

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP.

Franklin Township, in the southwest corner of Kosciusko County, is bounded as follows: North by Harrison Township, east by Seward Township, south by Fulton and Wabash Counties, west by Fulton County. It contains thirty-six square miles, or 23,040 acres. Its surface is what is denominated "rolling land," and its soil is of black loam, intermixed with sand. The process of under-draining has been employed extensively by its residents, and has greatly enhanced the value and fertility of its farms. The only water-course of any importance in the township is Yellow Creek, which flows through the northeastern portion.

The township was originally covered by a heavy growth of timber, among which was a large per centum of good building material. Much of this was destroyed in the process of clearing, when the timber supply was greatly in excess of the demand. This destruction, although probably unavoidable, was yet the means by which thousands of dollars were lost to the township.

At the present time, however, the saw-mill interest is one of the leading industries, and he who now clears land finds a ready market for all available timber.

EARLY SETTLEMENT.

Until 1837, the solitude of these forests was not broken by the ring of the ax, or other implement of civilization. The report of fire-arms, or the death-cry of the wounded game; the shout of the Indian, or the crackling of the dry twigs beneath his stealthy tread, were the only sounds to which their echoes responded.

It was on the Indian highway from Peru to the Northwest, and for many years after the township had become the home of the white man, the Indian trail through its entire length remained a distinctly-marked feature and a frequent reminder of the once powerful race who trod its forests in native majesty and unquestioned ownership.

The "war of civilization" was first opened within its boundaries by Benjamin Blue, who came from Ohio in 1837, and settled on Section 2, Town 31 north, Range 4 east. His neighbors were Pottawatomies, who, however, were peaceable, and viewed the advent of the white man with apparent composure. Their lands had been ceded to him, by a treaty (consummated several years previously), and they were determined to abide honorably by its terms.

Mr. Blue continued to reside in the township until his decease, which occurred but a few years ago. He was a man of enterprise and energy, and bore a prominent part in the development and improvement of the township. Before the close of the year 1837, Benjamin West settled on Section 7, Town 31 north, Range 5 east. He remained about two years, during which time he made some improvements, but finally left the county. His land was purchased by John Bybee, Sr., who entered heartily into the labors of the pioneers, and, after making a farm, occupied it until his decease.

In 1838, came Dr. I. H. Jennings, who settled on Section 10, Town 31 north, Range 4 east. He took part with his co-laborers in the development and improvement of the township, and yet lives to witness the changes for better, brought forth in the years that have followed.

In the fall of 1838, Jesse Myers settled on Section 19, Town 31 north, Range 5 east, near the present site of Sevastopol. He remained about two years, at the end of which time, he sold his land to Rudolph Hire, and left the county.

Richard A. Lee came in 1838, and settled on Section 1, Town 31 north, Range 4 east. He was a man of industrious habits, and hewed from the wilderness a fine farm.

In the spring of 1839, Prosper Nichols, a former resident of Harrison County, Ohio, settled on Section 35, Town 31 north, Range 4 east. Like those who preceded him, he was of an industrious nature, and, throughout a period of thirty years, was more or less prominently identified with the interests and public improvements of the township. He died in 1868.

In the fall of 1839, his son, Solomon Nichols, settled on the same section. For more than forty years, he has been an interested observer of the advancement of his township, and still resides upon the farm cleared and improved by himself.

In 1841, Amos Baldwin settled on Section 31, Town 31 north, Range 5 east, and George Sarber settled on Section 2, Town 31 north, Range 4 east. Both were skilled in the labors of pioneer life, and both entered into the work before them with the zeal and energy characteristic of their class.

There were others who came at various periods, and who bore a prominent part in the development of the township. Among this number may be mentioned Jeremiah Burns, J. E. Day, John Mollenhour, William Provault, Simon Hartman, Abraham Blue, William Ball, Enoch and William Sturgeon, John D. Highway, John Smart, William Horner, Amer Pierce and William Jeffers, John, Horace and Albert Tucker, Henry Black, James Warren, Robert Cook, Allen Judd, George Barr, Levi Shively, Thomas and James H. Burns, and Caleb Rogers—all good men and true. With strong hearts and noble purpose, they bent their energies to the work before them, and each succeeding year witnessed the accomplishment of some measure for the advancement of the locality which they had chosen for their home; each season witnessed an added number of cleared acres, and those previously cleared were green with growing crops. Year by year their labors were continued, and the fertile soil yielded them a rich surplus produce, and the fortunes for which they had labored so earnestly began to accumulate.

