The following was included in a series of articles published in The Democrat newspaper, printed at Hillsboro, Jefferson County, Missouri, beginning with the March 18, 1870 issue. The Hillsboro Literary Society printed a list of questions and submitted them to the oldest settlers of the county. The following by Mr. Stone, who was also the publisher of The Democrat, takes place in the year 1800 and is presented here with only a few spelling changes.

Lisa K. Gendron

Reminiscences and History of Jefferson County (Missouri)

by: Frank N. Stone

The region of country now known as Plattin Township, presented a magnificent scene-simply, plainly and truly a magnificent scene. The stretch of land from the Mississippi westward was rolling prairie, spotted here and there with picturesque groves of timber, and the streams found their pathways through belts of large and noble looking timber. Long fine grass carpeted nature's uneven floor and made it smooth, while seas of flowers - brilliant in their primitive wildness and sparkling with all the varied hues of the rainbow, ornamented, beautified, and enlivened the picture. The game was abundant. Antelopes and deer bounded from copse to grove - not in fright but sport. Wild pigeons swarmed the groves. Turkeys stalked tamely through the grass. Wolves roamed and howled at night, and skulked during the daylight and sunshine.

But the grandest sight of all was the horses. Troops of beautiful, well formed horses clattered over hill and dale, or stood in the shade of the tall trees. They were not ponies, but horses, large and well formed, fleet as deer and sure-footed. They frequented the prairies and open country, except when frightened, when they would betake themselves to the dense low timber in the upper regions of the Plattin, around its head-waters. A safe hiding place was here found from all pursuers, red and white, and until danger was well over they never returned.

What a scene for romance was here! Yet who to enjoy it! There was very little romance left in the whites after the tedious and perilous journey to the new country; and as for the red man, his lot is too hard for romance to play a part of it.

But no one's life is wholly without romance, and romance has played its part in Jefferson County history. And for the edification of those who are of a romantic or sentimental turn, in this assemblage, (and of such there may be not a few) I give a romantic incident of the olden time; a historical one however, and only colored by fancy.

The scene I have described. It was the fair Plattin region - the land of flowers and horses. It was longer ago than half a life time-almost a life time. In the fair country described, way off upon a high hill, overlooking miles of country and miles of the Mississippi's turbid waters-up in Selma Hills, the noted Indian chief, Blood Bird (red bird) built his abode of tents, and poles, and skins. Blood Bird was happy-for he was all powerful in the land. His followers were wont to respect and obey him; discord was never had, and where tranquility is, peace always reigns. And he was on friendly terms with the pale-faced settlers. He was a sensible Indian - he was shrewd and observing, and knew that peace with the whites meant safety.

And Blood Bird had a daughter, as many a man before him and since his time. And she was very fair, as many a one before and since her time. Nearly as pale as

the white man's face was hers, blacker and finer her hair - softer, more tender her eyes - deeper, tenderer, stronger her love - more abiding, firmer her faith - more bitter, more blasting her hate.

A young pale face saw and loved this daughter of the Indian. He came to Blood Bird's house from the mouth of the Plattin frequently, and the chief was too good a judge of human nature to mistake the object of the young man's visits. Indeed they were not denied. But Blood Bird was not very favorably inclined toward his visitor. He did not want to lose his daughter, and a rising young brave of his own people had long aspired to be his son-in-law, and it would weaken his power in his tribe, perhaps, to take in the pale faced encroacher.

In these days there roamed and led a herd of horses, a beautiful cream-colored horse. He was the admiration of all that had ever seen or heard of him. He was large and graceful, and as fleet as the wind. Hundreds, both white and red had tried all the power of ingenuity and strength in their possession to capture him, but dismally failed. Blood Bird killed many animals in chasing the cream - colored horse, but he swept away like a phantom, his silvery mane and tail floating in the winds, leaving his pursuers alone up on the plains.

Blood Bird chased him one day, and in the evening returned at sunset. The young man was there. He pressed his suit and boldly asked the chief for his daughter.

"Go," said the chief in a wild manner, "go and catch the Silver-Mane, and by the Great Spirit, you shall have my daughter."

"Tomorrow I will determine my destiny," exclaimed the pale face. "I will go after the Silver-Mane, and will never return without him."

The young white man owned the fleetest horse under saddle and reins. He had chased the Silver-Mane and pressed him closely, but abandoned pursuit in consideration of his animal. There was little chance for consideration now in his behalf, unless he caught the wild horse.

Daybreak found the rider and horse in search of Silver-Mane. Determination was settled on the young man's face, and his horse tramped uneasily. Silver-Mane was soon discovered. He espied his old pursuer; the only one he feared. The wild horse knew he must run for it. He pranced off in majestic splendor, hour after hour pursuer and pursued clattered over hill, dale and prairie. The huge form of his fiery blood-bay pursuer was looming up at his heels. The sun was high in the heavens, and the white foam streamed from the fevered flanks. Silver-Mane headed for the Mississippi. He was all excitement and fear now. Pride had vanquished, and he ran not knowing what he did. Likewise had his pursuer become oblivious of every passing event except the chase. Heedless on they dashed. The steep hills were nearer than before, and now they are reached. The wild horse is frenzied, crazed. Recklessly he runs and now is as recklessly pursued. Nearer he comes to the river. The whole country is in sight, but no stops to gaze upon it. A dense copse is before the horse. He plunges heedlessly into it and is followed.

The chase is ended. Two hundred feet below, upon the loose fragments of crumbled rock and decayed wood and riotous vegetation, are three corpses; rider and horse, pursuer and pursued, no more in dread of each other. The ground was crimsoned, and as a tall Indian, uttering a shriek of horror ran up and beheld the scene, his face changed. A ghastly smile of satisfaction spread over his repulsive countenance as he beheld the features of the pale face, now paler still in death. It was his rival.

In the mouth of the little valley below where this melancholy tragedy occurred, stands the little village of Rush Tower, and the historic spot is still designated and pointed out.

And this is some of the romance in Jefferson County history. Tis disconnected and disjointed, and necessarily so. Imagination may have furnished parts of the story - those which records fail to give, and fancy may have sought to give it a brighter tinge of color than reality is wont to do. Be this as it may, on my part tis the chapter of an hours preparation yet diving back almost a life time.