

## CHAPTER XV

### PAXTON TOWNSHIP AND BAINBRIDGE

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PRESBYTERIANS.

Paxton Township has as many points of general interest as any political division of Ross County. Its scenery is striking and varied; it is a fertile country, agriculturally and horticulturally; on its soil were fought two of the few engagements between the red men and the white within the limits of Ross County; on the shores of Paint Creek, also within the township bounds, was reared, by the great and rugged Massie, that luxurious haven in the wilderness which his queenly wife also made famous among the early generation of Ohio pioneers; early in his career the general also founded Bainbridge, the chief village of the township and one of the most prosperous in the county, and, finally, for many years the remains of the historic host and hostess rested side by side on the hillside west of their old homestead.

#### PICTURESQUE AND FERTILE

The romantic and historic Valley of Paint Creek, which cuts through a broad northeastern section and forms about one-half its northern boundary, is the striking natural feature of the township. Bold hills form its boundaries on every side, checkered with woodland, meadow and cultivated fields of corn and wheat and vegetables, many of the elevations being covered with orchards of apples, plums and other fruits; from the base of these hills to the banks of main Paint Creek, and again from the creek to the foot of sister hills beyond, stretch the broad bottom lands for which the valley is famous. No soil is more fertile by nature, slower to deteriorate with use, or more ready to rally from the exhaustion of prolonged cultivation, than the alluvial land along the channel of

Paint. The western line of the township and county strikes that stream at the mouth of Rocky Fork, one-half of its course being in Paxton Township and the other in Highland County. At this point begin the rapids of Paint. Confined within a comparatively narrow limit by limestone cliffs, the stream makes a descent of nineteen feet in a distance of 200 yards.

On the Paxton side the land is wooded to the edge of the rocky declivity, small trees grow in the crevices, and moss and grass serve to cover the intervals, save where some jutting mass of limestone denies root-hold to even these. In the early years of the nineteenth century on the Paint side, the water power of the rapids served to turn the wheels of large works and iron, lumber, flour and nails were produced in considerable quantities; upon the banks were the cabins of workmen and the residences of their superiors—all was activity and life. Now the men who projected and sustained the work are passed away. Below the rapids the stream broadens. Many years ago this was a favorite crossing for immigrants, and teamsters engaged in "packing" goods across the country, and was known as Keeper's Ford. Near by, Cold Spring furnished an abundant supply of drinking water, and now marks the site of the old camping ground. Rapids Forge is now passed, on either side, by the lines of travel—the Milford and Chillicothe Turnpike to the south, and the Bainbridge and Greenfield Road to the northward. But eighty or ninety years ago its now deserted shores were the scene of more activity than existed at any other point in the western part of Ross County.

Two miles below Keeper's Ford, is Grassy Ford, still in use as a crossing place when the water of Paint is not too high.

#### PAPER TOWN OF NEW AMSTERDAM

The falls of Paint Creek are, following the line of the stream, about a mile below Grassy Ford. There the water makes a descent of about eleven feet, furnishing a fine natural water-power. This power was early utilized by Nathaniel Massie and Jacob and Enoch Smith, by the erection of a saw-mill and distillery. At that locality on the north bank was projected and laid out, by the Smith Brothers, a town called New Amsterdam. They no doubt expected, and circumstances indicated, that this was to be the principal place of what was then the large territory of Paxton Township. Fine farming land extended on either side of the stream; both bottom and hill formed a main and conclusive argument in favor of the site. But it was not to be. Various causes, principal among which was the unhealthfulness of the location, combined to induce the abandonment of the idea. Bainbridge was projected

and laid out by General Massie, and New Amsterdam now exists only as a name on the map, and not now within the recollection of the oldest inhabitants.

Below the site of New Amsterdam, Paxton Township extends to the northward of Paint Creek, which is, above that point, its northern boundary line, taking an area nearly equal to one-fourth of its entire extent, and embracing a part of the fertile valley of Buckskin Creek, the largest tributary of Paint in the township. Farther on, Cave Run empties into Paint, and, nearly opposite its mouth, the waters turned, years ago, the wheels of Jacob Platter's Mill.

