CHILD LIFE IN COLONIAL WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

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Hundreds of books can be found which chronicle the experiences of those settling upon almost any part of the colonial frontiers in America. For the most part these records relate the harrowing experiences of the huntsmen and trappers with Indians and wild animals or recount the oft repeated and unforgettable horrors of the Indian attacks upon the first settlements. Sometimes the writer is thoughtful enough to include, in passing, a few of the adventures which befell the women. In these narratives children are but rarely mentioned; and when they are, only casually. Thus one gathers, upon noting this neglect, the impression that children played but a small part in that period of our nation's history.

And no doubt this is true for the very earliest days of the settlements, as families would have been but an added encumbrance to men already taxed to their utmost to preserve their own lives. Not with the van then do we find the first children. Here were the hunters, the traders and trappers; men generally without home or families, tied to no particular spot, and roving the unmapped wilderness only for the purposes of adventure or gain. In the course of these wanderings, however, they noted the plains and valleys of unsurpassed fertility and, on their return to the settlements, made such reports as stirred the harder of their hearers with the desire to see and own this land, which, from description, was so much better than that which they already had. The feeling which a fisherman has that it is always better fishing on the other side of the river, is no doubt the same as that which motivated many of the first emigrants.

But whatever their reasons for seeking the new lands may have been these were the first genuine settlers for they came to stay. Naturally their first work upon reaching the location of their choice was the erection of a house of some humble nature. But only with the arrival of the wife and children did this house become a home. Then, shut off with the few friends who had accompanied them,
and with none but the most difficult means of communication with their old homes, these new homes became little communities in themselves where each member of the family had his particular tasks to perform.

In such a situation children were much to be desired, if for no other reason than to provide a labor supply. For, isolated as they were, where land could be had for the taking, few if any men could be hired as laborers even if the father could have found the wherewithal to pay them. Under such conditions the sons became the helpers of their fathers, both in hunting and farming; while the girls aided their mothers in gardening, spinning and other household duties.

But the most important part played by children in the frontier days was not in the role of laborers. They were rather the incentives which spurred their parents on to desire better conditions. In the first place, more land had to be claimed and cleared to provide nearby farms where sons and daughters might live when grown. In the second place, the old cabin had to give way to a bigger, better and more comfortable log-house to shelter adequately their yet small brood. In the third place, a desire was created for safer surroundings for these children: the Indians had to be driven back to parts where they would cease to be a menace to these new communities; and the Law had to be called in to deal with the roysterers of the border. In the fourth place, better communications had to be established with the outside world in order that the children might learn to know more of the country to which they belonged, and that certain comforts might be brought in to vary the monotony of their lives. And lastly, parents became impressed with the need for the establishment of some means of education, so that sooner or later there appeared that characteristic feature of American life, the school.

Thus, in the course of a few years, the aspect of the community was changed. Around the group of old log cabins and the stockade fort where traders and hunters had stopped to rest, swap tales and drink healths, there grew up a peaceful and substantial farming community, with less of the passing nature about it. With the coming of the children, therefore, the frontier, as such, gradually moved farther westward while in its place a quiet and law-abiding countryside appeared.
It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the steps in the above noted development, but rather to picture as closely as possible the life of the child as it was lived in Western Pennsylvania during this particular period. The justification for such a treatment lies, in the first instance, in the fact that we ought not to forget the part played in the building of this commonwealth by those young heroes and martyrs whose sacrifices and deeds so often so unsung. In the second instance, such a record cannot fail to give us some glimpse of the manners and customs observed in this community only a hundred and twenty-five years ago. After such a view we can well congratulate ourselves upon the advance we have made in the last century and a quarter in providing for the care and welfare of the children.

In Western Pennsylvania, as on other parts of our frontiers, the first white men to visit the country were hunters, traders, trappers, and renegades of one sort or another, who had lived so long in the wilderness or taken to it so quickly and easily that they were almost savages themselves. (1) Next came those men who intended to make the country their home. These first genuine settlers, “almost without an exception, came from the frontier counties of Virginia and Maryland, chiefly from the former.” (2) It is believed that even these did not have their women and children with them until after the dangers from Indian hostilities, which attended and followed the old French war, had subsided. (3) Consequently, as yet there were no real homes established.