The First House in the township was a rough log building erected by Benjamin Blue, on the northeast quarter of Section 2.

The First Road was surveyed through the township in 1836, and was known as the Logansport and Mishawaka State Road. The Logansport and Warsaw State Road was surveyed and located in 1838.

EARLY BIRTHS AND MARRIAGES.

The First White Child born in the township was James, son of Benjamin Blue. He was born in 1839.

Early Marriages.—The first nuptial ceremony in the township was on the occasion of the union of Hugh Bryant with Miss Anna Nichols, daughter of Prosper Nichols. The ceremony took place at the residence of the bride's parents, in the year 1840.

During 1842, life-unions were formed between Samuel Shields and Miss Mary Nichols, William Wagner and Miss Sarah Nichols, Charles W. Holman and Miss Delilah Burns, and Peter Bryant and Miss Lucy Nichols.

THE FIRST CEMETERIES.

In 1843, Prosper Nichols donated a tract of land, on Section 35, to be used as a place of interment for those who died in the township. Its first occupant was a child of Samuel Shields. In the same year, Richard A. Lee donated a lot for burial purposes. Both are still used for the purpose for which they were designed, and are thickly dotted with the headstones of pioneers of the township.

THE FIRST SCHOOL.

In a rude log cabin, erected on the land of Solomon Nichols, Jeremiah Burns taught the first term of school in the township, in 1842. This school was sustained by subscriptions from those having children to be educated, and was the place where some prominent citizens of the township received their education. Among this number was Harmon Mickey, who, in later years, served this county in the capacity of Auditor. Others of its pupils are now influential farmers.

In 1846, the first public school was erected, and, in later years, each school district in the township was supplied with a school building. There are now eleven schools in the township, having a total enrollment of four hundred and fifty-five pupils.

EARLY INDUSTRIES.

The First Mill.—In 1848 or 1849, Edwin C. Gordon erected a steam saw-mill, to which, several years later, he attached a run of bulvers for grinding corn. Subsequently, he erected a steam flouring-mill near the saw-mill. Both were located at Sevastopol, and are still in operation, having been repaired and remodelled from time to time.

The First Tannery.—In 1842, Benjamin Blue established the first and only tannery in the township, on Section 2. It received its motive power from Yellow Creek, on whose bank it was situated. He conducted a successful trade for three or four years, after which he abandoned the enterprise. Since that date, this industry has not been represented in this township.

The First Brickyard.—In 1853, the first kiln of brick in the township was burned by David Hammon, who continued the business successfully until his decease. It is now conducted by his son, Franklin Hammon.

The First Store.—In 1842, Richard A. Lee opened for sale the first stock of general merchandise. The store was located at his farm on Section 1, and was on the line of the Rochester and Warsaw State Road.

In 1848 or 1849, a second store was opened by Charles Garwood on Section 29. He remained but a short time—perhaps, two years—and then abandoned the trade to his only competitor, Mr. Blue.

The First Blacksmith.—In 1845, David Preston erected the first blacksmith's forge in the township, on the land of Solomon Nichols, on Section 35. He remained about three years, at the end of which time, he left the county.

The First Carpenter.—David Bechtelheimer was the first carpenter. He began to ply his trade in 1844, and still resides in the township.

THE FIRST POST OFFICE.

In 1844, a post office was established at the house of Samuel Riekel, and styled Beaver Dam Post Office. Samuel Riekel was appointed Postmaster, and held the position until 1858 or 1859. In that year, the office passed to the charge of Jonathan Weaver. Several years later, Mr. Weaver sold his property and moved to another locality, when the office was removed to the store of Mahlon Middleton, and Mr. Middleton appointed Postmaster. Nathan Hagenbook was the next Postmaster, and had charge of the post office about three years. Jonas Leininger was then appointed, and the office removed to his store on Section 31, where it is now located.

EARLY PHYSICIANS.

Dr. I. H. Jennings was the first practitioner in the township. He practiced his profession in connection with farming. The same was true of Richard A. Lee, who began the practice a little later than Dr. Jennings. Dr. A. M. Towl came in 1854, and is still in active practice.

ORGANIZATION.