#### TWO HISTORIC SKIRMISHES WITH THE SHAWNEES

Only one more point of interest is found on the creek before we reach the line of Twin Township, and that is the most notable of all. About a quarter of a mile west of the Milford and Chillicothe Turnpike Bridge were fought, in the year 1795, engagements between the exploring and surveying party under General Massie and a band of Shawnee Indians. The proximity of the bridge has caused the abandonment of this ford, and, though the scene of the most interesting event in the history of Paxton, it is rarely visited. These two skirmishes, which early historians dignify as battles, have been pronounced historical as the last conflicts between the two races in the Scioto Valley, preceding the treaty at Greenville which brought peace with the Shawnees and other Indian tribes of the Northwest Territory covering a period of seventeen years.

In the year named (1795) an exploring party was organized, and set out from Manchester, on the Ohio River, for the Scioto country. Among the members of the little company were Nathaniel Massie, Robert W. Finley, Captain Petty and Martin Gilmore. After a march of several days they reached the falls of Paint Creek, and their practiced eyes detected signs of a recent Indian visit to the place. Soon after, proceeding cautiously, they heard the tinkling of the bells of the ponies of the Indian band. It then seemed too late to retire with safety, and it was decided, after a hurried consultation, to advance in the following order and surprise their enemies: Fallenbach (the guide), General Massie, Robert W. Finley, and Captain Petty (to protect the rear), with other less noted members of the expedition at intervals. In a short time the party emerged upon the Indian Camp at Reeves' Crossing. So well had the movement been planned, and so cautiously executed, that the surprise of the Shawnees was complete. Had this not been so, it would have been disastrous to the whites, for, of their entire force of forty men, but twenty took part in the battle, the rest

showing the white feather and seeking shelter behind logs and trees. After a sharp fight for a few moments the Indians broke and fled in confusion across the stream, leaving their camp and its contents to the mercy of the whites. The Shawnees lost several killed and wounded, and of the explorers one, a Mr. Robinson, who was shot and instantly killed. Martin Gilmore, who was the grandfather of Samuel Peacock, of Bainbridge, was separated from his companions, and ran to a point near where the Platter Mill was afterward built, pursued by two Indians. Crossing the creek at that point, he turned and shot one of his pursuers, when the other gave up the chase, and Gilmore reached the rest of his party in safety. Massie and his company, being left masters of the situation, gathered the horses, skins, and other valuables of the camp, and with a white man, John Wilcoxon, who had been held a prisoner by the Shawnees and had escaped during the confusion of the battle, commenced a retreat to Manchester, whence they had set out. It was certain that they would be followed by the Indians as soon as reinforcements could be obtained, so a strong position was selected for the night's camp, and every precaution taken that they might avoid surprise and successfully resist the expected attack. The place selected for the encampment was on Scioto Brush Creek, and there, after a night of watchfulness, their expectations were fulfilled, the Indians attacking their position with great vigor, about an hour before daybreak.

Here again the cowards who had fled at the first fire the day before, sought shelter, and left to their few boon-companions the work of repelling the superior force of their enemies. This was bravely and manfully done. After about an hour of fighting, the Indians again retired, leaving the little party to return without further molestation to Manchester. In this second skirmish the loss of the Shawnees is not known; that of the whites was confined to the wounding of one of their number, Mr. Gilfillan, by a rifle ball, through the thigh, and the shooting of several horses.

#### NATHAN REEVES AND HIS LANDS

Nathan Reeves, after whom the crossing was named, had purchased large tracts of land on Paint Creek, and in 1793 and 1794 General Massie, with his assistants, surveyed 1,000 acres of the Reeves' properties. In the spring of 1795 their owner made a contract with William Kent, of Pennsylvania, whereby it was agreed that Kent should come to Ohio and clear forty acres of the tract and place it in condition for planting, Reeves to give him in payment fifty acres of land, to be located at any point outside of the tract which he (Kent) should select. In furtherance of the agree-