

Henry Charles Tibbetts and his wife Catherine Messinger moved from their home in Marion County, Indiana in 1846. The following year their oldest daughter was born. She died in infancy. So this young couple, he not quite 20 and she just past 19 removed from the home of their childhood in Indiana, to journey farther west by covered wagon train in company with several other families to a new section of the middlewest to north eastern Iowa, which state was as yet very sparsely settled. The Big Woods was a strip of timber land about 30 miles in length and ten miles in width. Here Henry Tibbetts bought government land at the price of one dollar and a quarter per acre and immediately began the erection of a log cabin for a home, for his little family and there to fell the timber in order to make a clearing for their planting of crops. Corn was the first crop planted. The father Henry, was a hard worker and his children have heard him say in later years that he often used to arise at 3 a.m. in order to get as much work done as possible in those first months in the new land.

At first the nearest grist mill was at Dubuque, 100 miles away and so it was a tedious trip to haul the corn to the mill, then wait to have it ground, then travel back home with the supply of cornmeal. Fortunately for the pioneers in those early days there were many wild fruits and berries growing in the woods, cherries, cranberries, gooseberries, blackberries, plums, crabapples and grapes. In the fall there was an abundance of hard nuts, chestnuts and walnuts (black walnuts) and each spring the settlers would tap the sugar maple trees for the sap and boil it down into maple sugar and syrup and for years in those early days this was the only kind of sugar the pioneer family had, but later they were able to trade in maple sugar for the refined "white" sugar at the general merchandise store. During the early affairs in the new settlement there were many Indians in that part of the state and they used to come often to buy food from the settlers and on one of these visits one of their number took a great fancy to the child "Adelia" (Aunt Dee) and near succeeded in carrying her away captive, surely a terrifying experience to a young child. In these days the neighbors were far apart, but on Sundays they would visit around and great was the joy of the children to see company coming to spend the day. It is related that on one occasion one of the visitors at Henry's spied a small bottle way up under the rafters in the barn and then immediately conceived the idea of getting the bottle and playing doctor. Delia was then sent into the house to get a teaspoon and she was to be the doctor and administer the medicine to each of the patients. So she had all of the children lie down in a row and she was just ready to pour out a dose when one of the parents appeared on the scene in time to rescue the bottle which contained a deadly poison which Henry kept on hand for some special purpose. In the course of time in this new settlement there was a neighborhood school to which the children trudged from miles around. But as the school was only in season a few months each year, father fitted up a shed next to his tool house and hired a teacher for his children. There was Jennie and Adelia, Robert Nelson, Cyrus Jeffrey, John Henry, & Orthington (called "Worthy").