-eighth ounce of No. 6 shot I was set for whatever came along. As the sun arose above the timber of the swamp and over the marsh horizon like a big ball of brass, the spike-tails and wegians began to fly in countless numbers. A few shots had been fired on the marsh a mile or so above where I was by some campers on Round Grove. This put the ducks to flight. It was quite interesting to watch these movements among the thousands of spikes and wegians. I heard the quack of two green-heads. It took me some time to locate them among the spike-tails and wegians. But answering my call they decoyed nicely and as they poised in the air before alighting they made an easy mark and they both came tumbling down at the first shot. Shortly after this a flock of canvas-backs came over the decoys, leaving

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

three of their number behind. I did fairly well after my return to the blind on the second morning, for I had a double shot at a bunch of pintails. Then while my gun was empty there came to the decoys the largest flock of black ducks I ever saw. Without exaggeration I believe there was over a hundred of them. They lit among the decoys and all around my sneak barrel, some within twenty feet of where I sat with an empty gun. Imagine, if you can, how queer I felt while sitting there like a bump on a log. Those that lit close by eyed me anxiously. Finally I began very carefully to load the gun. I got the powder in all right but did not have room enough in the barrel to get the ramrod out and get the wads down on the powder without exposing my arms above the barrel. Those near me gave the warning signal and took flight. In a moment all were gone. I finished loading but never fully recovered over my mishap of losing the best chance I have ever had in all my hunting experiences for a big shot at



## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

black ducks, Shortly after this a large lone duck came from the direction of the swamp timber and came over in the decoys and as he poised and curved his wings to light I let him down with the first barrel and when I waded out to pick him up I found a duck unknown to me. It was a large brown bird with a large flat bill, looking very much like a spoon-bill. None of the hunters on the marsh that saw it could tell the name of the duck. The morning of the third day was rough and cold, the wind was blowing strong from the northwest and not many ducks were seen out on the open marsh in stormy and windy weather for they would stay in or near the timber. Yet I had fairly good shooting for two or three hours in the morning. As I was sitting in my sink barrel blind thinking how much more comfortable it was than standing in the water in a grass blind all day, I heard a loud "swish" of wings. Looking out I saw five large ducks over the decoys. I arose, gave them the right barrel and two fell dead and a

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

clean miss with the second. I waded out and picked up two black ducks and here is where I discovered that there are two varieties of black ducks just as surely as two and two make four. By ten o'clock it was getting very rough. The waves would splash over the top of the barrel. I gathered up my decoys and made a bee-line for camp. I had in all forty-six ducks and in that number there were eight varieties of the duck family. Many of the varieties that I killed then are now extinct. I would never believe that in fifty years those great myriads of migration ducks could have been exterminated. In years gone by I have often wondered where so many species of the duck family sprang from, so much more so than the dry land birds. The book name of many birds is derived from habits and their dress, as the green-head mallard, the spike-tail which has only two long pointed feathers in their tail. The wood-duck, sometimes called the tree-duck from the fact that they build their nests in old snags and hollow

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

trees and sometimes they are called the nut-hatch, but I have never heard where she got the name. But like any hunter who kills a duck and does not know the name of it he can offer a guess. The wood-ducks build their nests in hollow trees. Sometimes the flying squirrel or wood-mice will carry a few butter-nuts or beach nuts in a wood-duck's nest to crack at his leisure and perhaps some early observers found these nuts in a wood duck's nest and jokingly accused the duck of trying to hatch them. I have come to the conclusion that this is the way that so many new names of ducks have sprung up in later years. A few days later we broke camp and moved out of the marsh, scarcely a duck was to be seen. This was the first portable blind or tub-shooting ever done on the Kankakee. A year or so later there were scores of sink tubs in use but of a different type. They were made of galvanized sheet iron mostly instead of an old kerosene barrel, and while I do not want to claim anything new in shooting

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from a blind, for that mode of hunting is as old as man, only an improvement of the system during those early days. They were many marked hunters and very few of their names I can recall except the Cannons, Roots, Morehouses, Starkeys and scores of others whose names I have forgotten. Harry, my half brother, was a star wing-shot and last but not least were the Gilson boys, Ed and Billy, who were believed by many to be the best shots on the river. I remember one time, many years ago, before breech-loaders came in use, one of them killed one hundred and ninety ducks and eight geese in one day's shooting using a muzzle loader. It was during the early seventies that Kankakee region reached the zenith of its glory as a hunting resort. My first shooting was done from a boat. In some seasons we would have splendid shooting and in others not so good, this depended on the weather conditions. The marshes seemed to be the natural feeding grounds, especially for the diving ducks. But

