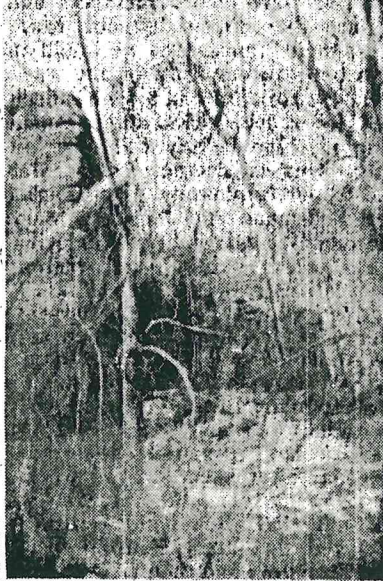


THE READERS REPORT

The History of Hurd

In response to your request for information about the history of Hurd, I am sending you a snapshot that I took about fifty years ago, showing the place where the Hurd Settlement began. It shows a



room with three rock walls, open on the south side, which has always been known as the "Rock Cabin". To reach it, follow either the Hurd Road or Fayerweather Road (incorrectly spelled Fairweather on the road signs) from the Briscoe Road until you come to the corner where the two roads meet. Go up the hill back of Russel Norris's house and over the fence. It will not look like this, because a recent owner dumped a lot of rubbish into it, but the rocks are there:

In this Rock Cabin Graham Hurd and Norman Judson spent the winter, hunting and trapping, and the following year brought their families and took up land. According to Child's "Gazetteer and Business Directory of Sullivan County" 1872-3, p. 112, Graham Hurd brought his family there from Connecticut in 1804, living in the Rock Cabin while building his house. This may have stood in the field west of the Fayer-

weather Cemetery. My mother said there had once been a house there, and Russel Norris's deed says, "bounded on the west by Graham Hurd." On the same page of the "Directory" it says that Chauncey Hurd settled a little farther south.

The Judson family homesteaded most of the land from here to the Newburgh and Cochection Turnpike near Bethel. Willis Judson, who grew up on the Judson farm next to mine, told me this: His widow, Mrs. Gladys Judson, lives at BRISCOE on the farm where she has spent all of her ninety years. She says she remembers seeing the logs laid as crossbeams for a roof over the Rock Cabin, but they were gone before I can remember.

This whole area was covered with virgin hemlock forests in 1804. The Hurd road was opened by the settlers who came in then. Some old deeds to property along what is now labeled "Fairweather" Road say "bounded by Hurd Road" which I take to mean that the original Hurd Road ran down the Fayerweather hill rather than the Briscoe hill as at present.

This was one of several roads in the neighborhood that were called after the people who settled them. Continuing across the bridge over Briscoe Lake from the Hurd road was the Dutch Settlement Road, or "Dutch Track" (a corruption of Deutsch Tract). The next road west of the Hurd Road, now called the Behr Road, was formerly known as the Irish Settlement Road.

The Rock Cabin is interesting from a geological standpoint. At the back of the room at the top of the north wall there is a shelf which looks as if it had been neatly cut. In front of the opening lies a large rock that appears to have fitted into the opening, even to a corresponding projection on its farther end. This projection is on the bottom, indicating that some force threw the rock out and turned it over end for end. There was always considerable speculation among local people as to how this could have happened.

One young man of my father's day put it this way: "That rock was heaved out by Old Dan Tucker (subject of a then popular song) and Aunt Parmeely Brown (a neighbor). Dan was always a lazy old cuss, and he didn't half lift, and that's why Aunt Parmeely had to lift so

hard, it made her cross-eyed."

The people of the Hurd Settlement cleared land, removed stones enough to build fences around their fields, and began to raise dairy cattle and make butter. They built a school and a church about a mile south of the first houses, as the settlement spread south along the Hurd Road. The school was in use until centralization with Jeffersonville took place. It was then converted into a dwelling. The church is still standing, but has been closed for several years.

Child's says, under "Errata", p. 9 of his Gazetteer "Hurd Settlement M.E. Church was organized October 10th, 1845. The present house of worship, which will seat 250, was erected in 1845 by the Protestant Methodists." However, a contract recorded in the Sullivan County Court House June 1, 1836, involved the lease of property as long as it should be used "for the purpose and scite (sic.) of a meeting house which said house is now built and enclosed thereon" in trust for the Methodist Protestant Church. This contract was dated Sept. 24, 1835, so it seems that a church building was in existence at that time.

There was a post office at Hurd until the R.F.D. came into existence in 1914 or 15, bringing the mail from Stevensville, now called Swan Lake. At that time the post office was in the Maltby home across the road from the church. At a much earlier date my grandmother Miller's brother, William Henry Pinney, was postmaster and had the office in his house, which stood where Granville Prince's garage now is. His brother, John W. Pinney at some time operated a grocery store at the corner of Hurd and Stephenson roads. I suppose this may have been 90 or more years ago.

The Hurd settlement was never a village, but rather a very scattered farm community. It has always been a pleasant place to live, where neighbors got along well together. I am surprised that its name should appear on one of the early resort-type post cards. It looks like a card made up with a plain banner on which the name of a town could later be printed. Many of the farm families in the area did "take summer boarders" during the first part of this century.

Bertha E. Baker
Swan Lake