Waggoner [1888:690-2]

Dresden W. H. Howard was born in Yates County, New York, November 3, 1817. He was a son of Edward, his grandfather being Thomas Howard. May 22, 1821, the grandfather, with his sons Edward, Robert A. and Richard, their wives and two children (Dresden and a cousin named Sidney), and a daughter of Sidney H. Nelson, left their pleasant homes on the banks of Seneca Lake, near Geneva, for the west. The grandfather rode on horseback, the families and small supplies of clothing and household goods being loaded into two two-horse covered wagons. In due time, over roads almost impassable, the party reached the then Village of Buffalo. Here, the grandfather, with the women and children, embarked on board a 30-ton Schooner (name not remembered), commanded by Captain Anson Reed, for a long and perilous voyage to Fort Meigs, 14 miles above the mouth of the Maumee River. This destination was reached at dusk, June 17th, after a trip of 26 days, where they were cordially welcomed by the few white settlers at “Orleans,” the little hamlet under the Fort. Dresden’s recollection of the scene that met his view on entering the mouth of the River, about 10 o’clock A.M., is yet very clear to him. The dark color of the water of the River was in strong contrast with that of the clear water of the Lake. The scene of chief interest as they slowly passed up the stream, consisted of the white tents of Indians camped on the West bank, from the house of Major Stickney (near Bush Street), to the mouth of Swan Creek – the Indians being there on business with Major Stickney, then Indian Agent for the Government. They were actively engaged in racing and other sports peculiar to Indians: but upon discovering the little Vessel, they gave one wild (to the passengers, unearthly) yell, and ran down the bank, to get as near as possible to the craft. While the boy was deeply interested in the scene, the women were crouched in deadly fear on the deck at such first view of the locality which was to be their home. The Vessel made slow progress up the River, with nothing to be seen but the primeval forest which lined its banks, and a deer and her fawn which had sought protection in the water from swarms of mosquitoes, or from some hunger wolf. In due time, the end of the journey was reached. The teams were many days behind the arrival of the Vessel, they having in bad roads – especially through the “Black Swamp” – more to overcome than the calms and adverse winds of the Lake. The real destination of the party was Tecumseh, or An-au-ba (now known as Ann Arbor), Michigan; but the persuasions of the Hollisters, Spaffords, Forsyths, General Hunt and other residents induced them to stop, when they soon were quartered in little cabins of bark-covered walls. Some cleared land was rented, and a small crop of corn, potatoes, pumpkins, squashes, etc., soon planted. With “dog-days” came ague and fever, attended by want and privation known to none but the pioneer. Several times the entire family was prostrated, with no one able to attend upon the sick. The frosts of October were patiently awaited as the only source of relief to sufferers; which season was made the more grateful for the abundant supplies of fish and corn-“pone,” which it brought. The grandfather had little means with which to start in the new home. He first entered 160 acres of Government lands, where now is the Village of Woodville, Sandusky County; but the Black Swamp proved too much for him, and he abandoned his purchase, subsequently selling it to Amos E. Wood, the founder of Woodville. In 1822, lands were purchased at Grand Rapids, Wood County, when cabins were built for Edward, Robert A. and Richard Howard; and in the Spring of 1823 they cut a road from the Indian Mission, eight miles below, through a dense wilderness to the Grand Rapids of Maumee. And founded a settlement immediately opposite the Ottawa Indian Village of Kin-jo-i-no and Reservation of 12 miles square, at the head of the Rapids.

All of the families, with the grandfather, lived upon their original purchases, cleared away the forests, and made for themselves comfortable homes (save Robert A., who sold his place in 1836, and moved to what now is Fulton County, where he died), and in due time were “gathered to their fathers,” their bodies resting on the banks of the Maumee within hearing of the never-ceasing murmur of the Rapids.

Edward Howard (the father of Dresden) was a Soldier in the War of 1812-15, as was Thomas in the Revolutionary War. The former was at the battles of Lundy’s Lane and Fort Erie. He was never robust after the War, and died in 1841. The mother (Nancy Haight Howard) survived him until 1881, dying at the age of 84 years, and being buried beside her husband. The children were Dresden; one brother, James Monroe, born in Yates County, New York; and one sister (Anjinette), born in Wood County. James died in 1841; and the sister is the wife of Hon. George Laskey, of Toledo. Coming here in childhood, with Indian boys for playmates, Dresden learned the languages of the several tribes in the Valley, and became more or less attached to Indian life. His inclinations early turned toward Indian trade and the hunter’s life. The fur trade with the tribes was then a lucrative business, and his readiness with their dialects made his services in demand by traders, who paid well for them. With others, he was employed by Government Agents in collecting the wandering bands for removal to their new homes beyond the Mississippi in 1832, and again in 1838. In 1832 he aided the removal, when they were transported across the country by wagons and on the backs of their ponies. For a boy, the trip was attractive. Scarcely any settlement was passed for the whole distance. The Indians were located on the banks of the Osage River (now in Kansas), where is the Town of Ottawa, name for the tribe. In 1840, Mr. Howard was employed by W. G. and Geo. W. Ewing, fur traders at Fort Wayne, Indiana, to take a stock of Indian goods up the Missouri River, and open trade with the Omahas, Missouries, lower Sioux, Pottawatomies and other tribes inhabiting the Valley and tributaries of that stream. His father and brother dying in 1841, made it necessary for him to return and care for an invalid mother and his sister, and accept the more quiet life of farming and civilization, for which his previous experience had done little toward fitting him. His school days (from seven to 10 years) were entirely spent at the “Old Indian Mission,” 10 miles above Fort Meigs, in a School of 100 Indian children – he being the only White pupil, save a few Indian and French half-breed boys and girls. That School was organized by the Home Missionary Society of New England, and was closed upon the removal of the Indians in 1838.