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

the dredging of great ditches through the lowlands letting the water off caused the glory of the Kankakee Marshes to depart. I only wish I had the ability to describe and make you feel the beauty of these marsh islands to those of my readers who may not have seen them. Picture the prairie marshes for miles and miles in length and from two to twelve miles in width and dotted with hundreds of small islands and ridges containing from one-half to twenty acres. The one that we were camped upon contained about four acres. The lofty sycamore with its white bark can be seen for miles as they rose above the mammoth oak and down from its limbs dropped ropes of creeping grape-vines, while there were many others covered with huckleberry bushes. There were many different species of birds which inhabited these islands. Among the game birds were several species of the snipe family which nests and rears its young during the nesting season. The wood-duck also also inhabited these islands and a half dozen or

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more other varieties of ducks nesting on or near an island. Also, in early times it was a great nesting place for wild geese and for this reason a portion of this great marsh in northern Jasper County along the Kankakee Swamp timber was known as Goose Lake but generally known among the latter-day hunters as Goose Pond, where thousands of geese would flock to roost at night and in the morning they would leave for the feeding grounds, usually on some farmer's wheat or cornfields. When they would rise from the water the air was filled with birds and the flop of their wings as they rise have the sound of an express train rumbling over a bridge. Now I have tried to picture this great pond at twilight or daybreak. It stands out in memory as one of the most beautiful I have ever seen in a country abounding in marshes, a lake where the surroundings were not marred by man and given over to the wild things that love the silent places. Another time I was out duck hunting and we had in camp a hunter of

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many years experience but when he came to camp in the evening his string would show only a few birds and when asked what was the reason he said he didn't know unless it was that the feathers carried away the birds. This happened to me many times and "Understand, old-timers. I am not telling you that every shot I fired brought down a bird." Not by any means, for many were the foxy old birds that I shot at and missed or as the old-time hunters termed it, another case where the feathers carried away the meat. As times passes and years unfold, it is a matter of intense interest to the water-fowl hunters how certain varieties of duck grow scarce and others come into prominence, which in early years was unknown to the hunting fraternity. This is remarkably true of several species and particularly applies to nearly every variety of large kucks known in the Kankakee River Region. As I have said, many varieties of ducks, plentiful fifty years ago, are now almost exterminated and where we ran our boats over

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the marshes and where I sat in my kerosene barrel blind and shot ducks almost fifty years ago now stands the farmer's house in the corn-fields and the scene of those by-gone days still clings to my memory. How often do my thoughts drift back to those camp days. What a lot more fun can a fellow have in a hunter's lodge or trapper's shanty costing about fifteen dollars amidst its natural surroundings, than in a ten thousand dollar mansion with its artificial environments. Every hunter has a hobby and some have two, as it was with me in my youthful days. It has been said that hobbies belong to the human and are a part of the Creator's birthright. The human nature glories of possession, both good and bad and all valuable. It has been said by scholarly men that hobbies of sane men often discount the dreams of an idiot, nevertheless we have them just the same. I loved hunting with a gun on the waters and dry land, I also enjoyed fully as well hunting with a good dog on the ice. Now before breaking



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camp and leaving the Kankakee hunting grounds to the agriculturist, which is now passing into its third stage of development, I want to tell the readers of another type of hunters known as the fur hunters, and their hunting outfit consisted of a good dog or two, an axe, a shovel and a rat spear. I have told the reader how we hunted the deer, shot the wild geese, trapped wild animals. Now I will relate how we hunted the ring-tail, raccoon, mink and muskrat, and occasionally an otter but not very often as they stay close to deep water. If there was snow on the ice the coon and mink were tracked to their dens and the muskrat was speared in his house with a long two-pronged spear jabbed through the house where the rats stayed during the day. But the coon and mink were mostly hunted with dogs. Scores of fur hunters who hunted the swamps with dogs never hunted with a gun at all and the hunter who owned a good coon or mink dog in those days had something that was valuable. One

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time whilst in camp on one of those swamp islands quite near our camp was a half-breed Indian's hut and with the hope of securing a few matches I called at his hut and found that he was the owner of a very valuable coon dog, judging from the number of hides that I saw sticking around in the hut. Not seeing any dog around I inquired what kind of a dog he hunted with. He said that he had an imported coon dog from Missouri. Now believing that many of my readers who are lovers of a good dog will be interested with the true meaning of a good coon, dog I will briefly relate the story told by the owner of the dog "Muck," as that was his name. He was a black-tan English fox hound and was born in the Ozark Mountains in southern Missouri and in those days the Missouri mountains were alive with raccoons and hunting coons was sort of hereditary with Muck. When but a few days old and before his eyes had opened he and his two brothers were bought by a Kankakee hunter and brought to the Kanka-

## BARREL-HOUSE BLIND

kee Swamps and turned over to a bull bitch to be mothered and cared for. With their keen scent of inheritance and the viciousness of their foster mother they were made the most famous hunting dogs that ever hunted in the Kankakee Swamps and those puppies with no pedigree other than that of a Missouri hound, sold for one hundred and fifty dollars each. Their qualifications, nerve and size for the hunters of coon and mink in the swamps on the ice in those days made them valuable not only for coon and mink hunting but they were trained for other game--deer, wolves and foxes. One of them fell into the hands of a noted deer hunter, Ed McNeel, and when the dog was eleven years old he refused an offer of two hundred dollars, offered by some Michigan deer hunter who wanted the old dog to train some young ones. I have an old note book made of hunting events of years ago. Its covers are tattered, dirty and faded, and on the outside shows plainly upon its shabby service the ravage of time and evi-

