

## Some of the More Destitute Families in Green County

Many families have endured difficult circumstances in Green County during the decades since its first white settlers arrived in the 1830s. Today we are going to explore three families who were at the lowest point that they could have fallen to. This is another column that might create some emotions because of the matter-of-fact way the newspapers reported the news.

The first situation is from the Monroe Sentinel of November 30, 1870 and I'm sharing it exactly the way it was written in the paper as I can't improve on that writing. "A tailor by the name of Martin Theur came to this town to work for Mr. Cohn, the merchant tailor on the north side of the Square. He had worked but a short time when his wife and two little girls came, and being entirely destitute, Mr. Cohn advanced money to buy the necessary articles for housekeeping. Theur continued to work through the summer, and finally took a notion to change his place of employment, and went to work for Mr. Wettengel. He showed evident signs of restlessness and a disposition to shirk the responsibilities of his position; and about a month ago, with the pretense of going on a hunt, disappeared, leaving his family to the mercy of cold, public charity.

"On Monday, this poor woman, who is near the period of child-birth, was taken to the county poor house, together with her two bright and sensitive children. When it was made known to her that this was to be her lot, she seemed to be crazed, and wandered about the town for hours, leaning against the fences for support, and sobbing as if her heart would break; finally, when the Commissioner, with the assistance of Mr. Tschudy succeeded in finding them, the wail sent up was heart-rending as described by a woman who witnessed it and did all she could to comfort those unfortunate beings. Oh, that some effort had been made by those who knew of this family's condition, in time to make them a purse and send them to their friends, or provide a place where the woman could receive the care and have the quiet so necessary to one in her condition.

"And what shall be said of the man who could have work and steady support for his family, and would act thus? Let him be branded with infamy, and may he know nothing but remorse, until he returns and takes back the sacred charge which nature has imposed upon him."

The second incident that I'm going to share came from the Sentinel on September 11, 1878 and will sound eerily familiar. "The miserable devil, Troxler, who ran away, deserting his wife and two little children, the other day, should be made to work in a chain gang and his wages paid for the support of his distressed family. He left them in very destitute condition, and for no other reason, as can be learned save to shirk the responsibility and care, the support of those whose existence is consequent on the voluntary act of their unnatural parent. They are pretty children and Mrs. Truxler is a good looking young woman, is about to give birth to another child. It is to be hoped that she may have kind neighbors and friends who will not see her or her children suffer."

The Monroe SUN printed the following, a third sad situation, on September 2, 1893 in such a way that one can't help but feel sorry for the family. They had one bad break after another until their situation was discovered and they finally received help.

"A most shocking and pitiable case of destitution, abject want and misery was brought to light on Wednesday in the town of Cadiz by Poor Commissioner Clark Baker. The attention of Mr. Baker had been called to the case and he accordingly investigated it and afforded relief. Upon arriving at the place designated he found three women one quite old and the other two idiots, one of them a daughter of the old woman, living in a rude shanty, or burrow on the side of a hill, which they had erected to afford shelter from the elements, and which was but little better than a pig-stye. A rough few boards formed the roof of the dug-out, and for the front and sides old quilts were made to do service to shut out the wind, rain, etc. An old stove standing at the door of the hovel, and a large boiler, in which the old woman was boiling green corn, their only food, when Mr. Baker arrived, were all the cooking utensils the wretched beings possessed. The history of the case is a sad one indeed. The family's name is Brown, and they owned a few acres of land in Cadiz on which they, with the father, Jas. Brown, managed to eke out a precarious existence until he died. Some months ago their dwelling was burned to the ground, and they were forced to take shelter in the apology for a stable. But disaster still followed the poor wretches, and a week or so ago the stable caught fire and was consumed, and with it what little furniture they had saved from the first fire. They then constructed the wretched shelter referred to and where they were found. They were all conveyed to the County farm. The two younger women are idiots so low in the scale of intellect as to be

mere animals. The county poor house never opened its hospitable doors to a more degraded and miserable lot of human beings.”

The 1893 Green County Plat book shows that the J. L. Brown estate owned 40 acres near the cemetery in Section 22 and J. A. Brown owned 30 acres in Section 26. I checked at the Register of Deeds and found no record for a James Brown who had died in the previous five years. Nor did I find any record of the widow selling any land in Cadiz within the next 18 months.



This portion of the 1891 plat map of Cadiz Township shows the property where the family who might have been the poorest to ever live in the county lived. The J. A. Brown plot in Section 26 at the bottom of the map and the J. M. Brown estate in Section 22 are possible locations of the James Brown family who were discovered living worse than animals in 1893. For reference on the map, the Saucerman Cemetery is located at the top left of this portion.