



PIONEER LIFE

As the pioneers built their homes, between each homestead were still thick forests with few roads. The closest towns were small and had been established before the Shawnee departure—St. Marys (1823), Lima (1832), and Wapakoneta (1833).

Travel to these towns was difficult. Because of the isolation, the pioneer families had to be self sufficient. They grew their own food, made their clothes, and continued chopping down more trees to expand their farm fields. Pioneer life was hard work!



BUILDING A NEW HOME IN THE WILDERNESS

Project of the Cridersville Historical Society

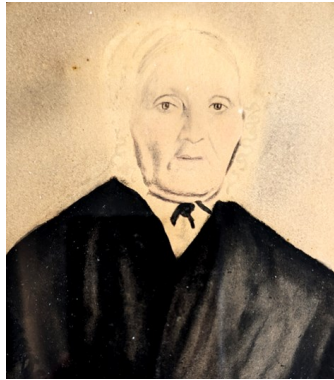
In 1835, Daniel Bowsher and his younger brother Benamine made a trip on horseback through this area. The brothers were so impressed with what they found they purchased 160 acres.

In the spring of 1836, Daniel and Benamine, along with Jacob Delong, lead an expedition of 27 people from Ross and Pickaway Counties to pioneer this area. They came by trails, waded swamps, and pushed through thick forests until they reached Duchouquet and Shawnee Townships.

They discovered that it was an area of swamps, thick forests, and abundant wildlife. A few members of the group found it too wild and returned home without unloading. The others were convinced the plentiful deer, wild turkeys and other game more than compensated for the hard work of clearing and draining the land and building new homes in the wilderness.



PIONEER FAMILIES ARRIVE



CATHERINE BOWSHER
Wife of Daniel Bowsher

In 1835, Daniel Bowsher and his younger brother Benjamine made a trip on horseback through this area. The brothers were so impressed with what they found they purchased 160 acres.

When the Bowsher families came, their first task was to build their log homes. They lived in a log hut built by the Shawnee while they were building their cabins. There was also an apple orchard near the hut. It was thought to have been planted by Johnny Appleseed. They continued to clear more trees to create fields for their crops.

The Bowshers chose the site for their new homes due to plentiful game in the woods and the abundance of sugar maple trees for making maple syrup. They also liked it because the Little Hog Creek ran through the corner of the site. It provided a ready source of water for their families.

FIRST LAND PURCHASE

The first land purchased in the area was made in 1834. George Delong purchased 80 acres at \$1.25 per acre at a government land sale in Piqua, Ohio. George lived in Ross County south of Columbus. He had bought the land without seeing it. Today, his land is the site of Cridersville Elementary School and Delong Pioneer Nature Park.



GEORGE DELONG



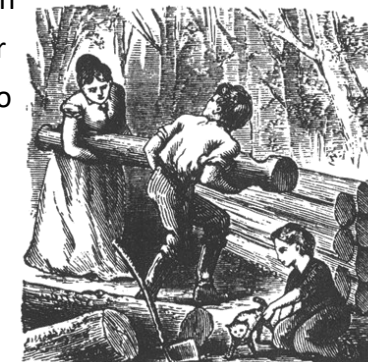
BENJAMINE & ELIZABETH BOWSHER



Building a log house in the wilderness was not an easy task. The work was all done by hand with a few simple tools—axe, adze, hand saw, drill, maul, and a froe for making shingles.

If there were neighbors nearby, it became a group effort. There was a job for everyone—from chopping down trees, hewing the logs, cutting the notches, stacking the logs, and installing the chinking.

When the log house was done, the families continued to cut down trees to expand their fields for crops. It was also necessary to hand-dig ditches to drain the fields for cultivation.



THE TOOLS THE PIONEERS USED TO BUILD THEIR LOG HOMES