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dence of wear and tear, But its pages are full of happy memories of by-gone days and recollections stir me as I open the old book. What a blessed gift is memory of all the many gifts of an all-wise, beneficent Creator. The gift of memory I believe to be the most precious of all. A person may lose his possessions, be deprived of sight or the loss of a limb but once having seen and enjoyed these things the memory will remain whilst life and intellect last and can be recalled at most any time. When I turn over the dim and faded pages I am back again in the old Kankakee Swamps. What events in hunting you can remember, Friend Hunter. What glorious happenings occurred when you were present to behold them. Every hunter keeps in his memory to the last some wonderful performance of the hunting grounds. He has only to shut his eyes and see again the shots or catch, just as it was made, even though it might have been forty, fifty or even seventy-five years ago and the smallest details of the great achievements will

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never pass from his recollections. Every old-time hunter has a string of such memories to think back upon. What were the most wonderful happenings of all, it has been said, that the hunters love best the trapping side of hunting. While this might be true from the financial side yet ask any old timer to tell of five great events of happenings of things he saw and four of them will be tales of hunting with the gun. Think it over and see if it isn't strictly true. The memory of hunting glories lingers longer and the thoughts of many great shots made will come sooner to the recollection than any achievement made with the rod or traps. The hunters who were there (I wasn't) have always claimed that the greatest of all rifle shots ever made in the Kankakee Swamps was made on Long Ridge about fifty years ago by a hunter named Hall, who is now dead. Hall was a native of Jasper County and a deer hunter by trade. He and Harrison Dalson hunted deer together a great deal and were together on the day that

## PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE KANKAKEE

Hall made the great shot. Two deer came dashing by Hall, running in opposite directions, and when they came opposite of each other Hall took aim and fired. The ball passed through the body of the first deer killing it instantly and struck the other deer under the shoulder between the first and second ribs and lodged near the heart and a few bounds more and it fell dead. A few days later Mr. Dalson was out hunting in the swamp when he came upon two big bucks fighting. They had locked their horns so tight together that they could not separate themselves, he shot one and knocked the other in the head with his hunting axe. He hung them up and went home and told Hall that he no longer had the best of him, for he had killed two deer with only one shot. Hall, wouldn't believe it at first but when he could not find any bullet hole in one of the bucks, only where it had been hit on the head with the pole of an axe. Yet he was entitled to claim the champion shot having killed his two, running

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with one bullet. Many years ago Father killed two, a doe and a fawn, at one shot. They were standing still. He had trailed them into a red-brush thicket where the brush was so thick that one could not see only a short distance. The red-brush is a species of scrub-oak that grows on the sand ridges. They hold their leaves on all winter, making it a great hiding place for deer. Looking under the bushes Father saw what he thought was a deer's legs but could not see any part of the body. Raising the trusty old rifle to his shoulder he aimed where he thought its body would be and fired. At the crack of the gun away bounded a deer. He went to where he thought the deer was standing and there lay one too dead to kick. To solve the mystery he looked at the tracks of the one that ran away and discovered great splotches of blood on the snow. Following the trail thirty-five or forty yards he found the doe kicking her last kick. The bullet had passed through the fawn and lodged in the shoulder of the doe. As

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they stood side by side, only a few feet apart, they were killed by the same bullet. The incidents just mentioned are only a few of the memorable shots. What hunters have seen such doings, or rather, where is there any hunter who never saw things just as wonderful?



CHAPTER XV  
DRAINING THE SWAMPS  
WHERE THE  
INGENUITY OF HAS  
DEFEATED THE DESIGNS OF NATURE  
BY ERASING THE KANKAKE SWAMPS OFF THE  
MAP. THE OLD RIVER AND THE  
ONCE FAMOUS HUNTING  
GROUNDS A PAST  
MEMORY

It is not my purpose to write the story of the reclaiming or rather, the story of the new Kankakee River, as it is a history in itself. In our childhood we were taught by our teacher and the geography that this vast region was a great swamp and by the term "swamp" it means a low depression in the earth's surface and this was filled with water and mud and by applying the term "swamp" this vast Kankakee Region made a very large mud-hole. This teaching was a great hinderance to the settling up of this country and many men and women still cling

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tenaciously to that teaching. Up to a quarter of a century ago any mention of the Kankakee Swamps called up visions of a region of limitless extent of swamps and marshes, uninhabited and desolate, a country always associated with tales of suffering and death, of unfriendly savages and wild animals. For years this country was passed over by hunters and prospectors and was considered worthless, but the marvelous transformation which has taken place in the last three decades in the land of silence and sunshine, furnishes one of the most interesting and inspiring pages in the history of our great Kankakee development. The Kankakee swamp is vanishing from the map. Its boundaries have shrunk and it is no longer presenting a formidable barrier to the growth and progress of northwestern Indiana. There was at that time several hundred thousand acres of this water-soaked, craw-fish country that has been reclaimed by means of dredging, that are now producing bountiful harvests. Every year hun-

