

## Solar Eclipse of June 16, 1806

With the upcoming solar eclipse event this weekend and then again in April 2024, I thought it would be fitting to share the story told by William Wentz as it appeared in the book entitled "History of Broome County 1885".

"He says: It was in the month of June, 1806, that my brother and I, then small boys living with our parents on Park farm in Kirkwood, were a mile away in the dense forest up the Fitch's mill brook, five miles east of the then small village of 'Chenango Point,' now Binghamton, searching for cattle which had escaped from the pasture to seek the cooler atmosphere of the forest. We were tracing the course of the stream, and occasionally peering into pools of water in the depressions of the creek bottom, not for the cattle, but for trout, which were then abundant in that stream. We at length discovered on the sun's image in the water a dark, circular figure, apparently resting on the limb of that image. A moment's reflection reminded us that the sun was to be darkened on that day, and it had not occurred to us on leaving home. Nimrod Hughes, of New Jersey, if my memory serves, and several others, visionaries and wiseacres, had for several months previous predicted this day as the end of the world, pretending to demonstrate their theories from the good book. Credulous thousands had swallowed the prediction and in numerous instances had made large preparations and pecuniary sacrifices for the solemn event. The circular figure discovered on the sun's image was soon still more visible; in this emergency we abandoned further pursuit of the cattle and instinctively bent our steps homeward, probably a little urged by excitement. Fortunately our route home was well toward the sun thus rendering it convenient to keep an eye upon any threatening demonstration from that quarter; though it led us often through dense brush and briars and over fallen timber, making rapid progress impossible. My brother was of superior muscle, and went ahead, while I from choice, kept within hailing distance, although conversation was suspended.

It was a brilliant summer's day; not a fleeting cloud was to be seen. I know we ran wherever it was possible, and only reluctantly stopped to get up when prostrated by falls. We at length reached home with the breath of life, but not without some fractures in our light summer dress, if not in our bare feet. On reaching our welcome home about eleven o'clock, it became quite evident that the former brightness of the day was fast fading, and that without a cloud in the heavens, increasing darkness was perceptible. The cattle for which we had been searching at length came to the barnyard as they did for approaching evenings. The birds of the near forests sought their nocturnal perches and chanted their evening melodies. The barnyard fowls gathered at the barn, and with apparent reluctance went to their roosts. The cock on his perch repeatedly chanted his ominous warning, as predicting an approaching storm. The gathering obscuration finally reached its utmost limit, and the entire disk of the sun was veiled in darkness. All nature seemed clad in mourning. Upon those present who gazed there fell a momentous awe and breathless silence. Only a few seconds, however, elapsed, when a spark like lightning showed itself on the opposite limb of the sun. The immediate contrast was so great that it seemed quite as light as a usual cloudy day. The cock again crew to hail the approaching light, and soon descended from his perch. The birds again mingled their cheering symphonies to complete the jubilee. The dark veil ultimately passed, and the sun set on that evening in glowing splendor. It was the natural magnificent total eclipse of the sun on the 16th day of June, at ten o'clock A.M., A.D. 1806."

Respectfully Shared By,

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