But by 1759 there were both homes and children, though neither of a very pleasing sort if we may judge from Colonel Henry Bouquet’s description of them. Colonel Bouquet, a soldier of fortune who later became famous for winning the Battle of Bushy Run, in a letter to his sweetheart, written in Bedford in 1759, speaks of the people there in the following manner:

“It is true enough that numbers of the inhabitants of the frontier are a worthless breed, and that the public did

1 “Moravian Diaries of Travel Through Va.” Va. Mag. of Hist. and Biog., XI, 123. L. Schnell, a Moravian missionary who travelled through Allegheny County, Va., in 1743, says, “The manner of living is rather poor in this district.” Also, “A kind of white people are found here, who live like savages.”
2 Veech, The Monongahela of Old, p. 83.
3 Fleming, Hist. of Pittsburgh and Environs, I, 512.
not suffer a great loss in getting rid of that vermin, which in time would have perverted the few good ones among them. To judge by what remains they were no better than the savages, and their children brought up in the Woods like Brutes, without any notion of Religion, Government, Justice, or Honesty, would not have improved the Breed.” (4) Perhaps the Colonel was a little too severe in this arraignment, but even if it were so, the settlers themselves can hardly be held entirely to blame. The population was no doubt too scattered for schools and churches, and itinerant preachers were not yet common. That they lacked government was surely no fault of their own, for although nominally included within Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, or Augusta County, Virginia, yet, since the county seat of the former was Carlisle, and of the latter, Staunton, with vast mountain wastes intervening, these parts were too remote to be reached by the civil arm of either. (5) Consequently, every one was at liberty “to do whatever was right in his own eyes.” (6)

Regardless of such a state of affairs, other settlers began to enter the country. Virginia and Maryland still furnished their quota. The Baptists came and settled near Uniontown in 1766-'8; the Lutherans, a German sect, located in German township, Fayette County in 1770; while “overpowering numbers,” chiefly Quakers and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, came from Eastern Pennsylvania and settled near Brownsville, before 1770. Such was the strength of this immigration that, by 1770, the population was liberally estimated at 1,500. (8) At any rate the number had grown so large by 1776, that in October of that year, Virginia saw fit to divide the district of West Augusta into the three counties of Ohio, Yohogania, and Monongalia, and to order court to be held every month by the Justices of the respective counties. (9) In accordance with this act court was held from 1777 to 1781 at the Virginia Court House erected about two miles above the present town of Elizabeth. (10)

4 Fleming, Hist. of Pittsburgh and Environs, I, 512.
5 Veech, op. cit., p. 84; See also Doddridge, Notes on the Settlements and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Va. and Pa., (1912 edition), p. 130.
6 Doddridge, op. cit., p. 130.
8 Hulbert, The Ohio River, p. 90.
9 Hening, Laws of Virginia, (Richmond, 1821), IX, 282f.
10 Van Voorhis, The Old and New Monongahela, p. 176.
This migration from the eastern settlements to the western frontier was one of the most interesting episodes in the child's life. Such a journey in that day was full of peril for all, but especially so for the women and children, poorly provided, as they were, with even the most common necessities. (11) The route that they followed lay along roads, or rather mere paths, so rough and "impracticable" that travel by wagon was hardly, if at all possible. Consequently, recourse was had to pack horses, which continued to be used as the chief means of transportation for years. (12)

Pack horses, when properly loaded, could carry a great burden, but in spite of this, one who beheld one of these caravans would have noticed that every member of the family, and also the milk cow, was pressed into service, in order that some household necessity or some treasured heirloom might be taken with them. Some of the horses were burdened with stores and agricultural implements; others carried the furniture, the bedding and cooking utensils; and still others, when available, the women and children. (13) These latter, "which carried the small children were each provided with a pack-saddle and two large creels, made of hickory withes in the fashion of a crate, one over each side, in which were stowed clothes and bedding. In the center of each would be also tucked a child or two, the top being well secured by lacing, so as to keep the youngsters in their places." Regardless of such precaution, the creels would sometimes break loose, and the babes falling to the ground would roll off amid great confusion. (14) Sometimes space could be found for the mother, infant, table furnishings and cooking utensils, all upon one horse, (15) but, as a rule, the mother walked with the rest of the family, and bore her share of the burden, which might consist of "a spinning wheel in one hand, and a loaf of bread in