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dreds of people are residing on farms now that a few years ago were musk-rat ponds. Years ago it was a very common thing to hear of some Eastern speculator being taken in by one of those swamp-land swindlers. They would plat out a tract of swamp land, go East to find their victim and trade or sell a tract of this land to some speculator. One Mr. Jones, of Dayton, Ohio, was taken in by some swindler in this way and when he came to look for his land he could not find it as it was covered with water from one to five feet deep and the way that Jones told it was more amusing than true. Jones said he was a victim of misplaced confidence. He had traded for a tract of land on the Kankakee River and was making a trip down the river in search of his land. He said that it had two good houses on it and was near a town. I should judge from his description of the country that he was looking for his farm. That the town and houses must of been musk-rat houses and the town must have been a rat-town. I would

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term it such from the inhabitants of the place as I have experienced just such a joke myself many years ago whilst I was an overland freighter on the western plains. We would work this gag on the tenderfoot that would come along inquiring if there were any settlements or settlers living anywhere near. The answer was most always in the affirmative and if they would go to such and such a place there was quite a settlement and a large town. The tenderfoot on going to the place directed would find it inhabited by a lively little four-footed tribe known as prairie dogs. (I have hunted for these towns myself.) This is about such a farm that Mr. Jones had traded for instead of two good farms and houses. They were musk-rat houses. It was in sixty-nine (the wet season) when Jones made his trip down the Kankakee and the resources of the country were not so well developed then as they are now, and his story of what he saw is more amusing than jest, so far as the truth is concerned. He says Indiana is

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a delightful country or will be when it is finished. The State is big enough and a considerable portion of it has a good foundation. What it wants is building up. There is plenty of water and sand, pucker-brush, roots and cotton trees, swamps and marshes and a wonderful vegetation of grass and vines and wild flowers. What it wants is more land, at least what a Hoosier calls land. But it is coming on. Thousands of acres of this Kankakee Marsh where the musk-rat houses used to stand now stands the golden grain shocks. What the change that will be made in the next quarter of a century is I leave to the reader to guess at. Mr. Jones then goes on to say that he did not trade for a musk-rat town or a cotton-wood grove. Being discouraged because anyone could have a town who would take a boat and go out in the swamp with a surveyor and make a map of a musk-rat pond, big house and population, The White Star was making a trip up the river to Baum's Bridge when she met Mr. Jones, the Ohio land

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speculator, who was sailing over the marshes hunting for his farm. The steamer had struck a snag and the crew was at work getting loose when Jones and his party came up. He began telling the crew how tired he was of water and marshes and more water and scraggley brush and more water. Finally he bluffed the captain of the *White Star* by saying: "Captain, what is the average price of land up in this part of the country. By the gallon, I think." Mr. Jones was tired of his Kankakee land speculation when he made his trip down the Kankakee. Many other Easterners have been taken in the same way by buying or trading Kankakee land without seeing it and when they come to look for the land it is out of sight, covered with water. Sometimes this region was called "the land that God forgot to finish." To my mind it was finished just as the Almighty intended it to be, it was left for man to finish. And now I am going to tell you in part how it was done. By the ingenuity of man, assisted by the State gov-

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ernment, is due the credit of erasing the swamp from our map and converting the country, which God forgot, into pleasant places for the habitation of man. At this time there was between four and five hundred thousand acres of this land practically water-soaked and worthless. Now it is drained by these engineering workers. This work of the State Reclaiming Service affords many examples of man's audacity of defeating the designs of nature. This draining movement originated way back in the early fifties when the Governor of Indiana recommended a bill to the Legislature for the redeeming of the swamp lands along the Kankakee Valley. That it was the State's duty to the great agricultural class of the Kankakee Valley that the farmers of this region have contributed a greater service to the people of the state than can ever be repaid. The landowners themselves in an oversight of the law regarding the sale and drainage of swamp lands have willingly bought and paid for these lands and then taxed them-

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selves for the drainage besides. Article Eight, Section Two of the Constitution for the State of Indiana which is as follows: "All lands that have been or may be hereafter granted to the State where no special purpose is expressed in the grant and the proceeds of the sale thereof, including the proceeds of the sale of the swamp land granted to the State of Indiana by the act of Congress on the 28th day of September, 1850." In the same section implies that the swamp lands were granted to the state on condition that the money derived from the sale of those lands be used in the drainage of the same. That part of the contract, sorry to say, has never been carried out. As I have said, all great movements have their beginning. So it was with the drainage of the Kankakee Swamps. In the early fifties a bunch of men, afterwards known as the Kankakee Swamp Land Swindlers, went into an agreement with the State Authorities at Indianapolis to drain a certain amount of the Kankakee marshes by digging



