

PIONEER LIFE

The first settlers in our community generally came from the Southern states. The majority of them were not wealthy, but they lived well due to their resourcefulness. They had to be farmers, hunters, mechanics, blacksmiths, harness-makers and any other occupation necessary to provide for their families. They lived in well-built log homes, usually with dirt floors, with crude furniture of their own making. They sat down to a rude table to eat from pewter or tin dishes, but the meat was plentiful - deer, bear, wild duck, turkey, quail and squirrel. The bread they ate was made from corn or wheat of their own raising.

Two indispensable items the early settler brought with him were an axe and a rifle. The first was necessary to clear the land on which he settled; the second was needed to defend himself against the Indians who still roamed the forests. Clothing was simple but adequate, usually made from homespun fabrics and tanned hides. Only after the 1820's were manufactured clothes common in the territory.

For entertainment there were quiltings, house-raisings, corn-husking. On these occasions the youngsters held running, wrestling and jumping contests. In the evening, things were not too much different from today. A fiddler was obtained and everyone danced - and usually imbibed a little from a bottle, called "Black Betty", filled with the whiskey of that day.

EARLY CATHOLIC HISTORY



THE OLD PARISH SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTED IN 1917,
AND REPLACED IN 1962

Probably the first Catholic to set foot in Perry Co. was Louis Du Quoin, an Indian chief, after whom the present city of Du Quoin is named. Although the early French missionaries may have come into Perry County from their missions along the Mississippi River, there is no reliable account of this.

The first recorded instance we could find of Mass being offered in Perry County is in 1857. It was celebrated at the home of Michael Bradley at Black Diamond (north of Du Quoin) by Father Cusack of Vandalia. There are indications that Father Cusack and Father Walsh of Centralia said Mass occasionally in this area in those days. In the early 1860's, Father Walsh had Mass at the home of Joseph Todd, which was probably the first Mass within the present parish boundaries.