12 Ibid.
13 McKnight, C., *Our Western Border*, p. 650.
14 Ibid.; See also a part of the "Diary of Rev. David McClure," quoted in Hanna's, *The Scotch-Irish*, II, 84f. Here Rev. McClure, who made the trip to Western Pa. in 1773, notes in his diary the loading of the pack horses, and says, "On the top of the baggage of one was an infant, rocked to sleep in a kind of a wicker cage, lashed securely to the horse."
15 Wilkeson, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
another.” The father, prepared to cut away the fallen trees from the path and to shoot game or enemy, carried an axe upon one shoulder and his gun upon the other. Those boys and girls, capable of sustaining the fatigue of marching, bore each a bundle, “according to their size.” Around the horns of the cow a bed-cord might be wound, and on her back the bag of precious meal would be securely bound. (16) Such a cavalcade was typical of the many others that toiled their way across the Allegheny before the roads were made.

When several families made the journey at the same time, the caravan was necessarily long. Thus children were frequently separated from their mothers for hours. Then, when the day’s travel was ended, the family would have to be collected before the humble meal could be prepared, both of which tasks usually fell to the mother. Hunger assuaged, all fell asleep, “in the numbing, pinching cold, alongside of some icy stream.” (17)

This frequent travel, in time, widened and cleared the paths to such an extent that they might be called roads, but of the worst kind that could possibly be imagined. Cut into deep gullies on one side by the mountain rains, and filled with blocks of sandstone on the other, with abrupt descents that often resembled the breaks in a flight of stone stairs, they were extremely hazardous. (18) Nevertheless, the hardy pioneers dared to attempt them with their huge and heavy Conestoga wagons.

With these cumbrous vehicles loaded with clothes and necessities, (19) which the emigrants no longer had to carry, the journey was begun. The pull up the mountains was comparatively safe, no doubt, but in descending the steep declivities, and in crossing the slanted or tilted portions of the road, lay the great danger. In the descents, those wagons, which were not provided with lock chains for the wheels, had to be checked by means of a large log or broken tree top tied to their rear, and allowed to drag upon the ground. When the slanting places were crossed all available men were required to get on the upper side and pull at

17 McKnight, C., *op. cit.*, p. 650.
the side stays to prevent the wagon from tipping over. Sometimes trees, in the tops of which grapevines were intertwined, obstructed their way, and before the men could fell them, the boys would have to climb up and cut away the vines which attached each tree to its neighbor. Not in those times did they make the trip from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh in twenty days.

Even yet, however, the women and children followed on foot, especially up all the steep ascents, unless they were very tired or the weather was bad. In climbing the hills “the children often stuck by the way, or lost their shoes in the mud, occasioning a world of trouble to the elder girls, to whose share it fell to look after the welfare of the little ones.” Small wonder that Mr. Hildreth, from whose account the above quotation is taken, could so well remember the journey!

Such toils created enormous appetites. Nevertheless, their manner of living was of the simplest and economical nature. Some carried their provisions with them; others bought their bread, butter, milk and meat from the stores, taverns, or farmhouses which they passed on their way. They ate but two regular meals a day; one before starting in the morning, and another at evening; at these, the men and women drank tea or coffee, and the children, milk. At noon, while the horses were feeding, the travellers took a “cold bite” in their wagons. The cooking was done after the day’s journey was over, in the evening, at the side of the road. This labor fell upon the girls, who prepared the food for the next day after the supper was eaten and the smaller children were asleep.

One can imagine that, after such a weary day, they all sought their pallets early. Usually their beds were spread

20 McKnight, C., op. cit., p. 650.
21 Hulbert, op. cit., p. 71.
22 Baily, op. cit., p. 135; also Hildreth, op. cit., p. 122.
23 Hildreth, op. cit., p. 122.
24 Ibid., p. 118.
25 Ibid., p. 117.
26 Bailey, op. cit., p. 135.
27 Hildreth, op. cit., p. 117.
28 Ibid., p. 118.
29 Ibid., p. 117.
30 Baily, op. cit., p. 135.
on the floors of the houses where they tarried, though a part of the men always slept in the wagons to protect them from pilferers. In the houses chairs were turned down to support the heads of the sleepers. Under the base of these chairs was stowed the clothing of the children, in order to prevent the loss of shoes, stockings, etc., which so often happened in the confusion of the morning haste to be off.

