

JAMES H. BLUE*

" This gentleman is a representative of other of the families that came here when this part of the country was a howling wilderness filled with wild animals and with roving bands of Indians. The subject of this memoir, when he was a boy played with the little Indiana many times, and before their removal became familiar with their games and methods of hunting. The family came here in the year 1835, and it is said were the first white people to locate permanently in Franklin Twp. When they first came they had nothing but the wild tract of land, and at first were obliged to live in a small Indian hut. This answered the purpose until a substantial log cabin could be built. It was typical of the times, built of round logs, with a huge fireplace in one end, with puncheon floors and clapboard roof, set down in the midst of a little clearing in the dense woods. With this rude beginning in this county and with these wild and primitive surroundings, the Blues became Hoosiers in the correct meaning of the term and their cabin was a veritable "Hoosier's Nest".

James H. Blue was born in Fayette County, Ohio, November 16, 1830, and is the child of Benjamin and Margaret (Riley) Blue. The Blues were originally from Scotland, thence went to Holland owing to religious persecution, and finally to America, as the only country where they could conduct their affairs as they desired. Peter Blue, grandfather of subject, was born in Virginia, and upon attaining manhood married Miss Susan Kelch and emigrated to Jefferson County, Ohio, where the latter owned a farm of over two hundred acres and followed farming as well as coopering, the latter being his trade. To him and wife eleven children were born, eight sons, and three daughters. Benjamin, the ninth child and the father of subject, was born in December, 1802. While he was yet a lad his father moved to Fayette County, of that state, and there Benjamin was reared to man's estate. He attended the rude subscription schools of his neighborhood and managed to secure a fair education in the primary branches, the three Rs being the leading studies of that time. His summers were spent at hard work on the farm. Peter Blue at the time of his death was possessed of a considerable estate, consisting mostly of land. This afforded some assistance to his family in getting a start in life. Benjamin, upon attaining manhood, sought the hand of Miss Margaret Riley in marriage and in 1823 their wedding occurred in Fayette County. Subject was unable at this time to buy land, and accordingly for twelve years he rented tracts and farmed same and managed to get a little ahead. But it was uphill business at best, and he thereupon determined to go farther west where land was cheaper and where his small savings would go as far as possible toward buying a farm. He made the trip to Indiana in 1834, traveling on horseback most of the distance and back, and while there learned that he could greatly better his condition. In the fall of 1835, he placed his family in covered wagons and came through as fast as possible to Kosciusko County, landing near Gnette, in Prairie township, where he and family spent the first winter. During this time he entered from the government a half-section of the best land he could find in what is now Franklin and Harrison townships, the entry being made February 16, 1836. This was during President Jackson's administration, though the deed was signed by Van Buren. He moved his family on this land and occupied the Indian hut, as before narrated. He was probably the first permanent settler in what is now Franklin Township. A few scattering families were in the surrounding townships, but all else was wholly wild, unsettled and largely unexplored. They here began pioneer life in earnest.

Mr. Blue was a man of great force of character and prodigious energy, and he and his family went to work in dead earnest to carve a home from the wilds.