

A pioneer Christmas gives reason to pause

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The following are Christmas stories taken from the Oldham County History Center collection. The first story was taken from James Trigg Jr. by Lucien Rule who was a local historian in the late 1800s. Trigg recalled the story of his family's arrival in Oldham County.

Trigg was just an infant at the time:

My father and mother left Virginia for Kentucky in the year 1798, going to the Monongahela River above the present site of Pittsburg, where they embarked in a flat-boat, with other pioneers, and floated down the Ohio to a landing called Harmony, just below Fern Grove, Indiana. It was Christmas time, a wet, snowy day, with a bitter wind blowing; and to make matters worse, as we neared the Kentucky shore, the Indians fired at us from the opposite side of the river, so that it was quite awhile before we dared to disembark.

The close, smoky cabin of the flat-boat had nearly smothered us the latter part of the voyage, and we were glad enough to get ashore at last. There were only two log houses in the neighborhood at that time, still used as forts incase of Indian attack; so my father proceeded to erect an open-sided log hut. It was a hard and discouraging struggle before we moved into a more comfortable cabin. Many a night my father stood guard over us while my mother melted and molded bullets at his side. A few years later she was left a widow with six small children to support, me being the youngest. Exposure, hardship and pneumonia had taken our father's life.

We got along some way. As we grew up mother taught us to work and we did the best we could to make a living. The neighbors were very good to us. It seems to me that people were much more sociable and helpful than they are now. Need and danger made us dependent upon each other, but the good old customs have passed into forgetfulness, and people seem much more selfish and grasping today than in the pioneer period.

Another pioneer from Oldham County was Stanton Pierce Bryan. Born in 1827, he was the son of Dr. Edmund and Lettie Pierce Bryan and had 14 siblings. At 22, Stanton Bryan left his family home in Wayne County and traveled to Louisville in hopes of entering medical school by earning money for his tuition teaching at a country school. He found a job in Oldhamsburg (now Skylight) for a summer term and there he met a student who would become his future wife, Adelaide Thomas. He was admitted to medical school for the academic year of 1851-52 and received his degree in medicine. He and Adelaide Thomas were married in 1853.

In January of 1854, Bryan took over the practice of Dr. Kellar in Brownsboro and was the practicing physician there for the next 40 years. Bryan was always appreciated for his community service but few knew of his poetry. Many of his poems were published in

popular magazines at the time. Themes of his poems were usually "The Christmas Present," written in 1851 was later published in a journal in 1885, "Today's Lady's Book."

The Christmas Present

*I brought a Christmas Present, Love,
To Offer unto thee,
It is the richest offering
Thine eye's may ever see,
And often, when thou seest it,
Say, wilt thou think of me?*

*It is no jeweledstring let, love,
To thee I offer now;
It is no pearl, nor wreath of gems,
To grace they beauteous brow,
For it is fair enough, without
The gilding they bestow.
It is no beauteous bird, love,
With glossy golden wing,
Taught by the heavenly Muses mine
Its sweet love- chants to sing,
From some far-off bright sunny isle
To thee this day I bring;*

*Tis not the deep devotion, love,
Of this true heart of mine,
That I this evening would bring
And offer at thy shrine;
That were no longer meant to give,
For tis already thine!*

*It is no diamond bracelet, love,
Around they wrist to cling;
It is no necklace set with gems
Around they neck to swing;
It is no lavish stone of gold,
No, I have none to bring.*

*Tis worth far more than all these, love,
Thou'lt say so when tis given,
And if they young and tender heart
With grief should e'er be viven,
Look trustingly unto this boon,
Twill lead thee, love to Heaven!*

*It is the Holy Bible, love,
My offering to thee,
And may each blessed promise there
Shine own rich treasure be,
And mayst thou with its author dwell
Throughout eternity.*

Besides writing poetry, Bryan was a good storyteller. One of my favorites was his description of being out on a cold wintry night in December when he was trying to reach a place somewhere near Buckner. He was riding, he thought, on the right trail when suddenly his horse stopped short and no amount of urging would induce him to take another step. There was nothing to do but to give him the reins.

The animal immediately turned in the opposite direction, and finally their destination was reached. Next morning, the doctor went over the same ground and found that he had ridden to the very verge of a point where another step would have precipitated both horse and rider to probable destruction.

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