

Milford Times:

The Last Bear

Among the early settlers in the township of Milford was the Hubbard family who located on a farm about two miles down the river from the village. They came from one of the New England states, bringing some of the customs with them, among which was that of beginning Sunday at set of sun on Saturday and ending at set of sun on Sunday. The death of the father must have occurred not long after the occupation of their Michigan home, as he was not living in the fall of 1836. The family was very respectable in numbers as well as other things, and this is the roll of the children as now remembered: Abner, Horace, Nelson, Willard, Albert, Henry, Lucy and George.

The elder son, Abner, was a hunter more than anything else and previous to the fall of 1836 had caught and tamed a young bear, which he was keeping for a pet and playfellow for the younger children. The bear did like to play in a rough and tumble way, but the writer hereof, then a lad of thirteen, did not care to indulge in familiarities with the beast and consequently kept a safe distance from the place where he was usually fastened to a stake in the front yard of the Hubbard residence. It occasionally happened however that his bearship managed to get at liberty, betaking himself to a swamp near by and by the side of the road to gather berries. At one of these times the writer saw the bear in the edge of the swamp and the bear saw the boy in the road. Probably the bear wished to play with the boy, but it is a sure thing that the boy did not wish to play with the bear. The boy ran for the house and the bear ran after the boy, who succeeded in falling over the threshold of the house, just out of reach of the bear. Mother Hubbard rescued the boy and tied up the bear.

Now the foregoing is only preliminary and is related to account for the fact that in after years I knew bear tracks when I saw them. It was late in the winter of 1841-42, or perhaps the year after, when in early morn and before it was fairly light, I was passing from the south to the north side of the village of Milford. There was considerable snow on the ground and during the previous night an inch or two additional had fallen. When about midway of the marsh, where the willow trees now shade the street, I saw unmistakable tracks of a bear, which was rather a surprise as bears were not in the habit of roaming the streets and none had been seen in the township in several years. I walked slowly along examining the tracks more closely in the increasing light. As soon as the conclusion was reached that the tracks must have been made by a bear, I ran back to the house of Abner Hubbard, who then resided near where the streets now cross and diagonally opposite the present hotel. In response to my knocking Hubbard came to the door in his stockinged feet, when I told him that a bear had passed to the southward in the road in front of his house during the night. Without hat, coat, boots or shoes, he rushed to see the tracks, and as quickly rushed back into the house, to come out five minutes later with coat, hat and boots on and his rifle in his hand to follow where those bear tracks led. Others joined in the chase and during the forenoon the poor, hungry, wandering, little bear was killed near Vincent's. And that no doubt was the last wild bear to roam in Milford streets.

E.F.A.