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Early History of Mentone

By Geo. A. Nye

The present history of Mentone is being acted out by the citizens of this fast growing town which has become noted as one of the biggest poultry centers in the United States. Mentone is about the youngest town in the County and it is doubtful if another new town ever is started within the County. It started in 1882 as a shipping point on the new Nickle Plate Railroad. Sixty years ago there was a great deal of talk in the Northern Indianians edited by the late Reub Williams about new railroads. There were many railroads built on paper which never touched the ground just as in the early 1900's there were many Interurban lines which were talked about but never built. The Gold Spike was one of the steam lines that ran the columns of the papers for a long time but never got beyond the meeting stage and by meeting we mean a concourse of citizens called together to hear the latest and vote money to help the cause. But the Nickle Plate was one road that was actually built and now it bids fair with a good rock ballast and heavy steel to become a rival of the Pennsylvania and Lake Shore lines. With the coming of hard surfaced roads since 1920 and the introduction of the truck into carrier service it is doubtful if another mile of any kind of railroad line is ever built in the County. Mentone is well situated in a first class farming district, has active and influential citizens, and draws on a large area for trade. Although the population is now about a thousand or less there is no reason why the town should not develop into a very important trade center and some day become a city of prominence.

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According to the County map appearing in the Atlas for 1879 the land now occupied by Mentone belonged to Sarbers, Blues, Merediths, Mentzers, Dorens, and Lees in Franklin Township and Morgans, Sarbers, Christians and Blues in Harrison Township. School No. 13 was along the road on the Morgan farm in the southeast corner of Section 34. This is now in the heart of the business district on the north side of the street. Where the old Interurban depot is now and to the northeast was the George Sarber farm of 160 acres. One mile east of the present Interurban tracks is shown Oak Ridge post-office and a store on the J. F. Johnson 40-acre farm. Abe Whetstone later owned this farm. It is here that a blacktop road now starts north three miles and then one mile east to Harrison center. In the 70's there were many of these postoffices scattered over the county such as Hastings, Angleton, Farmers, Oswego, Kinsey and others. In the extreme northeast corner of Section 1 where the co-operation has its plant is shown a Methodist Church on the Samuel Lee farm. I have been told that it went by the name of Morris Chaple. South of this church there were two farm houses along the east side of the road and back of them was a mill race about a quarter of a mile long flowing northwesterly from a mill dam on the Yellow Creek now known as the Peter Blue or Orlando Meredith ditch. This dam was on a 100-acre farm owned by Linneaus Borton. One mile west of the church was a mill and a store probably run by G. & R. Mentzer. There was also a Grange Hall on this corner. These were on a 4 1/2 acre tract in the extreme northwest corner of Section 2. Later this corner was owned by Ike Kesler.