NAME, BOUNDARIES AND AREA.

Miami County takes its name from the tribe of Indians that owned and occupied its territory. It is one of the central counties of the State, and bounded on the north by Fulton, east by Wabash and Grant, south by Howard and west by Cass and Fulton.

Its area is 364 square miles.

SURFACE, STREAMS, SOIL, TIMBER, GEOLOGY.

J. M. Brown says, in his centennial sketch: "It may be described as comparatively level, with but slight undulations, and somewhat hilly along the Wabash and Mississinewa Rivers. Its general altitude above tide water is about 700 feet, the bed of the Wabash being about 140 feet below this general elevation.

"The principal streams are the Wabash, Eel and Mississinewa Rivers, all having numerous creek tributaries. Along these rivers and creeks are large tracts of bottom land, constituting about one-seventh of the area of the county. The balance is rich upland, with the soil somewhat sandy north of the Wabash, increasing more noticeably in the northwest part.

"The county was originally covered with a dense forest, except now and then quite small prairies and oak openings in the northern part.

"The leading varieties of timber were beech, sugar, oak of the different kinds, black walnut, ash, elm, cherry, hackberry, buckeye and hickory.

"In geological formation, this county belongs to the Upper Silurian, with slight traces of the Devonian on the western edge. Evidences of the Glacial epoch are quite noticeable, especially north of the Wabash. The rocks are chiefly silico-calcareous and magnesian limestone. A limited quantity of fine-grained sandstone is also found. Slight traces of iron are not only found in combination with the soil, but also filtered into the limestone rocks, which, being disintegrated and combined with the drift, have formed vegetable soils, not excelled in productiveness by any in the State.

"Possessing such fertility of soil, and being well watered, and having an enterprising population spread over its entire extent, it ranks among the finest agricultural portions of the West."

CIRCUIT COURT.

The first term of the Circuit Court in Miami County was held in September, 1834, at Miamisport; the seat in March, 1835, at Turkington's Tavern, northeast corner of Main and Miami streets, in Peru, and the September following that stood, until a few years ago, on a lot east of the northeast corner of Case and Second streets.

Solomon Hearts, of La Porte, was Circuit Judge, and Samuel C. Sample, who afterward represented the Ninth Congressional District in Congress, Prosecuting Attorney. Henry Cooper, Charles Ewing and David H. Colerick, of Fort Wayne; John W. and Williamson Wright, Henry Chase and Ben. Hurst, of Logansport, were attorneys. We had none of our own until a later day.

The room in which the term of the court last named was held was not over eighteen feet square. The Judge, Prosecutor, Clerk and attorneys sat around a table near the north wall, and parties litigant and spectators stood wherever they found convenient places in the room and about the door outside. The indictments were generally for small infractions of the law, such as betting on shooting matches, selling whisky without license, and indulging in the innocent amusement of cuckre or old sledge at twenty-five cents a corset.

PRESIDENT AND ASSOCIATES.

The Circuit Judges at that time were elected by the Legislature, and two Associates, in each county, by the people, which gave the Court three Judges at the same time.

One almost regrets the absence from the bench of the Associates. It is true they were not distinguished, in a general way, for their profundity in legal lore, but they gave to the tribunal, especially when in consultation, a look of sapient dignity, and in judicial rulings the moral force of consolidated resolved by three persons without division of opinion. Whether the Associates exercised their own convictions of the law in concurring in such rulings, or deferred with the President, as they were in the habit of doing, to his opinion, their concurrence was inevitable from an independent understanding of the law, in one of those mysterious questions of fact of which it might be unjust to express an opinion. If we so enumerate thing, however, for the irreverent feel similar to speak of Associates as cyphers, and of saving expense by supplying their places by wooden men.

REMINISCENCES AND INCIDENTS OF THE EARLY COURTS.

It is not to be inferred from what has been said about the Associates that their individuality was merged in that of the President, for they sometimes asserted themselves, and on occasions they did they were a judicial power not by any means to be contemned, as James B. Fulwider, of this city, learned at Huntington, long years ago.

