



Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley

Sandford C. Cox

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Sandford C. Cox was a prominent member of the bar and politician, La Fayette, was born near Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana, July 1, 1811. His paternal ancestry were originally from North Ireland, of Scotch-Irish extraction. About 1825 he came with his parents to Montgomery County, settling near the banks of Sugar Creek. About a year and a half after his recovery from having a limb amputated the family removed to the vicinity of Granville, this county. Mr. Cox, realizing that he was a dependent cripple for life, soon became despondent, Due to his disability he became a teacher, county recorder, and later an attorney. During this time he wrote that exceedingly interesting history entitled, "Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley," a reliable work, quoted with satisfaction by all historians of Indiana.

This book provides a firsthand account of the the Potawatomi Trail of Death, the 1838 forced removal of the Potawatomi from Indiana to Kansas in which 41 out of 851 did not complete the journey.

Sanford Cox with other interested parties rode out from Lafayette to see the Potawatomi travelling through Lafayette. In this book he describes this event:

“Hearing that this large emigration which consisted of about one thousand of all ages and sexes, would pass within 8 or 9 miles west of Lafayette, a few of us procured horses and rode over to see the retiring band, as they reluctantly wended their way toward the setting sun. It was a sad and mournful spectacle to witness these children of the forest slowly retiring from the home of their childhood, that contained not only the graves of their revered ancestors, but many endearing scenes to which their memories would ever recur as sunny spots along their pathway through the wilderness. They felt that they were bidding farewell to the hills, valleys and streams of their infancy, the more exciting hunting grounds of their advanced youth, as well as the stern and bloody battle fields, where they had contended in riper manhood, on which they had received wounds, and where many of their friends and loved relatives had fallen, covered with gore and with glory. All these they were leaving behind them to be desecrated by the plowshares of the white man. As they cast mournful glances back toward these loved scenes, that were rapidly fading in the distance, tears fell from the cheek of the downcast warrior, old men trembled, matrons wept, the swarthy maiden’s check turned pale, and sighs and half-suppressed sobs escaped from the motley groups as they passed along, some on foot, some on horseback, and others in wagons - sad as a funeral procession. I saw several of the aged warriors casting glances toward the sky, as if they were imploring aid from the spirits of their departed heroes, who were looking down upon them from the clouds, or from the great Spirit, who would ultimately redress the wrongs of the red man, whose broken bow had fallen from his hand, and whose sad heart was bleeding within him.

“Ever and anon, one of the party would start out into the brush, and break back to their old encampments on the Eel River and on the Tippecanoe - declaring that they would rather die than be banished from their country. Thus scores of discontented emigrants returned from different points on their journey, and it was several years before they would be induced to join their countrymen west of the Mississippi.”

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