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big ditches and emptying them in the river and they were to take a certain percent of the land drained for their pay. They dug a few small ditches on range and section lines, reported same to the state authorities and received their land grants for several thousand acres of swamp land without ever draining an acre of the land. They sold and traded great tracts of this land to Eastern speculators who never saw the land before buying it and in some instances they never saw it after buying it. As mention has before been made, when they came to look for their new possessions it could not be found on account of being covered with water. The speculators could see no future for such a desolate region and never paid the taxes. The lands were sold for taxes. The counties held the tax sales and very little of it was ever redeemed and the land went back to the State. Occasionally in later years some of these tax title deeds and swamp land swindlers' deeds are heard of in the district courts. The state issued the land grants

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in good faith but the ditch makers did not fulfill their part of the agreement. In 1854 the State Authorities ordered a swamp land ditch commissioner to be appointed and Aaron Lytle, of Valparaiso, Ind., was appointed to this position and was the first ditch commissioner for this district. After serving about a year and a half he resigned and Ezriah Freeman was appointed his successor. Commissioner Lytle had a few ditches surveyed out and dug. They were sold out in sections and half sections just as much as a contractor thought he could construct. State Ditch No. 1 on the north side of the river was the first ditch dug and an Irishman by the name of McDugal contracted for the first two mile sections and John Broady of Three Rivers, Michigan, bought the third and half of the fourth sections one and a half miles. State Ditch No. 2 was run farther east beginning at the river and running up old Sandy Hook to where it intersected with Ditch No. 1 near an island called Bridge Island. I might explain here why it de-

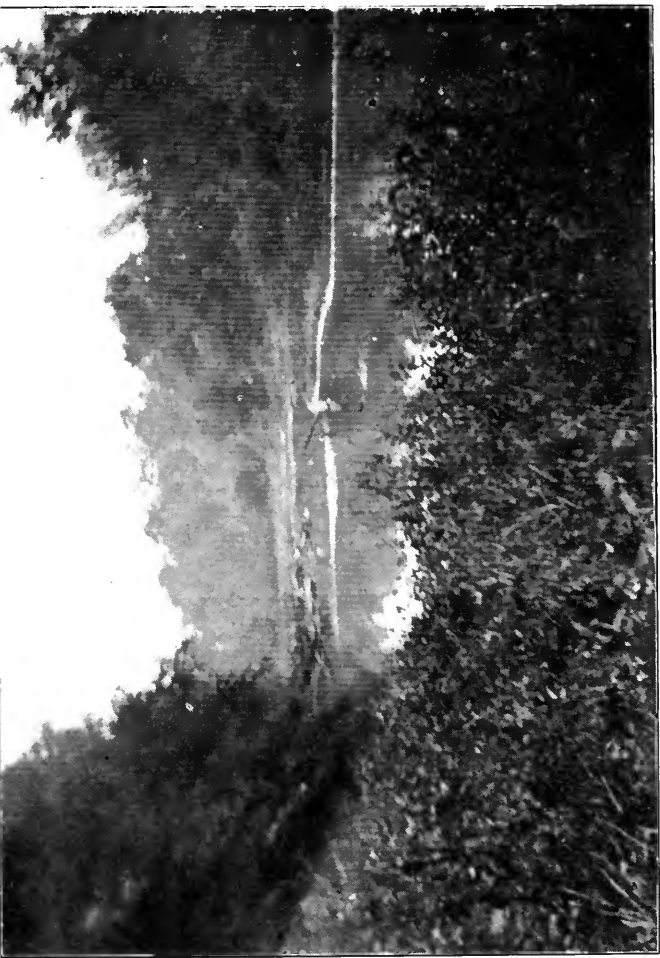
## DRAINING THE SWAMPS

rived that name is from the fact that at this place is where the first wagon road crossed Sandy Hook, Early in the seventies a wagon bridge was built across the East Channel of Sandy Hook from the main land to the Island, a little over five hundred feet long. Previous to the building of the bridge the channel was forded during low water and footmen crossed the channel in boats. Getting back to the subject, these ditches were dug by hand with pick and shovel and were twelve feet wide for the first three miles then eight feet wide to the source. The two ditches that I have mentioned were the first State ditches dug in the Kankakee Valley. They were practically a failure. At the lower end where they emptied their waters into the Kankakee they filled up on account of back water when the river was high and the ditch was of little use at all, as they had to be cleaned and recleaned every few years costing the landowners several thousand dollars at each operation which means that these people have spent

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nearly one hundred thousand dollars of their own money without as yet realizing the desired benefit. Most of these settlers bought this poor, wet land with limited capital and are improving it under hard conditions. Legally and by all rights the State owes to the land-owners of the Kankakee River Region every dollar that has been spent in the reclaiming of these lands. As I have said all great improvements have their beginning. So in the summer of eighty-six was the date of the digging of the Cass and Singleton big ditch in Lake County and it was the first dredge ditch dug for the reclaiming of the swamp region. Since that there have been many ditches constructed on both sides of the river running parallel with the stream. One of great importance was the drainage of English Lake some years ago. Three years ago was commenced the reclaiming ditch, the new Kankakee River, by straightening the old river which was so crooked in its course that it almost crossed itself. In a distance of forty miles, straight line.





