

Milford Times: Feb. 13, 1915

## A LONG AGO FOURTH

### An Incident of Its Celebration in Milford

When a person undertakes to relate from memory, events that transpired seventy years previously, errors might easily creep into the narrative; still, it is my belief that this story is, as to facts, almost, if not precisely, correct.

It was on the Fourth of July, 1842 that the first Sunday school convention for the county of Oakland was held at Pontiac; and this tale is to relate the part that Milford played therein.

The village, or perhaps some patriotic individual had xxxxxxxxxx cannon that was used whenever it seemed desirable to make a noise; and there was ever a strife between the two sides of the river which should have the first use of the gun. For some time previously to the date mentioned it had been on the north side, lying on a slight elevation just east of the saw mill and distillery pond then owned by Aaron Phelps.

Some time previous to the Fourth, Albert Hubbard, George E. Andrews and the writer managed in the night to transport the cannon across the river and hide it under the floor of a small building used by the Hubbard brothers as a joiner shop, and situated about where the Presbyterian church was afterward located.

The powder to load the gun, to wake the people, to start early for Pontiac (some like the house that Jack built) was furnished mainly by Ansley S. Arms and David M. Ladd, but I have a dim recollection that Bristol, the tavern keeper, contributed.

In some way red flannel was procured to make cartridges of a size to fit the bore of the cannon when filled with powder (now don't ask why red flannel;) and as it was before the age of sewing machines, Miss Ann Fox (afterward wife of Willard Hubbard,) Miss Marie Antoinette Fox who married Austin Rankin, used needles to sew up the bags, and they also gave the boys a lunch about midnight.

Of course, it would not do to ask the north side to boost a south side celebration; and this brings to mind the fact that in 1842 most of the business was done on the south side. All that could be called business on the north side was Calvin Eaton's turning shop, Aaron Phelps' saw mill and distillery, and the Widow Edmunds' tavern, which in these days would be called a Hotel with a big H (and by the way, if I am not greatly mistaken, the widow was mother of Lewis and Job Austin by a former husband.)

On the south side were Luman Fuller's flouring mill, Ansley S. Arms and David M. Ladd's general stores at which could be purchased anything from a keg of nails to a fine tooth comb; Bristol's tavern, Schuyler Hubbell's wagon shop, and Joe Bartlett's blacksmith shop.

Now back to the Fourth of July. At 3 o'clock in the morning the cannon was carried to the public square, nearly in front of the residence of Ansley S. Arms, loaded and fired thirteen times, once for each of the original states; and in due season a procession headed by a four-horse team driven by John L. Andrews, drawing a lumber wagon, made into an omnibus by seats along either side covered by buffalo robes and thirteen pretty girls, followed by buggies, more lumber wagons and about every sort of vehicle that could be found except wheelbarrows.

Such an auspicious beginning and long continuance of a bright midsummer day was not of the kind to awaken the thought that a tragedy was impending.

About mid afternoon, the cannon was taken back to the north side very near the place from which it was taken, the breech placed in the rotted centre of a stump, and the gun slightly inclined toward the mill pond, and placed in charge of Mr. Thompkins, the gun loaded as usual excepting that after the charge was put in, stones as near the size of the bore as could readily be found until the bore was filled, and the gun touched off that the stones might fall into the pond with a splash.

After a few discharges the gun burst instantly, killing Thompkins; and a large fragment passed very close to Dr. Mowry, who was passing along the street not far eastward.

This casualty cast a gloom over the little community arousing feelings far different from those of the early morning; and those returning from Pontiac, came in with saddened faces, having been told of the

tragic occurrence by persons whom they had met.

To the Editor of the Milford Times:

Please edit the foregoing without mercy. Correct where needed and you will please me. And now something farther. You have been very kind to me for many years in regard to contributions to the Times; but in almost every way things have changed with the passing years and there is not now a resident of Milford that cares to read anything more that I might write. I will, however, here set down the names of good families who at different times gave me a home; perhaps not in chronological order, but nearly.

Polly Hudson, sister of my father, took me into her little log house already full of children in the fall of 1836; for a time I lived with Mrs. Calvin Eaton—with the family of Hiram Scollard; (could relate a story about his serving in the army in the war of 1812;) family of Schuyler Hubbell; of Fred Bourns; of Bradford Hebbard; of Dennis the merchant, and of John Grow.

And now good-bye to Milford and the Times. Also before closing allow me to state that Ellen Andrews was the last person that tied me to Milford, and she had I known from my childhood.

Egbert F. Albright

Mr. Albright has from time to time contributed some very interesting articles for the Times, relating incidents of the earliest history of our little town. We know their perusal has been enjoyed by our readers, and we are glad to have been able to record and preserve them ere they passed completely into oblivion. Mr. Albright as a young man came to Milford, then the merest hamlet, in 1836, and is one of the very, very few  
Still living whose personal recollections extend back to that early day in Milford.