He had a case in that Court, as plaintiff—one of those very plain cases, that he thought ought to go to judgment on presentation. The President Judge (Borden, of Fort Wayne) thought as, too, and ruled in his favor on several points raised, but Judge Slack, of Huntington, then a young attorney for the defendant, did not think so, and adopted the practice of polling the court on points of law, with the result, every time, of overruling the President Judge. The plaintiff's attorney was amused and speechless at the unusual proceeding of the Associates, and the plaintiff himself arose and asked leave to take a non-suit. "Certainly," said the Judge, "you can take a non-suit." "Can take a non-suit, can he?" said Slack.

the Court polled on that motion." And the Court was polled and the Presiding Judge again overruled. Slack then moved judgment for the defendant, and had the Court polled. The result was that the plaintiff, with his very plain case—a note of hand—went out of court with a judgment against him for costs. He thinks to this day there was something wrong about that suit, but is entirely satisfied that the Associate Judges could exercise the highest kind of judicial powers when properly moved in that direction.

On the first day of the term of the Court held at Peoples' house, the Court, in charging the Grand Jury, called their attention, among other things, to violations of the law by Justices in taxing fees. Squire McGuire, the first Justice elected in the county, and the only one in the town at that time, rose from the step of the stairs in the corner, where he had secured a seat, and announced, with considerable energy, that he was not one of the kind of Justices mentioned. The Court stated that the charge was general and had no personal reference, which was received by the Squire as a satisfactory explanation, and he resumed his seat.

Several citizens, one of whom was prominent among us until the time of his death, which occurred a few years ago, were in attendance to answer the charge of gambling, the specification being that the game was old sledge, at twenty-five cents a corner. The prosecuting witness, Alexander Boyd, was a contractor on the canal, who had the section from about the bridge up to the dam. When called to the witness stand, he stated to the Court that it was a matter of conscience with him to be sworn on the Bible. The book being procured, the witness laid his hand upon it, and, at the conclusion of the words, reverently pressed it to his lips. T——, the party referred to, who was to be affirmed by the testimony, had been watching the ceremony with deep interest, and when it ended, exclaimed, "Well, by ——! that goes me: he'll tell the truth now, won't he?" with several other emphatic words expressive of his poor opinion of the witness. The Court told the Sheriff he must keep order.

Old Jo. T——, called Colonel for short, who lived in the brick house that stood near the first lock west of town, was something of a character. Coming up to the crowd that stood about the door, he indulged in an oratorial display. The Sheriff was commanded to "stop that noise." The Colonel did not recognize the authority, and the Court ordered him to jail until morning. How the order was executed by Sheriff Linnes is a mystery, for there was no jail until some years after.

COURT HOUSE AND JAIL.

The proprietors of the town, as part of the inducements offered for its selection as the county seat, gave the court house square and agreed to build the court house and jail. The contractor for the court house was Samuel McClure, father of Samuel McClure, of Marion, and for the jail, Mathew Fenimore. The court house was a brick structure, forty feet square, and two stories high. It stood on the southwest corner of the square, the court room being below, and the second story divided into three rooms—one for the Clerk's office, and the other two for jury rooms. The building was under roof, but not finished so as to be used until the March term, 1847, just after the close of which, on the night of the 16th of March, about 9 or 10 o'clock, it was discovered to be on fire in the upper story. The carpenters had been at work, during the day, putting in the bar and doing the other work of the court room. All the county records were burned with the building.

The jail stood on the northeast corner of the square; was a two-story, double-walled, hewed log, entered by an outside stairway and a trap door through the second story floor; and was also burned some time after.

FIRST NEWSPAPER.

Samuel Pike, who in after years became celebrated in the West for the number of papers he had started and edited, came to Peru, in 1834, from Lewburgh, Ohio, as the clerk and business manager of James B. Fulwider, in the mercantile business. In the Spring of 1837, he issued a prospectus for the publication of a newspaper in Miami County, to be called the *Miami Chief and Peru Forester*.

The prospectus said that the paper should in no event be a "political party organ," but in all things "governed by the eternal principles of truth and justice;" that it would spread abroad those germs of intelligence upon which the happiness of the people and the permanence of our institutions are based," and that it should furnish "the latest foreign and domestic news." The facilities for carrying out the latter promise were weekly and semi-weekly mails from the neighboring towns of Richmond, Logansport, Fort Wayne, Rochester and Lima, which did not arrive on schedule part, Fort Wayne, Rochester and Lima, which did not arrive on schedule time by any means. Mail matter from Cincinnati took about two, and from New York about four weeks to reach Peru, and transatlantic news was very uncertain.

