



Early Indiana Trials: And Sketches; Reminiscences (Classic Reprint)

O. H. Smith

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Excerpt from Early Indiana Trials: And Sketches; Reminiscences

The writer proposes to consume a leisure hour by calling upon his recollections of the early trials of important cases in Indiana, which may be interesting, at least to some of our pioneer settlers who are yet living witnesses of the truth of his reminiscences. He proposes to confine himself to the Third Judicial Circuit of the State, and to the time when the Hon. Miles C. Eggleston was Presiding Judge of the circuit. The Third Judicial Circuit included what was then known as the Whitewater country, and extended from the county of Jefferson north to the State of Michigan, some two hundred miles in length, and from the Ohio line on the east, to White River, some seventy-five miles west. The country was new, sparsely settled, and being on the western frontier, the towns and villages were filled with Indians, trading their peltries, wild game and moccasins ornamented with the quills of the porcupine, with the settlers, for calicoes, whisky, powder, lead, beads, and such other articles as met their fancy. The population of the country embraced by the circuit, was a hardy, fearless and generally honest, but more or less reckless people, such as are usually to be found advancing upon the frontiers from more civilized life, and consequently there were more collisions among them, more crimes, committed calling for the action of the criminal courts, than is common in older settled and more civilized parts of the older States.

The judiciary system at the time referred to was, like the country, in its infancy. The Circuit Court was composed of a president judge, elected by the Legislature, who presided in all the courts in the circuit, and two associate judges, elected in each county by the people.

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