

The Old Whipping Post at the Ovid Court House

[This manuscript has been found in a book in the Seneca County Historian's Office. There is no date for the incident described in the story, nor is there any source information. It has been included here for two reasons: (1) it is an interesting and humorous story, and (2) it is hoped that someone reading this story will be able to provide missing details such as the year of the incident and its source.]

James Van Vleet was the last man whipped at the whipping post at the Ovid Court House. It seems that at this time the country was overrun with deer. The deer were quite tame and did considerable damage to the farm crops.

One morning Mr. Van Vleet sent his two small boys out to chase the deer out of the wheat. The deer were so tame they would go round in a circle and the boys could not get them out. Upon learning about this problem, Mr. Van Vleet said he would get them out. He went to the house and got his gun and shot one of the deer.

Mr. Brown, his neighbor, who was not thought of well in the community, knew that there was a fine of twenty-five dollars for any one killing a deer and that upon conviction by the Court the party making the complaint was to receive one-half of the fine. Mr. Brown made a complaint to the Court and Mr. Van Vleet was brought before the Judge and given a trial. Mr. Van Vleet did not deny the charge and was found guilty. The Judge fined him \$25.00 or twenty-five lashes at the whipping post. Mr. Van Vleet would not pay the fine at this time even though he admitted that he was guilty. In the hopes that Mr. Van Vleet would decide to pay the fine, the Judge adjourned Court to the next day, as the Judge did not want to sentence Mr. Van Vleet to the twenty-five lashes.

The next day when Court convention, Mr. Van Vleet and many of his neighbors were there. Mr. Van Vleet stood firm in his decision not to pay the fine. The only thing for the Court to do was a sentence of twenty-five lashes at the whipping post..

At the announced time the next day, Mr. Van Vleet appeared to pay the penalty as fixed by the Court. A large crowd of his friends was also gathered. The officer took Mr. Van Vleet to the whipping post, and the crowd followed. The Officer began to give Mr. Van Vleet light lashes and when he had received twelve, the crowd said stop. One of the crowd said that since Mr. Brown was entitled to one-half of the fine and that the fine was not paid, then Mr. Brown should be given one-half of the lashes. The officer then gave Mr. Brown twelve hard lashes.