Thus passed their days and nights of travel: the fathers and sons engaged in the care of the train; the mothers in looking after the welfare of the children and overseeing the work of the girls. (31) But the toil could not deprive the young of all their fun, for the younger children visited back and forth from wagon to wagon, (32) and contributed their bit of lightness to the long and toilsome days. Surely, though, the eyes and hearts of all brightened with joy when the last mountain had been crossed and they entered the valleys which were to be their future home.

When their destination was reached, a plot of farm land was selected and the home site chosen. Now began the erection of the temporary structures, called cabins, which were to serve as shelters until the materials for more appropriate houses could be secured. A very good description of these makeshift homes has come down to us from one who saw many such at that period.

"They are built with unhewn logs, the interstices between which are stopped with rails, calked with moss or straw, and daubed with mud. The roof is covered with a sort of thin staves split out of oak or ash, about four feet long and five inches wide, fastened on by heavy poles being laid upon them. . . . . a cabin has commonly no window at all, and only a hole at the top for the smoke to escape" (33)

W. J. McKnight gives us the further information that they were commonly no more than twenty feet by thirty feet in size, and sometimes had a single window with oiled paper for a glass. (34) These were the first shelters that the children could call homes.

Later, when the time could be spared to make or ob-

31 Hildreth, op. cit., p. 117.
32 Ibid., p. 118.
33 Harris, The Journey of a Tour in the Territory Northwest of the Allegheny Mountains, p. 15.
tain the materials, better homes were built. These were called log houses, differing from the cabins in the following ways: the logs were hewn; the interstices were stopped with stone and neatly plastered; the roof was composed of shingles, nicely laid on; the windows were of glass; and a chimney was provided for the escape of smoke. (35) Some were no larger than the first cabins and so poorly constructed that the occupants were still subject to the inclemency of the weather. (36) It is not strange, therefore, to find that the latter houses, so carelessly built, were just as carelessly cared for. (37) Even among the tidy Germans one could sometimes discover an "old log house as black as a smoke house and more dirty than a hog-pen," with "a thousand holes through the roof." (38) Yet such homes were no sign of poverty then, for one traveller noted that a miller with a family of ten, and supposed to be in comfortable circumstances, resided "in a miserable log-house about twenty feet long." (39) Moreover, Henry M. Brackenridge, son of the Honorable H. H. Brackenridge, and born in 1786, lived his first years in a log cabin in the city of Pittsburgh, (40) so we may know that such structures were the common habitation of all classes.

However, when sawmills had been brought into the country and erected, those settlers who were near enough to procure lumber, provided themselves with more modern houses, "with neat floors and ceilings." (41) In Bedford, by 1802, most of the homes were of this nature. (42) But, in the rural and remote districts, log houses continued to be in general use for years to come. (43)

35 Harris, op. cit., p. 15.
36 Michaux, "Travels to the West of the Allegheny Mountains in the year 1802," in Thwaites, Early Western Travels, III, 150.
39 Michaux, op. cit., p. 150.
40 Brackenridge, Recollections of Persons and Places in the West, p. 10.
41 Harris, op. cit., p. 15.
42 Michaux, op. cit., p. 145.
43 Ashe, Travels in America, p. 109. Ashe, who travelled in the Ohio Valley in 1806, says: "In this country in general, most all settlers' houses are built of logs, between which there are large interstices, which require to be filled with well-tempered clay."
In homes like these were the first children born west of the Alleghenies. One hardly needs to be told that in this new country where the population was sparsed and scattered, and where there was little money, few doctors could be found, and these could be secured only by travelling twenty or thirty miles to get them. (44) Consequently, the period of childbirth was one of extreme peril for both mother and child. Without doubt, neighbor women gave all assistance that was in their power, but at best such help and advice must have been of a rather unskillful character, for "deaths in childbed were not infrequent." (45) And, inured as the frontier women were to hardship and shock, sudden fright suffered while in this delicate state, was doubtless the cause of many premature births. (46)