Franklin Township shall comprehend the following territory, to wit: "Commencing at the northeast corner of Section 2, Town 31, north of Range 5 east; thence west to the county line; thence south along the county line to the southwest corner of this county; thence west to the southeast corner of Section 14, Town 30, north of Range 5 east; thence north to the place of beginning."

Road Districts Established.—"District number one in Franklin Township shall take the south half of said township. District number two shall take the north half of said township."

Voting Place.—"The place of holding elections in Franklin Township shall be at the house of David Peterson."

David Peterson is appointed Inspector of Elections until his successor be elected; and said township shall be entitled to one Justice of the Peace, to be elected on the first Monday of April or August next." [Commissioners' Records, page 92, March, 1838.]

The First Township Election.—In August, 1838, the qualified voters of the township met at the appointed place to elect their officers. Richard A. Lee was chosen Justice of the Peace, and James Garvin, John W. Dannuck and Solomon Nichols, Township Trustees.

THE FIRST RELIGIOUS MEETING.

In 1840, Rev. Jacob Miller, of the German Baptist Church, conducted the first religious services in the township at the house of Prosper Nichols. Later in the same year, or early in 1841, Elder Amos Baldwin, of the Christian denomination, conducted services at the house of Jeremiah Burns, and, in pleasant weather, meetings were held by him or some other minister who visited the township, in the groves near at hand. In 1841, Rev. James Martin, of the Baptist Church, conducted services at the house of Benjamin Blue.

THE CHURCHES.

The Church of God.—In the winter of 1865-66, a small class met in the schoolhouse at Beaver Dam and organized a congregation, with fifteen members. Elder Wesley Lovett was the Pastor in charge. Until 1872, meetings continued to be held in the schoolhouse; but, in that year, they moved at Beaver Dam a neat frame house of worship, 34x44 feet, at a cost of \$1,200. Services are conducted every two weeks by Rev. B. F. Bear. The present number of members is thirty.

The Sunday School was organized in 1870, by David Leininger and Frederick Krause, Superintendents, with eighty scholars. During the winter, the school is discontinued, and, since its last session (summer of 1878), has not been re-organized. Elias Leininger was its last Superintendent, and the average number of scholars was eighty.

The Baptist Church.—In 1858, fifteen members of this denomination met in the schoolhouse at Sevastopol and, through the influence of Rev. Andrew Babcock, organized the Baptist Church. The schoolhouse continued to be the place for holding meetings until 1860. In that year, frame erected their present house of worship, at Sevastopol. It is a neat, frame edifice, 36x40 feet, and cost \$800. Since its organization, the Church has prospered, and new names have been added yearly to its list of members. It now has a membership of about one hundred, and is under the pastoral care of Rev. Peter Hummer. The Church officers are as follows: Solomon Ernsberger, John D. Highway and Elliott Manwaring, Trustees; John D. Highway and Elliott Manwaring, Deacons. In the year 1860, a Sunday

school was organized in connection with the Church, and was conducted during the summer only, until 1877. Since that date, it has been maintained throughout the year, and now has an average attendance of about forty scholars.

John I. Cox is the present Superintendent.

The German Baptist Church was organized in 1857, and was then called Beaver Dam Congregation, by which name it is still known. Their first communion service was held in the same year, at the house of Prosper Nichols. Elder David Bechtelheimer was the first Pastor, and still serves the Church in that capacity. They contemplate building a house of worship at an early date, and have appointed a building committee for that purpose. The edifice will be of brick, 40x50 feet. Simon Bechtelheimer, James Warren and Moses Sagers are the present Trustees. The present number of members is 165.

SECRET SOCIETIES.

Sevastopol Lodge, No. 403, I. O. O. F., was organized in July, 1872, by Joseph A. Funk, of Warsaw, Special Deputy, and worked under dispensation until November, 1872, at which time a charter was granted. The Lodge organized with eight charter members, and, on the night of organization, received ten accessions to its numbers by initiation. The following named persons were the first officers: A. J. Whittenberger, N. G.; J. I. Cox, V. G.; Dr. A. M. Towl, Treasurer; E. B. Towl, Secretary. In 1876, the Order erected a neat frame building, 24 by 56 feet, two stories high, at an expense of \$1,700. The lower story is occupied by a store, and the upper rooms are the place where the lodge meetings are held.

It is in good working order, having at present forty-five members. The officers for 1879 are as follows: L. P. Jeffers, N. G.; Daniel Tipton, V. G.; John Dunlap, R. S.; George W. Jeffers, P. S.; William Jeffers, Treasurer.

