

# Quite the character

BY C.W. LATTIN

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The following excerpt from an article titled "Pioneer Reminiscences" appeared April 11, 1861, in the Medina Tribune. It was written by Gen. William G. Tanner (1793-1869), who felt disposed to give some reminiscence of early pioneers of Shelby who exerted great influence upon their community and times. In this selection, he speaks of James Carpenter, a pioneer preacher. Through this story, I believe we get a first-hand flavor of the people and those early pioneer times.

"It was in the year 1818. The people were assembled at Oak Orchard to attend a funeral. The preacher engaged, failed to be there at the appointed time, and there was a prospect of having no sermon. After some delay, a person remarked there was a minister coming.

"All eyes were turned toward the newcomer, and some were disposed to laugh at the idea of his being a preacher. He was a small dark man, very coarsely clad, with a large leather apron blackened with grease and dirt reaching nearly to his feet, and an old hat with the brim flapping over his eyes. He drove a diminutive yoke of cattle on an apology for a cart, with a trough or two on an axle filled with black salts, which he was carrying to market.

"An acquaintance went out and stated the circumstances, and invited him to come in and preach for them. He willingly consented, and driving his cattle into a fence corner, without any preparation, came in and was introduced as Elder Carpenter. He laid off his hat, named a text and proceeded with his sermon, without a moment's delay. At its conclusion, he turned his cattle from the fence and went on to market.

"The feelings of the congregation underwent an entire change during his sermon, for he displayed a very high order of talents,

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taking them by surprise, for they had judged the man by his appearance and thought him incapable of delivering so eloquent a sermon."

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