At the time this prospectus was issued, A. A. Cole was an engineer on the canal; at Delphi; W. Herod, a lawyer at Columbus, Ind.; Col. C. W. Ewing, an Indian trader, and D. D. Pratt, a young lawyer, at Logansport. They were all on the threshold of their future. Mr. Cole returned to Peru. They were all on the threshold of their future. Mr. Cole returned to Peru. finished his legal studies, became prominent as a lawyer, and represented this Legislative District several terms. William Herod was elected to Congress from this District, and was for many years a prominent man in the State. Col. Ewing was chosen Senator from the district of Cass, Miami and State. Col. Ewing was chosen Senator from the district of Cass, Miami and Fulton; had a most promising political future, but withdrew from politics in 1840, as the demands of a business in which he acquired a large fortune. D. D. Pratt achieved eminence as a lawyer; was elected to the State Legislature, to Congress, to the United States Senate, and appointed United States Commissioner of Internal Revenue, under Gen. Grant's administration.

It gives point to the maxim, "Large sweeps from little fountains flow," to think that the success of these men was, perhaps, due to the early recognition of their abilities by the editor in appointing them agents to receive subscriptions to the *Miami Chief and Peru Forester*, and exalts, by the facts of history, his sagacity in selecting the right man for the right place.

The first number of the first paper ever published in Miami County appeared on the 22d day of July, 1837, not under the bicephalous cognomen announced in the prospectus, but as the *Peru Forester*. The editor, no doubt, concluded, upon reflection,

"That one mouth could carry all to bear,"

or at least that want of the necessary space in the paper for the "double header" justified the use of the guillotine.

The paper commenced a handsome appearance and fair editorial management. W. Baker, previously editor of the *Ohio Review*, Cuyahoga Falls, soon as associate editor with Pike, who also had been on the tripod before as editor of the Highland (Ohio) *Democrat*. As would be very natural, the first number of the first paper had something to say about

THE TOWN AND COUNTY,

and, accordingly, the editor holds forth as follows: "This place, which is the seat of justice of Miami County, was laid out on one of the most beautiful sites, on the north bank of the river Wabash, in the month of July, 1834, about one hundred, and all the others ninety feet wide, crossing each other at right angles. The plat of the town occupies a delightful elevation from the river, neither too high nor too low. The Wabash & Erie Canal passes between the town and river, and the Grand Central Canal will probably intersect it at this place. [The termination of this canal, as the editor supposed, was, by act of the Legislature, made at the mouth of the Mississinewa; but shortly after the whole internal improvement bubble burst, and whatever hopes were based in this work were doomed to an early blight.]

"The rivers and streams of the whole country abound with fish of the most delightful flavor. The farmers cannot in the opinion that the country of Miami embraces the best body of land to be found in the State, or, perhaps, in the world. A large portion of the land is heavily timbered, and, when cultivated, yields almost every species of grain and other productions in the greatest abundance. Multitudes of springs of the purest water break forth in various parts of the county, and particularly along the margins of the rivers. The county of Miami contains about four thousand inhabitants, exclusive of the Miami Indians, who number between eight and nine hundred."

WABASH & ERIE CANAL.

From the letting in 1834, this work has progressed steadily, and it was expected that the division from Fort Wayne to Peru would be open for the navigation of boats by the 4th of July, 1837.

Its completion was an important event, and had been waited for with intense and anxiety. Hence the *Forester* says: "Before 12 o'clock of that day, the town was filled with people of the county, to witness the grand display to be made on the occasion. Unfortunately, the boats did not arrive. The banks, being porous, absorbed the water much faster than was expected."

"P. S.—Since the above was written, we were informed that the packet boat Indiana, Capt. Columbia, had arrived at the head of the lock, about one mile above town, and that it would be impossible for her to reach the basin in consequence of the canal not having been sufficiently filled with water to bring her up." "The Indiana was the

FIRST CANAL BOAT,

freighted with passengers alone, who left the canal boat at the lock above, and came down to town during the evening, where they were most cordially received by Mr. Cooper, proprietor of the National Hotel [southwest corner of Canal and Miami streets, familiarly known as the Sing Hotel in early days, and burned down some years ago], at which place they were joined by a large and respectable party of ladies and gentlemen, and a few turns of the light fantastic toe, accompanied with music, told how much the company were gratified at the long expected event. Capt. Columbia informs us he will make another trip to this place next week."