The Old River Bed at North Bend after the channel had been changed.

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it ran near one hundred and fifty miles, undermining big trees along its banks that would tumble down in the river and wash out great holes in one place and fill up in another, making it a slow, sluggish stream. In high water it would spread out over the swamps and marshes for miles on each side of the river. Since the construction of the big ditch the water is all confined to this channel. If some of these swamp land speculators could return to this region they find what they were looking for forty or fifty years ago. The large land owners such as Cass & Singleton, Gifford, of Kankakee City, Illinois, and Nelson Morris, the Chicago meat packer, and many others who owned large tracts of swamp lands were strong in favor of draining whilst many others were opposed to the movement, especially the hunters and trappers who said that it would ruin their business, that the Kankakee Swamps were more valuable for their furs than they were for their agricultural purposes. The money that was brought

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into this country for the sale of furs amounts to between sixty-five and seventy-five thousand dollars every year, that the revenue for furs alone from 1850 to 1900 amounts to over three million dollars. Furs vary greatly in price from one year to the next. But only during the fifty years was there one good prime rat hide brought in selling for thirty-three cents. In those days a musk-rat hide would bring from three to ten cents a hide. Father predicted that the day would come when a good prime rat skin would sell for a dollar. Fifty-two years later in 1920 his prediction came true, when he saw good prime rat skins sell for four dollars and ten cents apiece. In those days it took a rat skin to buy a common sewing needle. A French fur trader by the name of Cuttauh from Detroit, Michigan, used to buy furs in this region and he told the trappers' wives that they had better buy in a good supply of needles, as the needle-maker was dead and that they would not get any more needles very soon. Upon the







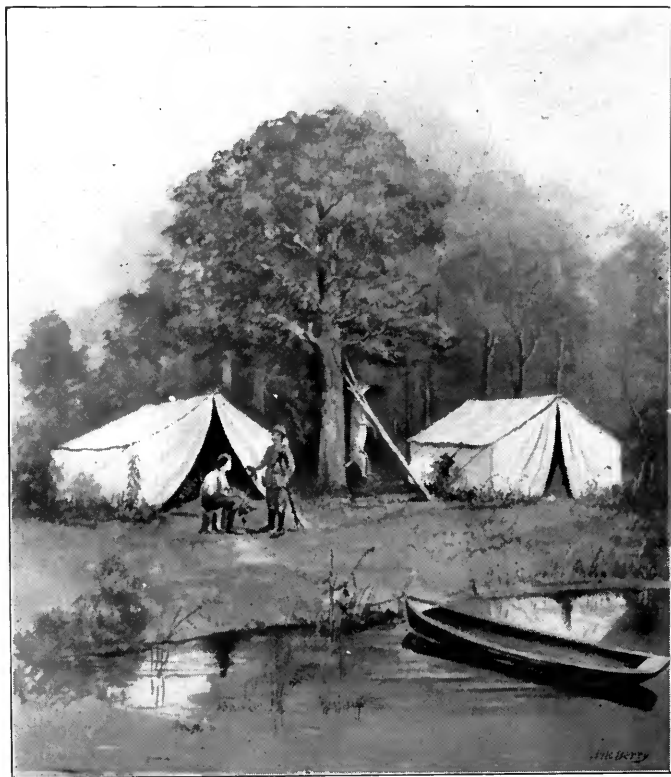
The New Kankakee at the mouth of Sandy Hook

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strength of this statement he traded thousands of needles to the squaws and the wives of the white hunters, in exchange he gave them a needle for a rat skin. This vast region that was considered worthless has made many a man a small fortune. The best figures obtained for the amount of furs caught and sold by the hunters and trappers of the Kankakee Swamps between the years of 1850 and 1900 was approximately three million, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, an average of seventy-five thousand per year. Whenever there was a bill up before the legislature for an appropriation for the drainage of the swamp lands there was always enough to oppose it and cause its defeat and yet the water soaked lands were doomed. Finally the fatal day came. A big dredging machine was set to work in the river a few miles above Baum's Bridge and excavated a great ditch of one hundred and fifty feet in width through the dense forest. Hence the new Kankakee River. The game had become almost

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extinct long before the water ever flowed in the new river. The last deer that was killed in the swamp, to my knowledge, was killed by E. D. Salsberry, a Panhandle railroad engineer of Logansport, Indiana, in his Fall hunt of 1880. Salsberry and his party were in camp on Cornell Island and one morning he and Ike Shaw, another Panhandle engineer, were going to the South Marsh for a day's shooting and in going through the swamp timber a deer ran across the trail and Salsberry shot and killed it. using small bird shot. And two months later Father killed one on the North Marsh, These were the last deer ever seen alive or dead in this part of the swamp region. The story of the Kankakee country is a story of evolution in the development of a country richly endowed by nature, and a story of neglected opportunity, neglected in some instances not from lack of appreciation but from man's natural inclination to follow along the lines of least resistance. Nature has done so much for this favored country that the



