Starke County 26 "Tidbits of Starke County"

Saturday, August 1, 2009, 8:30 to 12:30 <u>Eastern Daylight Time</u> is the date and time set for our area's Forestry Field Day. The field day is held each year in one of four counties, Fulton, Marshall, Pulaski and Starke. It is always a good opportunity to learn from our Indiana State Forestry experts about the forests and woods of our area - the care and maintenance and sale of these natural resources.

This year, with our small Classified Forest, Melba and I will be host to this event. (Held at 3750 E. 50 N., Knox - you are all invited.) I have been asked to welcome the attendees to our woods, and also to talk about the history of the forests in Starke County. There is a little history on this subject in several of the history books written about our area. One book, *A Standard History of Starke County*, published in 1915, has some fascinating reading on the early pioneer life in the 1850's in Starke County. I turned to this history book in order to prepare for the forestry meeting on Saturday, but became interested in the description of pioneer life in general. My family came to Starke County in 1851, a year after it was organized. So, as I am reading, I am also visualizing my great grandparents' life on their new frontier.

On page 5: "After unyoking their cattle and turning them loose to feed upon the neverending crop of wild grass they begin to make preparation for a hut or tent to house their good wives and babies from the inclement weather of the cold autumn months then coming on.

After they had provided a place or home for their families the next thing was to fence and plow or "dig up" a patch to plant their next crops and while the family would cultivate the soil the man of the "farm" would shoulder his gun and go in quest of a deer or some wild game which constituted a great share of their living. After they had raised a sufficient amount of grain they would load up an ox wagon or cart and drive miles and miles to some mill to have it ground, taking one or two days in going and the same in returning, camping out at night while make the trip. The family at home, if they should run out of meal before he returned, would grate or grind some meal from ears of corn on an improvised grater or a piece of tin punched full of holes, over which they would rub the corn to make meal for bread or mush."

Each week, when I drive to the grocery store for a loaf of bread and the many other wonderful convenient items that are available these days, on streets that are paved (and not swamp trails), I should think of the tremendous progress and inventions that have taken place since the 1850s in Starke County. It is awesome. Melba says that she would not have made a good pioneer woman.

Jim Shilling Starke County Historical Society