

This is a short sketch of pioneer history of Watson township, Allegan County written by Fremont D. Miller of Hopkins. I was born in a log house in Watson in 1854, and have lived all my life in Watson and Hopkins townships.

My father, David R. Miller came from Rochester, N.Y. to Watson, Allegan Co. in 1844. There were several families here at that time, but this story concerns the earliest settlers, and took place about 1830.

The Pullen family lived in the extreme eastern part of Allegan township, and the Fields family lived across the road in Watson township on the place now owned by Martin Reed. The Pullens and my folks were close friends and often visited back and forth. This story is what Mr. Pullen told my father.

The early settlers were managing to get along, but it was a slow process clearing the heavy timber to raise crops, and they couldn't meet their taxes. They let them go for several years until finally the government said they had to pay. Well they talked it over and decided to call a meeting at Mr. Pullen's to decide what they would do, so they spread the news by grape-vine telegraph and the neighbors all gathered.

I will digress to explain that what was known as Bear Swamp joined the Field's farm on the east. It was a half mile wide and four miles long running north and south, and was a wilderness full of bear and wolves. They were so disturbing to the neighbors, coming at night to howl by the hour and keep folks awake that the state paid a bounty of \$3.00 for every wolf scalp. At the meeting they voted to buy strychnine and kill deer which they would quarter and fill with poison and scatter through Bear Swamp. They got everything all set, and the next morning they went down to the first bait and there were wolves in every direction, scattered over the snow. It must have been a sight. They cleaned up this bunch of scalps and went to the other baits. There were wolves and more wolves. They shipped them to Lansing and the bounty they got paid all their taxes and there was a nice bunch of money left. They kept on with the poison baits and made subsequent shipments, but they got the main pack of wolves that first night. They were never bothered by their howling after that.

Those pesky wolves proved to be a blessing in disguise I thought as those old pioneers have passed on, and the next generation, there ought to be something said about it.

I am 83 years old, the last of my father's family and presume the only living person that knew this story.