The birth of the first white child west of the Alleghenies is worth noting. This child, born December 5, 1762, and christened George Plumer, was the son of Jonathan Plumer and wife, whose "rude frontier cabin" was located not far outside of Fort Pitt. Mr. Van Voorhis states that the after career of this lad was as notable as his birth. (47)

Though Mr. Palmer may have had the honor of being the first white child who could claim this territory as the land of his nativity, there were many others born in the next few years, who could make a similar claim, if we may judge from the reports of baptisms performed by the early missionaries and ministers who visited the region. Reverend Charles Beatty, who made a two month's tour through this section in 1766, makes mention in various places in his journal of baptizing "several children." (48) The diary of David Zeisberger, a Moravian missionary to the Indians as early as 1771, often mentions the fact that he and his

44 Michaux, op. cit., p. 152.
45 Doddridge, op. cit., p. 120.
46 Hulbert, op. cit., p. 60. Hulbert, in citing the story of one Mary Ingle, who gave birth to a daughter after being captured by the Indians, writes: "On the night of the third day's journey, under a canopy of leaves near a dim fire, assisted by her brave sister-in-law, one of whose arms was tightly bandaged, the miracle was wrought."
47 Van Voorhis, op. cit., p. 476. There is some doubt as to whether Mr. Plumer was truly the first white born west of the Alleghenies, for the Moravian missionaries were baptizing children west of the Alleghenies in 1747 (see page 44).
48 The Journal of a Two Month's Tour, pp. 16, 19, 20.
companion, Heckevelder, had baptized white children at the request of their parents. (49) From such numerous references we may conclude that the birth of a child in the new country had ceased to be such a notable event, outside the family at least.

In spite of the hazards connected therewith the birth of a child was greeted with joy in the frontier home. The German family when blessed with the birth of a son, "exulted in the gift of a ploughman or a waggoner"; if a daughter, they rejoiced "in the addition of another spinster or milk maid" to assist in the household duties. (50) At the time of the birth of their child, they always noted and recorded the signs of the heavens, in order that the horoscope might be read by someone skilled in that art. (51) By them certain days were regarded as unlucky, and it was supposed that the poor child born upon such a date would be doomed to poverty. (52) Without doubt, though, children born on these days were welcomed as heartily as if they had been more fortunate. But the other settlers, also, welcomed the birth of children, if one may judge from the size of their families. Seven or eight children to a family was a common number in those days (53) and families of nearly twice that number were not at all rare. (54) One almost doubts Thomas Jefferson's estimate that it would take a thousand years to populate the country east of the Mississippi, even if all foreign immigration had been barred, when one reads that such large families were so general.

Immediately after birth, or as soon thereafter as a minister of some denomination could be procured to per-

49 Zeisberger, Diary, I, II, notably I, 8, 23, 181, 183, 189, 210, 259, 268 and II, 240.
51 Kuhns, The German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pa., p. 120.
52 Ibid., p. 103. See also Owens, "Folk-Lore from Buffalo Valley, Central Pennsylvania," Journal of American Folk-Lore, IV. p 127. The unlucky days were as follows: Jan. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12; Feb. 1, 17, 18; Mar. 14, 16; Apr. 10, 17, 18; May 7, 8; June 17; July 17, 21; Aug. 20, 21; Sept. 10, 18; Oct. 6; Nov. 6, 10; Dec. 6, 10, 11, 15.
53 McKnight, C., op. cit., p. 422, 604.
form the ceremony, (55) most parents desired that their children should be baptized. Especially were the Germans desirous that this rite should be performed. Even as early as 1747, Reverend Leonard Schnell and his companion, the Reverend V. Handrupt, Moravian missionaries to the Germans on the frontiers, were called upon in numerous instances to baptize children. (56) Usually these men did kindness willingly, but sometimes they refused "because these people give their children such poor training." (57) Zeisberger and Heckewelder seemed to have no hesitation about the matter, cheerfully performing the ceremony for any and all who asked. (58) Sometimes parents were so anxious that they brought their children long distances to the missionaries. (59) Oftimes the rite was performed in the coldest weather, (60) and it is a wonder that such small children did not die from exposure. Perhaps some did but those survived the ordeal had already proved that they possessed the physique necessary to cope with the hardships of pioneer life.

