

An Ode to Skillet Fork

Written by L. C. Higgs, circa 1897

Of all the lands beneath the sun
Where I would love to dwell,
Is sunny Southern Illinois,
The home of beau and belle.
The birds of passage on the wing,
The eagle or the stork,
Would feel content and gaily sing,
On the banks of the Skillet Fork.

The winding stream, the wooded banks,
Bring rapture to the soul;
The iron bridge does duty well,
Although there is no toll.
Upon the hill lives "Gypsy Sam,"
As happy as a stork,
With Betsy, gentle as a lamb,
On the banks of the Skillet Fork.

The wooded hills, the vale below,
In summer dressed in green,
In winter capped and clothed in snow
'Tis beautiful, serene.
The rabbit leaps and runs with joy
In Nature's silent park;
The huntsman, happy as a boy,
On the banks of the Skillet Fork.

Fair stream, how lovely is thy course,
As swiftly on you glide,
As driven with magnetic force
To meet the ocean tide.
And when you reach the foaming main,
There tossed about like cork,
No one on earth would know you came
From the beautiful Skillet Fork.

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A fount of blessings to the land,
Through which you swiftly run,
A boon to horse, to ox and man,
During summer's mid-day sun.
The angler, too, in search of sport,
Equipped with line and cork,
Can there in silence hold the fort,
On the banks of the Skillet Fork.

The winter storm makes not a change
Tho' ice reigns king supreme;
The same old stream flows silent on
As if the fields were green.
The forest may look bleak and dim
In Nature's silent park,
But yet it flows full to the brim,
This beautiful Skillet Fork.

Ay Xenia, just five miles away,
A still-house in full bloom,
When old and young may feel quite gay
And drive away dull gloom.
You can take it straight, you bet you can –
Need just a jug and cork,
And feel that you're the richest man
On the banks of the Skillet Fork.

Note: This poem was originally published in the October 8, 1897 issue of the *Marion County Democrat*. The text accompanying the poem explained "Skillet Fork is a small stream flowing through Marion County, Illinois, which every person in this section of the state is acquainted with, and like all other streams of water in this part of the world, it flows onward towards the great 'Father of Waters,' the Mississippi River. The following lines were composed by L. C. Higgs of Xenia, at the request of Samuel Joles, better known as 'Gypsy Sam,' who is a farmer and whose home is on the banks of Skillet Fork, to him the most cherished spot on earth."