THE VILLAGE OF SEVASTOPOL.

Sevastopol was laid out in 1856 by George W. White, John Tucker and John Mollenhour, who were the original proprietors of the land upon which it is situated. Thomas and A. J. Whittenberger opened the first stock of merchandise in the village, and enjoyed a lucrative trade.

The Post Office was established in 1857, and William Dunlap was appointed Postmaster. The office was kept at his house, about one-half mile west of the village, until 1861. In that year, A. J. Whittenberger was appointed Postmaster, and the office removed to his store at Sevastopol. Dr. A. M. Towl was the next Postmaster, and was succeeded by Dr. C. R. Grubbs. Several years later, the office again passed to the charge of Dr. A. M. Towl, and from him to H. C. Riner, the present Postmaster.

The First Blacksmith-Shop in the village was established in 1856 by a Mr. McCowick.

The First Physicians were Dr. C. R. Grubbs and Dr. A. M. Towl, both of whom still survive, and are residents of the village. The business interests of the present are represented by the following-named firms: Dunlap & Burns, general merchandise; H. C. Riner, groceries; David L. Lewis, hardware; C. E. Newhouse, drugs; Mott & Mollenhour, undertakers and furniture dealers; Richard Dorenire, boot and shoe manufacturer; R. J. Lambert and George Kern, blacksmiths; T. M. Paschall and Philieus Letter, wagon-makers; Towl & Keesecker, steam flouring-mill; J. I. Cox & Bro., steam saw-mill; Dr. H. B. Ernsberger and Dr. A. M. Towl, resident physicians.

HARRISON TOWNSHIP.

Harrison Township was organized March 8, 1838, and was formed from territory originally included within the boundaries of Wayne Township.

It is bounded on the north by Tippecanoe River and Prairie Township, east by Wayne Township, south by Seward and Franklin Townships, west by Marshall County.

It contains 28,800 acres, nearly all of which is arable land. There is but one small marsh, and but a small per centum of timbered land. The soil is watered by Tippecanoe River in the north, and Trimble Creek, which traverses the township from southeast to northwest.

Woodden's Lake is a beautiful body of water, situated on Section 7. Palestine Pond is situated in the southern part of the township, near the town of Palestine.

EARLY SETTLEMENT.

James Woodden and Andrew Sell were the first white settlers in the township. They came from Preble County, Ohio, in the spring of 1834, and located, the former on Section 18 and the latter on Section 19, and entered at once upon the labor of clearing ground, and erecting cabins for the shelter of their families.

They were recognized as leaders in the community, and bore a prominent part in the settlement and improvement of the township.

Immigration progressed slowly, and for two years after their arrival only eight families joined the settlement. They were Thomas Romine, David and John Underhill, Thomas Reed, Joseph Snively, William Blue, Isham Summy and Christian Sarber, with their families. Philion Romine, an unmarried man, came in 1836, and still resides in the township.

All were endowed with that fortitude and courage which characterized our pioneers, and fought vigorously in the struggle of civilization against the wilds of an undeveloped country; and their labors were not without reward, as the forest disappeared, acre by acre, and the fields of waving grain which succeeded it, provided them with the means of sustenance for their families, and the strength and energy to continue the battle, until nearly the whole of their lands had been redeemed and cultivated.

Some of their number have lived to witness and enjoy the present prosperity of the township, but many entered upon the eternal life, before their eyes beheld the consummation of their hopes.

The First Mill.—In 1838, Isham Summy erected, on the bank of Trimble Creek, the first mill in the township. It was a grist and saw mill, and received its motive power from that stream. Its facilities for grinding were limited, yet it proved a great convenience to the settlers, and a source of at least moderate profit to its proprietor.

The First Store.—In 1836, Daniel Underhill sold the first stock of general merchandise in the township, in a log cabin on the present site of Palestine.

The First Post Office.—In 1836, a post office was established at the house of James Woodden, and Mr. Woodden appointed Postmaster. During the early part of Van Buren's administration, Isham Summy was appointed Postmaster, and the office removed to Palestine.

The First Cemetery was laid out on a lot donated for the purpose by Andrew Sell, near the present location of "Center," United Brethren Church.

The First Death was that of a child of Andrew Sell, who was buried on the home farm, and this fact probably induced the father to consecrate that portion of his farm for a burying-ground.