CANAL LAND OFFICE—LAND SALES—"DOG."

The treaty of 1834 was not ratified by Gen. Jackson, on account of the numerous individual reservations; but in 1837, the bargain was struck by Martin Van Buren. This brought many lands within the canal land limits.

Chauncey Carter commenced the surveys in 1836.

Early in the Spring of 1840, under the direction of J. L. Williams, the Canal Commissioner, these lands were taxed and booked, preparatory to the public sale in the Fall of 1840.

Jno. M. Wilt, Clerk of the Land Office at Fort Wayne, was engaged in selecting and rating the land in the Spring of 1840, and in the summer the sale and other office property was removed to Peru. The building occupied was the Wilson row, northeast corner of Second and Miami streets.

The individual reservations referred to interrupted the canal grant of every alternate five miles on either side. In lieu of this loss the State was allowed to select from any unsold government land the equivalent in quantity of what she was deprived of by those reservations. These selections were made in 1844, and a public sale of them took place in the Fall of the same year, at the office, south side of Second street, third lot from Miami.

After the failure of the internal improvement system, large amounts were due contractors for work on the W. & E. Canal, which the State had no means to pay. These amounts were at first represented by certificates of indebtedness, issued to the contractors, on yellow paper, which had a limited circulation under the name of "yellow dog." At the session of 1841, an act was passed by which this was taken up and a newly-engraved bill, issued in the denomination of ten dollars, and afterward of five dollars, issued in lieu of the denomination of ten dollars, and subsequently for the same purpose, due on canal lands, and went under the name of "white dog." It was worth from forty to sixty cents on the dollar—a disastrous value to the contractor, but a blessing for those indebted for canal lands. "Dog" was a name given by common consent to corporate promises to pay that were deemed of little value. In the financial annals of Michigan, Bank paper, which constituted a large share of the currency, was called "red dog." The canal furnished "yellow dog," "white dog," and for the debts west of Tippecanoe, "blue pup."

AN ATTEMPTED SWINDLE.

At the session of 1846–7, an act was smuggled through the Legislature, declaring all lands upon which preëmption or interest were due and unpaid for a given time forfeited to the State, and subject to private entry.

The parties who got this bill through, without the members knowing its true character or purpose, were A. W. Morris and John Fitzgerald. They procured a copy of the bill, signed by the Governor, and started for Fort Wayne riding night and day. Immediately on their arrival, they got the clerk in the Land Office interested in carrying out their scheme. The office door was kept closed from early morning, while there were over existing all the choice farms of the Wabash Valley that were in arrears for interest or principal. Mr. John Shields, who was operating in "white dog," and had capital. Mr. John Shields, who was operating in "white dog," and had capital. business about the office, suspected that something was wrong. He gave the alarm, and parties from all along the line, that owed anything on canal land, came here to know what had been done. A great excitement followed land, came here to know what had been done. A great excitement followed this attempted swindle, and if the parties who got it up had fallen into the hands of the excited settlers, where lands they were attempting to the hands of the excited settlers, where lands they were attempting to the under the color of law, it would have fared badly with them. The act, and all that was done under it, was regarded as fraudulent and corrupt, and at the next session was repealed and the interest declared null.

The Land Office remained here until the passage of the Butler Bill, in 1847, and was removed to Logansport, in July of that year.

STEAMBOATS AT PERU.

