

The Bark Covered House by William Nowlin
Excerpt Three -- Troublesome Indian

“The first Indian who troubled us was one by the name of John Williams. He was a large, powerful man, and certainly, very ugly. He used to pass our house and take our road to Dearbornville after **fire-water**, get a little drunk, and on his way back stop at John Blare’s. Mr. Blare then lived at the end of our new road. Here the Indian would tell what great things he had done. One day when he stopped, Mrs. Blare and her brother-in-law, Asa, were there. (John Williams) took a seat, took his knife from his belt, stuck it into the floor, then told Asa to pick it up and hand it to him; he repeated this action several times, and Asa obeyed him every time. Seeing that (Asa) was afraid, (John Williams) said: “I have taken off the scalps of six...(white men) with this knife and (I will) take off one more.”

“When father heard (what John Williams had said), father thought that he was (to be) the victim. We were all very much frightened. Whenever father was out mother was uneasy until he returned, and father feared that the Indian, who always carried his rifle, might...shoot father when he was at work.

One day (John Williams) came along, as usual...and passed our house. Father saw him, came in (the house), took his rifle down from the hooks and told mother he (was going to) shoot first. Mother would not (allow) it.

After we lived a year or two longer in **mortal fear** of him, (John Williams) died a natural death. We learned afterward that **Joseph Pardee** was the man (John Williams) had intended to kill. (John Williams had) said, “Pardee had cut a **bee-tree** that belonged to Indian.”

Vocabulary: fire-water = alcoholic drink; mortal fear = to be afraid for your life; Joseph Pardee = neighbor of William Nowlin’s family; bee-tree = tree containing bee hive and honey.

Questions to think about and answer:

1. Why was the Indian, John Williams, going to Dearbornville?
2. Why did John Williams stop back at the Blare’s house after he had been drinking?
3. What do you think John Williams thought of Asa?
4. What did William Nowlin’s father think that the Indian was going to do to him?
5. Why did father want to shoot John Williams?
6. Who stopped father from shooting the Indian?
7. How did John Williams finally die?
8. Who was the person that the Indian wanted to kill?
9. Why did the Indian want to kill him?
10. Do you think father and his family ever relaxed as long as John Williams was alive?