Camp of Logansport, Ind., Hunters on Cornell's Island  
on the Kankakee in 1880

Left Camp—H. J. McSheehy, John Condon, Sam Doll,  
J. B. Messinger. Right Camp—Ed Salsbury, Ike Shaw



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struggle for existence which called forth man's best energies, eliminated. It was easy to live, to understand the slow development of this region and to appreciate the rapid progress of later years. We must understand its geographical location, its topographical formation and the conditions controlling its destiny. Way back, nearly a century ago, when Major Long explored this Kankakee region, in his report he gave it the name "Kankakee Swamps." The term caught the fancy of the public and has been set in type for it ever since and it is impossible to estimate how potent a factor the phrase has been in retarding the growth of this country. Here, as well as in most all new territories, the hunter followed close on the foot-steps of the pathfinders and here, indeed, was the Hunter's Paradise. Imagine, if you can, an area of several hundred thousand acres of swamp and marsh land and abounding with wild game of all kinds and the river alive with fish of the best varieties found in the States. While the deer.

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wild-hog, turkeys, geese and ducks made the hunters meat; the otter, mink, musk-rat, raccoon, wolf, fox, lynx and wild-cat were the fur-bearing animals. It surely was the home of the hunter and trapper. This was the condition of the region when the Redman left it and the white hunter built his cabin on the wooded islands and the shores of the Kankakee. Yet many of the readers wonder why white men with their families lived in so secluded a spot. Could the hearts of the hunters ask for more; could nature more bountifully bestow her gifts? That he should look with disapproval on the swamps is no small wonder. But by and by the man with the hoe came and looked upon the country and it seemed to him that this swamp region was too good to be given over to the musk-rat and the raccoon and to the exclusive use of the few men who did not own them and this is what brought about the reclaiming movement. Under the new conditions, with the advent of the Swamp (Gifford) Railroad, the Kankakee swamp



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country passed into its second stage of development and in many places the "hoodooed" craw fish flats of the Kankakee region is now the Kankakee Valley corn fields. The reclaiming of the Kankakee swamps cast a shadow of gloom and sadness to the few remaining old-time hunters who have spent their early years hunting and trapping on the Kankakee river. They feel pretty much as did the Indians when they had to give up their ideal hunting grounds to the whites. The pioneer hunter saw the French fur-trader and the Indian go, then they saw the wild game go and now what is left of their number have seen the vanishing of the Kankakee swamps. In the language of the poet "There is a magical tie to the land of our home, which the heart cannot break though the footsteps may roam." Yes, indeed, the ties that bind us to the land of our birth are truly magical. I often find this so when I am visiting my old home. I am naturally attracted to the scenes that I loved so well when a boy. So it

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was with the Indians that once inhabited this region. The reader remembers that mention was made in a previous chapter of my visit to the Pottowattomies in the Indian Reservation. One old warrior, Chief Nae-nee-be-zho, narrates the sadness and sorrow of his people. He spoke of the whites, of the white man's hunting ground and their destiny. He told how they would vanish and be no more. He said in part, "Oh, Great Master, the pale-face comes and the Redman is driven from the face of the earth. The land that was ours is gone from us and the rocks are our bed and the leaves are our cover. We sigh in vain for yesterday, we have no hope, no comfort for tomorrow, all our greatness is gone and the Redman's days are but few, I return to the land of my Father, I gaze on the placid river. Oh that I might die and sleep here where the great Waubonsie breathed the air, beneath the same trees which have sheltered him, Oh where are the friends of my Father, where is the war chief Waubonsie, Meltontonis

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and many others? Oh, could I stand where my tribes once roamed. But no vestige of the powerful Pottowattomies remain. The lakes and marshes and the Kankakee River, which my canoe was wont to glide; knows not the dip of the Redman's paddle. Where once I moored my canoe to the shore of Lake Michigan now the great steamers are at anchor and the dip of the Redman's paddle is heard no more. No more does the flint-tipped arrow fall the deer and the woodlands resound no more with his bounding step upon the brink of the river. But now comes the pioneer's cow in its stead. The majesty of nature is dwarfed and humbled in the marsh of the white man and on his trail is naught but nature's ruins. I gaze on the camp of the white man and hear him call it Chicago. Oh Nau-nee-bo-zho, forgive the cruel pale-face for disturbing the peace of the great Shaubanee, whose home was along the Kankakee Region. I seek for the wigwam of my people and find in its place the houses and barns of the white man.