The houses in which these children were born have already been described. The inside of these dwellings was the child's whole world for the first few months, so it is interesting to note the crude furnishings on which his eyes first rested or his little hands clutched as he manfully strove to assume the erect posture of his parents.

The adjective crude adequately describes this furniture, for it was nearly all of home manufacture. (61) The very bed upon which the child was brought into the world was a product of his father's skill with the axe and augur. A description of the way in which these beds were made has fortunately been preserved to us by one of the early pioneers, who had, no doubt, made not a few himself:

"For bedsteads, an oak tree that would split well was selected, cut down, and a log about eight feet long taken

55 Zeisberger, op. cit., I, 8, 199; also Beatty, The Journal of a Two Months' Tour, pp. 16, 19, 20.
56 "Moravian Diaries of Travel Through Va." Va. Mag. of Hist. and Biog., XII, 57f.
57 Ibid., XI, 120f.
58 Zeisberger, op. cit., I, 8, 23, 181, 183, 189, 199, 210, 225, 268; II, 240.
59 Ibid., I, 188.
60 Ibid., I, 181, 183.
61 Doddridge, op. cit., p. 87.
from the butt and split into such pieces as could readily be shaped into posts and rails. Another log not so long was split into such pieces as, with a slight dressing, made slats. Holes were bored with a tolerably large augur in suitable places in the posts for inserting the rails; two rails were used for each side and about three for each end, the end rails answering for head and foot boards. Like augur holes were made in the lower side at suitable points for inserting the slats. When properly prepared this bedstead was put together by pressing the rails and slats in the holes prepared for each, thus making a rough but strong high-post bedstead, the posts at the top being tightly held together by rods prepared for the purpose, upon which curtains were to be hung. Thus was created a bedstead.” (62) Doddridge would lead us to believe that even this bed was a luxury, for he tells us, “When the bed was, by chance or refinement, elevated above the floor, it was often laid on slabs across poles and supported on forks . . . .” (63) But one can imagine that either style was staunch enough to support the wailing bit of humanity lying thereon. In fact, this very stability may have been the cause of his petulance, for as soon as he was placed in his new cradle, made of poplar troughs and peeled hickory bark, (64) and was gently rocked by his anxious mother, he was quickly lulled to slumber.

So soon as he began to crawl he encountered wooden benches, stools, and tables, likewise all of home manufacture. The benches and three-legged stools, a luxury in those days, were made of slabs of wood with legs set in augur holes. (65) Sometimes the tables were made in a more elaborate fashion, and we are again indebted to Mr. Duncan for the details:

“A large tree was cut down, and a log, the length desired for the table, was cut off and split into pieces (slabs) as thin as possible. These slabs were generally two feet in width and six feet in length; when dressed and made as smooth and thin as possible, two were put together with

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63 Quoted in McKnight, C., *op. cit.*, p. 199. See also Doddridge, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
strong cross piece, tightly pinned with wood pins, the whole set upon four strong legs, thus making a strong but rough table four feet in width and six feet in length, the size of the table being governed by the size of the family.” (66)

The tableware was also mostly what they themselves could contrive. Delft, china, and silverware were unknown. (67) Iron forks and knives, and tincups were rare luxuries and could only be procured east of the mountains. (68) A few pewter dishes, plates and spoons had found their way to the west, (69) but, in most cases, wooden bowls, trenchers, and noggins made of beechwood, (70) or gourds and hard-shelled squashes, were in use. (71) Iron pots and kettles, for cooking over the open fireplace at the end of the house, were also much prized articles. (72) In one respect, at least, the frontier child had the advantage of his modern cousin—he could not be scolded for the breaking of any of these utensils.

When darkness hid this infant’s little world, his vision was little improved by the light which his mother lit. If it chanced to be a candle, the home was fortunate indeed. Usually it was an “old iron lamp”, or a “dish containing refuse grease, with a rag in it,” either of which smoked and gave a dismal light. (73) But, since the child could not read, and since those who could had little or no literature on which to exercise their ability, perhaps the poor quality of the light was not felt to the extent to which it would be today.

At any rate, the light was not used long, for the child, tired out with play, and the father and mother, wearied with their labors, were early to seek their rest. Their beds have been described (see page 44), but in such small homes which housed such large families, not many beds of that kind could be erected. Their sleeping accommodations were, therefore, necessarily inadequate.

