

## A HISTORICAL QUAIL HUNT

Carl A. Leopold was born in 1858 and died in 1914. He lived through the years when the last passenger pidgeon died and the final wild buffalo departed the western plains. He saw the population of other species decline dramatically in number as a result of wanton slaughter, and he realized we must learn to conserve if we hope<sup>d</sup> to save our sport of hunting.

Carl had three sons. Aldo was born in 188<sup>7</sup>~~9~~ and became a world wide authority on wild life. Aldo dedicated his text book "Game Management" to his father with the inscription "Pioneer in Sportsmanship."

Father took each of his three boys in turn as his hunting companion and to teach us some of what he had learned. In about 1908, while Aldo and Carl were off in college, my turn came. Dad did not enjoy Sunday hunting because there were too many hunters. School kept me the first five days, so that left only Saturdays for hunting, excepting at Thanksgiving, when Friday was a holiday.

One year I recall we enjoyed a two day hunt at Batavia, an hour's train ride west of us. We entrained in the darkness of early morning on a west bound passenger train, putting our setter dog in the baggage car. The steward opened the dining car early so we could eat breakfast on board. We wore our hunting clothes of light canvas which shed burrs. One unusual part of father's dress was his shell vest. A sleeveless garment carrying three horizontal rows of small vertical shell pockets, totaling about 50 when full.

When we got off at Batavia it had become daylight, and with the dog we walked the short distance to our two-story hotel "The Humble House," where we engaged a room for the night with Mr. Humble and left our one suitcase and extra shell box. It was the beginning of a two day hunt. One day would be



spent in the low hill country west of town, and the other in river bottom land to the east. Dad shied off bottom land hunting, not because of fewer quail, but because of higher cover with its burrs and difficult shooting. I remember little in detail of these hunts eighty years ago, but there were lots of quail. An average day's hunt produced about twelve to fifteen big coveys; sometimes more. Most were full coveys of a dozen or more birds...We really went pretty much from covey to covey with little lost time.

One good area was farmed by a man named Hoenodel who had kicked <sup>us</sup> me out before, so we avoided his place. Most farmers in late November were in their corn fields gathering, and we could hear where they worked by the bang of the ears as they hit the backboard and the driver as he directed his team. We purposely avoided them.

By evening we were plenty tired and ready to quit. At our little hotel we washed up in a bowl and water pitcher getting ready for supper. The meal was served "family style" on platters which were passed around and each diner helped himself. The meals consisted mostly of fried meat and potatoes in plenty. The meat was usually tough neck beef or other cheap cuts to which we were not accustomed.

After supper we worked over the many burrs in the dog's long setter fur so he, too, could sleep comfortably. He was fed and tied at the back porch, and we went up to bed. Father believed in sleeping with plenty of fresh air, <sup>meaning an</sup> measuring ~~our~~ open window. But our windows were nailed shut for the winter, so Dad had to call our host with a hammer to get one open. So to our big double bed.



Here I had my first experience with feather beds. One under and one over. They felt fine, soft and warm, but during the night Dad, being twice my weight, made a deeper hole in the feathers and I ended up on top of him.

After a sound sleep we went down for breakfast to get ready for the second day's hunt. Dad came in from checking on our dog and reported quietly to me "Two quail are missing of our string." We didn't begrudge our host his tidbit, but this was not the first time. We paid our bill and so began the second day of our big Thanksgiving hunt.

In those days hunters were scarcely a limiting factor of the quail population, but trapping quail could destroy a whole covey at a time. The type of farm program of those days with its weedy fence rows, rail fences, small fields, osage hedges, hand shucking of corn and spring ploughing, produced great numbers of quail and natural production plus bad weather held them in check.

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