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Again, if they would turn to the spot where the great Chiefs held their councils and where the pipe of peace was smoked by the great warriors they would find cities, towns and villages. The brick walls rise on the spot where once the deer-skins were spread and the great oak tree had been taken away. The memories of the Redman have been buried beneath the white man's axe, trowel and plow. Nau-nee-bee-zho could not understand why they were banished from the land that the great master gave them unless it was for the treachery of Nau-non-gee, or the murderer of Red Bird, on the trail that run from Pottowattomie Ford on the Kankakee (Eaton's Ferry) to Lake Michigan. Oh memories of the Kankakee, which was the ideal hunting ground of my sire, are so shattered, all about me is desolation and I turn from the scene which I sought to return to the land of the setting sun. The pale-face has no love for our memories and our traditions he regardeth not. Sad is the heart of the Redman. Years and

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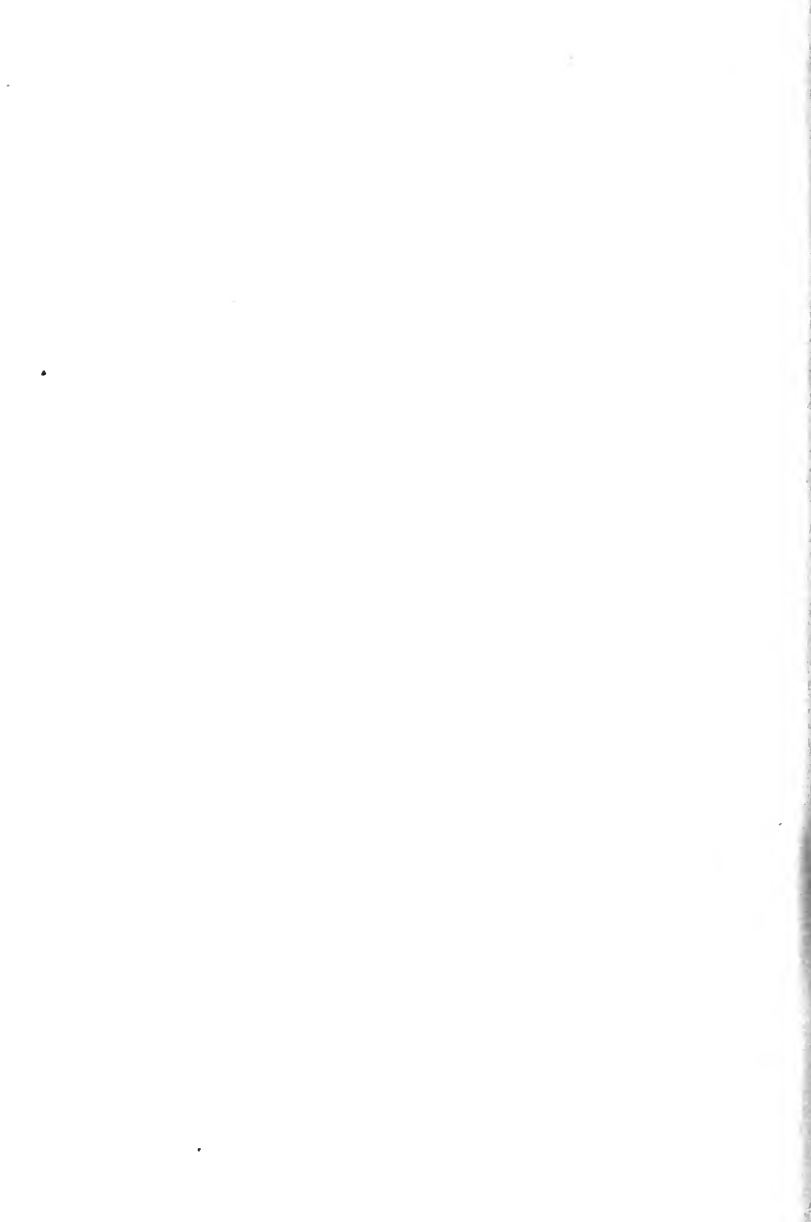
years ago when this old Indian moved his beautiful squaw to French Island, now the home of the white man, and in the same swamp where the young papoose paddled his log canoe is now the Kankakee corn-fields, Where the war dance made the air ring is now heard the brass band playing "Just As The Sun Went Down." And the tolling of the bells in the towers tells of the departure of the Redman who worshipped the Great Master. In the quiet groves where the sky and the trees were not shut out to the Redman, nature is the highest art. He would sit in his canoe with Okemoes and his little papoose floating between the banks over the silvery waves of the river, He saw in the Great Master everything. There was no black smoke from the railroad locomotive and traction engines; no fences to mar the beautiful land which the Great Father had given to them. As I was about to leave their lodge and bidding them good-bye, one of the old warriors rose to his feet, threw a blanket around him and passed to

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and fro, saying in a low, sad tone: "Oh gone are the days of my youth and memories of my people and the beauties of our beautiful land are forever buried. My Father and myself are forgotten, and the Land of Liberty shall know us no more." When I visit the scenes of my boyhood where I played with the pebbles and sand, where years before played the little papoose with his canoe and paddle, and when I recall some of my early adventures of hunting and fishing, the most pleasant recollections of all was my boyhood days in my island home on the Kankakee.

End,









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