Sometimes, though, a sufficient number of beds was

66 Duncan, op. cit., p. 399.
67 Doddridge, op. cit. |. 89.
68 Ibid., p. 88.
69 Ibid.
70 Autobiography of an Irish Traveler, I, 1233.
71 Ibid, p. 88.
72 Ibid.
73 McKnight, W. J., op. cit., p. 156.
provided not only for a large family but for strangers as well. In one instance, space was found in a log house about twenty feet long, for four large beds. Two of these were stationary and the other two, built very low, could be pushed under the two former ones in the daytime, and drawn out at night. These four beds received "the whole family, composed of ten persons, and at times strangers." (74) As a rule, however, the adults, and especially strangers, slept on the floor before the fire, oftimes "much exposed to the air." (75) No doubt much air was needed in a room so crowded.

The bed furnishings were of various kinds. Bedsteads were provided with blankets and sheets for covers; (76) feather beds, (77) and possibly straw mattresses, to sleep upon. The Germans used feather beds for both covers and mattresses. (78) When sleeping on the floor they used skins of different animals, especially those of the bear and buffalo, both to lie upon and for covering. (79) Blankets were some times used for coverings in this case, too; (80) and straw was often piled down to relieve the hardness of the floor. (81) It is evident such beds could boast of some warmth and coziness though of little comfort.

But whether the sleeping was done in beds or on the floor, all slept in the same room, as a general rule. (82) In one instance a traveller records that "ourselves, our servants, several waggoners, his wife and eight children, and a young daughter all undressed and went to bed on the

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74 Michaux, op. cit., p. 150.
76 Baily, op. cit., 137.
77 Ibid.; see also Rush, op. cit., p. 22.
78 Ibid.
80 Lincklaen of an Irish Traveller, I, 200; also Jardine, op. cit., p. 12.
82 Ibid.; see also Michaux, op. cit., p. 150.
floor together.” (83) Francis Baily, who journeyed through this country in 1796-97, had an interesting experience of a similar nature which is worth recounting. When it came time to retire, he says,—

“... we were ushered up a ladder, into a dirty place, where a little hole in the wall served for a window, and where there were four or five beds as dirty as need be. These beds did not consist (as most beds do) of blankets, sheets, etc., but were truly in the Dutch style, being literally nothing more than one feather bed placed on another, between which we were to creep and lie down.”

After he had fallen asleep, the “whole family, men, women, and children came up and occupied the other beds. (84) Such conditions were not exactly healthful, judged by our modern standards, but it must be remembered that they were usually the result of necessity, and, therefore, much allowance must be made. Moreover, the constant outdoor life led by the children of that day usually provided them with constitutions sufficiently strong to withstand any evil effects that might have resulted from these arrangements.

However, bed-coverings of bear skin, deer skin, buffalo skin and feathers are hardly washable, even under present conditions. Consequently, we are not at all surprised to learn that the child’s slumber was oftimes disturbed by the bitings of various insects. The most common of these pests was the flea, which, in spite of frequent changes of the straw in the mattresses, was a persistent nuisance. (85) Bed-bugs and lice (86) were not at all infrequent and made the sleeping of those who were unaccustomed to their foraging, difficult. Gnats and woodticks (87) were very annoying both day and night in those homes which happened to be infested with them. And, if the child chanced to doze in his cradle in the daytime, he was doubtless considerably irritated by the buzzing house-fly (88) which seemed to

85 McKnight, W. J., op. cit., p. 158; also Autobiography of an Irish Traveller, I, 200.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
know that his pudgy little fists were harmless. Another common pest, though not an insect by any means, was the rat (89) which, when numerous, no doubt made of sleeping quite an ordeal for the child and even for the timid adult. We, in our rat-proof houses and bug-proof beds, would know better how to appreciate such comforts, if we could have had the pleasure of spending a night in the home of the frontier child.

89 Loskiel, *Extempore on a Wagon*, p. 23. Loskiel puts his experience in verse, which is translated by J. Max Hark, in the following manner:

“At Kilian Grey’s we spent the night,
As comfortable as we might,
Where swarming rats on the rampage
In constant battle us engage.”

(To be Continued)