

# A Pioneer Home

Lois Esther Littler

Several clues indicated that a house was there before it became visible to the approaching visitor, for pioneer homes were located, not because of nearness to a road, but because of proximity to a spring and a stream; the former saved time and labor in digging a well for the household and the latter promised a supply of water for the livestock. It nestled, this home of my great-grandparents, half-secluded among huge trees and smaller shrubs on the crown of a knoll overlooking a meandering stream. As one followed the short stretch of road between the school building and the Quaker meeting-house, a winding lane diverged to the left where the highway and the drive to the meetinghouse met. The lane paralleled the south boundary of the meetinghouse grounds, and at its

farther end two ancient gray willows appeared to be standing guard over the brook. A nearer approach disclosed a ford where the stream was widest and shallowest and, between the ford and the willows, a foot-log was securely placed for the convenience of pedestrians. Crossing the brook and following the tracks of the lane up the hill, a visitor saw on the left a springhouse with a mossy clapboard roof, surrounded by a huge bed of *Calamus* and shaded by a giant oak. A narrow path led from the lane, up the hill to the gate, through which one entered the picket fence of the yard. A Philadelphia Rambler rose flanked the right side of the gate and old-fashioned red-black roses, the left; butter-and-eggs, or toad-flax, bloomed in wild freedom along the fence. A Japanese flowering quince, a lilac, and several varieties of roses were scattered informally over the south slope of the yard.

The house itself was a rambling structure, having evolved from an original four-room log cabin to a seven-room weather-boarded house built in an L-shape. North of the house was a large outdoor cellar with a pitched roof extending almost to the ground. A large paw-paw tree stood near its entrance. On the northwest corner of the house was an outdoor fireplace, in which an enormous iron kettle provided facilities for heating wash water during the summer months.

The back yard was a small quadrangle bounded by the outdoor cellar and the woodshed on the north, the smokehouse on the west, and, on the south and east, by the inner L of the house. The latter was further emphasized by a porch which extended the full length of the L. On the north end of the porch was a wooden pump with a gourd dipper and a well trough. That end of the porch was well shaded by wild cucumber vines trained on twine strings. The west end was enclosed so that there was room for an open-shelf cupboard in which a miscellany of articles, from flower pots to discarded dishes, could be stored. Two or three splint-bottomed chairs were arranged conveniently where the long hours of shade on a northern exposure could be enjoyed. In the center of the quadrangle was a pansy bed fringed with mignonette; between the house and the smokehouse was a group of vari-colored hollyhocks crowding about the gray poplar walls of the smokehouse; and climbing the dinner bell pole nearby were bright blue morning glories.

The garden lay west of the quadrangle and the house, and was bisected by a path to the orchard, which lay still farther west and south. Bordering the garden were a persim-

mon tree, two or three seedling peach trees, a Blue Damson plum tree, a quince bush, gooseberry and currant bushes, and a few raspberry and blackberry briars. The orchard extended for an acre or more on toward the barn and contained such old-fashioned favorites as Sweet Apples, Rambos, White Pippins, and Sweet Vandivers. Along the fence separating the garden from the orchard were a few beehives the inhabitants of which were busily plying between fruit and flowers.

Returning to the house, one entered the kitchen door and found a large, square room, but the dim light obscured details. There were only two windows, and the two doors were without panes. Gradually the main articles of furniture appeared: a work table on the north side, a Franklin cookstove, a dining table with four straight chairs about it, and a safe with perforated tin doors. As one crossed the warped board floor and entered the door into the general living-room, a like simplicity of furnishing was apparent: three rocking chairs, a Morris chair, a bed, an Oak Burner heating stove. A hand-woven rag carpet covered the floor and a hand-woven blue and white coverlet, the bed; a Seth Thomas clock ticked away the tranquil hours. Two small, dark bedrooms opening off the living-room contained little more than a bed and a chair each. A second living-room opened off the center one; yet it was no more ornately decorated save for the addition of a settee of simple design. A cherry cord bed, a cherry bureau, two rocking chairs covered with crocheted tidies, and a Florence heating stove composed the furnishings there. In all the rooms, the only pieces of furniture not made by hand were the stoves, the Morris' chair, and the settee. Even the whisk broom by the stove was home-grown and homemade.

Simplicity, sturdiness, and genuineness characterized the occupants of this home even as they did the furniture. There were Uncle John and Aunt Mercy — husband and wife — and Aunt Lizzie and Aunt Mary: the former was a widow and the latter a spinster. Here were, essentially, three families living under one roof; yet if they had ever heard the aphorism that no roof is big enough for two families, no one ever surmised it. They shared the daily tasks involved in tending the small acreage received by their father from the government in 1830, tilling the soil and maintaining a small dairy, a small orchard, and a garden. With meticulous faithfulness they attended the First and Fourth Day meetings of the Society of Friends and observed their own periods of daily worship. Both Uncle John and Aunt Mercy went often to neighboring meetings to preach.



They were all never-failing sources of aid and comfort when illness or death visited the homes of their neighbors. Of them it could be said: "Religion was the central core and fiber of their lives and the fragrant perfume of their personalities" as well as that "they had wide margins to their lives."

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## Gentleman

Howard W. Newman

**T**he gentleman is perhaps among the rarest of present-day animals. It has, because of the ravages of the elements, the predaciousness of such parasites as **Female inhumana**, and the powerful insecticide of satire, been nearly exterminated, extirpated, eradicated, and annihilated. Even its habitat, that imaginary realm wherein the Little Lord Flaunteroys and assorted fairy-book characters flit through the most stilted of social amenities with not a trace of selfishness, egoism, or any other imperfection, has very nearly been destroyed. Thank Heavens!

But the ultimate extinction of this organism is not the problem, as is the problem not the ultimate extinction of this organism. With fear of repetition, it must be stated that the problem is one of taxonomy.

There are, as everyone presumes, two kingdoms used in taxonomy. These are the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom; the former is composed of dependent organisms with well developed powers of locomotion and large, roving eyes, and the latter is composed of independent organisms without brains. Although the classification is a difficult one, the gentleman has been placed in the animal kingdom because of such accessory organs as the heart and the reproductive system of the sexual type.

The phylum to which the gentleman belongs is **Moresata**—not **Moronata** as some authors would have one believe. This word is derived from two ancient Greek words that lose everything in translation. It is agreed by most taxonomists, however, that the members of this phylum possess an innominate structure which enables them to open all kinds of doors, to fall to the rear of a line, to bow and to rise in the presence