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AN ADAMS TOWNSHIP HOMESTEAD

(Annie Boxley Martin)

Is there anything so sad as an empty old homestead, that was once, perhaps, the pride of the village, but is now empty, alone and forsaken? Some one said, "All houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses," for a house, too, lives a life full of joys and sorrows. Has its turmoils, advancements and back sets. It is builded slowly into a home for "it takes a lot of living in a house to make a home." Companionship, love and care, and if there is a large family, the terror of sickness hovers over its roof, and even death may enter its portals. Year after year the home comes to mean more to a family and to the community . People pass it each day and look on its outside appearance with interest. Children play in it, and around it. Now it is seeing its best days. But then the time comes and the house stands empty, its old familiar friends gone, its windows looking blankly out on new surroundings, at people who are indifferent or antagonistic to its yearn.

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Such thoughts come to one's mind when passing the Old Underwood Homestead in Sheridan, on the Lafayette road. These grounds were purchased to erect the New Consolidated High School of Adams Township, and this old homestead knows its must soon vacate its lifelong situation in the midst of its magnificent evergreens. It has been empty for a long time and looks very neglected. Windows clouded with dust, and its empty rooms echo all street sounds, laughs, chatter and discordant yells,

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even the sound of the trains as they rush madly through Sheridan, never stopping for fear, if they did they might pick up a passenger. This house seems to mournfully ask, that some one come and live in it once more and to think of its past.

Away back in the early '80s, it was a wide, white, old fashioned house, with its pines, its lovely lawn, shrubs and flower gardens, with its large farm pushing backward, well kept and well stocked. A fine domestic homestead, its pleasant rooms echoed with the laughter and conversation of Mr. And Mrs. Lewis Underwood and their seven children. The family ranked high among the best of Adams Township home makers, willing to contribute part of their time and energy to the public good. And as the schools were then the center of social activity of the sparsely settled community the Underwood family were deeply interested in education, and the young folks worked hard to keep in the lead in student life.

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Now this old homestead is passing into history. Will soon be a memory. Yet it stands watching the erection of the fine new school building, and after all, it seems good to know that these grounds will echo the footsteps that go to seek knowledge and culture, and that great grandchildren of Lewis Underwood and wife will attend school in this new building. And it is across the road from the two-room building, where the older Underwood pupils attended school and answered roll call in the '80s.

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It is a long, long road from the time when the first school was taught in Adams Township, on the old Boxley farm, at the foot of the hill, opposite the end of Main Street. Just one hundred and two years ago this spring term. It was taught by George Boxley, the township's first settler in 1828, and he regularly taught each year until 1838. He had a large family of boys and girls who needed instruction, and as he was a university graduate he gathered his own, and as many of the neighborhood children who wished to come, and taught them free of charge, putting up a crude log structure for his own use. He taught short terms here until 1838 and in this year they raised a subscription for the purpose of having a school. A Mrs. Pierce was employed to teach it, this relieving Mr. Boxley of his self imposed task.

This school room was also a log cabin, which stood near the present location of the Wesleyan church. After 1838 schools were taught at various places in the township, until the law provided for regular schools in 1851.

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Now Adams Township is providing for her children, a large comfortable building, with plenty of heat, light, ventilation, and modern accommodations. The work is going on in earnest. The shacks used to protect the material for construction make the grounds look like a village within a village. When one passes you feel the inspiration and influence even now from this greatest of all institutions, "The Free Public School." It is the place where they train our future citizens in the things that will strengthen and develop them to be of use and service in the world. We know an educated people will make Adams Township speak in no uncertain voice when heard. Homesteads pass away, school buildings go – the work of man's hands vanishes, but what is gathered into the mind by men of what is taught in our Great Public Schools of Indiana will help to solve our personal and national problems. A good education is for "all time."