In the early part of June, 1835, Peru had its first sensation. It was the arrival of a steamboat, called the "Science." She came without notice, and left without ceremony. Her movements were governed by the maxim that "a wise man and this wait for no—steamboat." The water was falling, and delay was dangerous. Lying to at the bank a moment, to allow those who desired a short ride to get aboard, she went up Chief Godfrey's, above the mouth of the Mississinewa, stopped there for a short time, returned, let off her excursionists, and then passed down the river out of sight, and was gone. The next Spring, another steamboat, called "Tecumseh," arrived, bringing goods, for Spring, another steamboat, called "Tecumseh," arrived, bringing goods, for one of the merchants, from Cincinnati. The captain's name was David Laughlin, near Jeffersonville, Indiana. It was said that Chief Godfrey had offered five hundred dollars of Louisville. It was said that Chief Godfrey had offered five hundred dollars to any steamboat that would come up to his place. Each of those boats went there, but which of them got the money cannot be stated. One thing may be safely said: the Chief would treat each visitor with princely hospitality. The name of the "Tecumseh" was changed to "Logansport," and she made several trips to that place, afterward, under the new name.

With these facts in view it will not appear so surprising that steamboat navigation to Peru was one of the important factors in calculating the future of our county.

LOST CHILD.

In March, 1837, an event occurred that caused great excitement. It was the disappearance of a child belonging to Thomas Black, who, the Spring before, had settled on the farm some seven miles west of town, where he recently died. The child was a boy, about two years old, and, when last seen by its mother, was entering itself over the cabin when the family lived. Missing the child shortly after, and finding no clue to its whereabouts, the terror-stricken mother gave the alarm, and immediate search was made by the near neighbors. As the cry "lost child" spread, the people, for miles around, turned out to assist in a search that was continued for days and weeks, but the fate of the lost one is as much a mystery to-day as the most diligent search left it forty years ago. The generally accepted opinion at the time was, that the child had been taken by some Potawatomie Indians, who had been encamped in the neighborhood a short time before, and carried with them to the West, where they were about moving, under treaty requirements.

BACKWOODS COMMERCE, MILLS, ETC.

Lumber was rafted and provisions were boated, in flat boats, down the Mississinewa from above Marion, and hauled long distances, to supply the wants of the first settlers.

The saw-mills and corn-crackers first erected in the county and located in the vicinity were one at the prairie east of Chief Godfrey's, built and run by the Government to grind for the Miamis, under treaty stipulations about 1839; one at the south side of Eel River, below Marion, built by Hall & Wagoner in 1834, and afterward owned by Josh Strouse; one in La Fontaine Creek, west of Peru, built by George Townsend in 1840; one in Pipe Creek, on the site now occupied by Wallick's mill, built by Chief Godfrey in 1836; one on Eel River, where Deahlson's mill now stands, built by B. L. Daniels in 1837; and one at the Feeder Dam, where town, built by Britton & Zorn in 1838.

Nearly all the first saw-mills run "nigger-heel" mill-stones for grinding corn.

STORES—WHAT THEY KEPT; PRICES.

The stores kept dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes, glassware, queensware, cutlery, hardware, iron, nails, leather, paint, oils, dye-stuffs and medicines, each. In short, had to be prepared to supply every want. Brown sheeting sold for from 16 to 25 cents per yard; bleached, from 20 to 50 cents; calico, from 20 to 50 cents; jeans, from 50 cents to $3.00; overalls, the same; pocket handkerchiefs—silk was the style then—from 50 cents to $1.00; coffee, 20 cents; sugar, 20 cents; beef sugar, 10 cents; tea, $1.00 per pound; boots, from $3.00 to $6.00; women's shoes, from $1.00 to $2.00; sunflies—no coal oil then—25 cents per pound; iron, 10 to 15 cents; nails, from 10 to 15 cents per pound; salt leather, 16 to 20 cents; bridle, $1.00 per hundred from Cincinnati, and about $6.00 from New York.

After the erection of mills, lumber was very cheap, compared with present prices. The best poplar, for building purposes, was $3.00 to $6.00 per thousand; walnut cheery, ash, oak and other kinds, though not in much demand, were about the same. Hewed timber, of ordinary dimensions, was about three cents per foot hewed, and building sizes, fifty cents a perch, delivered. Teams were $1.50 to $2.00 per day, and laborers, 50 to 75 cents. Masons got from $1.00 to $1.25 per day, and laborers, 50 to 75 cents.

LONG CREDIT; MONEY SCARCE—ITS SOURCES.

The merchants gave a year's credit, and the customer took all the time over he wanted, and neither made anything in the operation. The first settler had no money to spare in settling store bills, the great end and purpose of his life being to get enough money to pay for his land. To secure the