

John Balch, born in Somerselshire, England, came to Massachusetts in 1623 and settled in North Beverly. Robert Balch, a farmer in Topsfield, Mass., marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775. His youngest son, William Balch, served in the War of 1812 and came to Madison, Ohio, in 1818. He settled on Middle Ridge on the place, which is now owned by Nichols Brothers. The old house across from Burns Road on Middle Ridge was built after the first house burned.

He traveled from Newport, New Hampshire on horseback. The first summer he cleared ten acres of the 130 acres of forest and built a log cabin on the ridge. In the fall, he returned East and that winter on a sledge built for the purpose, he brought his wife, Mary Boyton of Weathersfield, Vermont, to their new home in the wilderness.

True Pioneer Stories

Told by William Balch, pioneer, to his son, George F. Balch, recopied by Frances Balch.

In the month of December 1817, the 28th, I came to Madison in this way. I rode up to the tavern in Unionville. The land lord's name was Hal Brook. I wanted to know if he knew a man by the name of Dow, he said he did. I asked him to give me the directions to find him. "You go north about ½ mile and you will come to the house of William Harper and then go west three miles. The fourth house you come to you will find Evan Dow," said he. "I am much obliged, good-bye," I replied. The country was all woods. I started north and when I got thirty or forty rods where the Gleason Tannery now stands (Unionville R. Rt.) there was a mud hole to go through. I got about the middle of it when the horse got one leg caught in a root. He pitched and threw me over his head. I struck on my head and shoulder. The mud was 18 inches deep and thick as mush. My plug hat went under and I had to turn over before I got up. By that time my horse found his legs again. When we got out we were the worst looking animals you ever saw. I got to Evan Dow's in the evening the 29th of December 1817. I bought the north end of Silas Newcomb's tract, one hundred acres. (Where Squares Acres is now.) He found it too swampy, so later traded it for the tract now owned by Nichols Brothers.

A Bear Story

In July 1819 I was sitting and rocking my baby son (John) in my arms. I looked out on the bridge and there was a large brown bear. I called my wife to come and take the baby and I would go for the bear. I got my gun and started to cut him off. I went to the corner of my clearing and waited for him to come with my gun all ready. As I waited for the bear, I saw an old stump about five rods from me but I could not see the bear. I stood there about ten minutes waiting for him to come along. All at once that old stump fell over and started off. I then drew up to fire. He ran behind a log and went along to the top where the trees were thick. I could not get a shot at him before he was out of the way of all the danger.

Told by William Balch, Pioneer