The tribes inhabiting the Valley of the Maumee, and also that of the Wabash and their tributaries, at the time of Mr. Howard’s earliest recollections (and for many years before), were the Ottawas, Pottawatomies, Miamis, We-aws, Piankishaws, Shawnees and Delawares, with a few of the Ochibewas and Muncies. The principal Chiefs of the Ottawas were Na-wash, O-to-saw, Char-lo, Oeque-nox-ie, Kin-jo-a-no, Ot-to-kee, Wa-se-on, Wa-se-on-i-quet, and others/. Of the Pottawatomies were Waw-bon-see, Baw-beece, Me-te-ah, Win-a-meg; of the Miamis, La Fountain and Richard-ville, with many others, whose names are not recalled; of Shawnees, were Joseph and William Parks, whose Reservation was at Wa-pa-kon-neta. The Walkers (half-breeds) were principal men among the Wyandotts at Upper Sandusky. Turkey Foot (Mis-sis-sa-inzit), was a noted Ottawa Chief, as was O-to-saw. Little Turtle (Mis-she-kenee) perhaps was the most noted, as he was the most intelligent Chief of the Miamis, who, Mr. Howard things, lies buried near Fort Wayne, Indiana. Turkey Foot was buried near the rock from which he harangued his Braves when he fell with a bullet from one of Wayne’s soldiers, August 20, 1794. Mr. Howard’s memory is stored with facts and associations connected with the aboriginal tribes with whom he was so long intimate. When asked by Governor Noyes, of Ohio, why he always spoke with such special kindness of the Indians, he replied, “They have always, in childhood and in manhood, treated me with kindness, and I could not be ungrateful for their uniform generosity. Treat an Indian justly, and you will secure his friendship for life. Treat him illy, and you have his enmity for life.” Mr. Howard’s present residence is on the site of the old Indian Village of Winameg, Fulton County, where the former residents so long enjoyed savage life, and where so many of them found their last resting place, which is now carefully protected. The Red Man has taken his last drink from the shaded spring at the foot of the hill, his last look upon the landscape so long his pride, and now sleeps nearer the setting Sun. In the Spring of 1827-28, Mr. Howard – then a boy of 10 years – first visited that locality, and there ate his first bowl of hominy and roast venison, and took his first drink from the pure waters of the spring. The Indians had just returned from their Winter hunting-grounds in the pine and sugar-maple forest of the then wild Territory, now the fertile and rich State of Michigan, where they had enjoyed a successful hunt; bringing in a bountiful supply of Maple sugar (of which they were fond). They were having their annual dance or worship of the Great Spirit (Chi Manitoo), returning thanks for success in the hunt, and asking for a prosperous season to come. For the Summer, the women were to plant and how, while the men, beside lounging about, were to look for an occasional deer. Corn, beans and pumpkins were still planted there; but not by the faithful, patient squaws of former days.

Mr. Howard, with all his early attachment for the primitive ways of the Indians, has not been backward in promoting the methods and means of Christian civilization. For forty years past he has been identified, to greater or less extent with the agricultural, the financial, the political, and the social movements of the age, seeking faithfully to meet his full duty in these several relations of life. In promoting the construction of good roads, elevating the farming interests, and the establishment of sound morals and general education, he has been active. In 1870 he represented the Tenth District on the State Board of Equalization. Elected to the State Senate in 1871 from the Thirty-Third District, he served in that body for two years. In 1860 he was Presidential Elector, casting the vote of the Fifth Congressional District for Abraham Lincoln. Of all his record in connection with elections, that which gives him his chief pride, was made in the fight for the exclusion of the sale of intoxicating liquors at Wauseon, in April, 1887. He was appointed by Governor Foraker, April 1, 1887, a Trustee of the Toledo Asylum for the Insane, constructed for the State, near Toledo. Mr. Howard was married in 1843 with Mary b. Copeland. There were born to them two children – Osceola E. M., Civil Engineer, of San Diego, California; and M. Agnes, now residing with her parents at Wauseon, Ohio.