

Nevins Township

This township lies in the extreme northeastern part of the county, and is bounded on the north by Parke county, on the east by Clay, on the south by Clay and Lost Creek townships, and on the west by Otter Creek townships. It is five miles in width from east to west, and from north to south six miles in length, and contains nearly 20,000 acres of land. Branches of Otter Creek rise in different parts of the township, and flow from the east side through and leave at the western limit, affording stock water and drainage. Along the north side main branch of the creek, which flows diagonally from the northeast to the southwest, runs to Indianapolis & St. Louis railroad, dividing the township into two nearly equal parts. Within the boundaries of the township, and on this line of railroad, are the stations of Fountain, Coal Bluff and Milton, which afford markets for the products of this part of the county. The surface of the township is hilly and covered with timber, except a portion in the north corner called Henry's prairie. A portion of this is also called Wet prairie, and is surrounded by groves of yellow oak.

The name Nevins was given this division of the county in honor of one of the early settlers of that name, who came here from Kentucky with his family in 1818. He was a wheelwright by trade, and manufactured spinning-wheels for the neighboring matrons and maidens. In those days organs and pianos were not known in this region, and the hum of Nevin's spinning-wheel was about as near instrumental music as anything possessed by the young ladies of that period. The clothing was not only made at home, but the cloth, in all its transformations from the back of the sheep to the back of the man, was manufactured by those who wore it. The linen, also, was a home manufacture. The flax was raised and "broken" and "hackled" and spun and woven by the persons who afterward cut it out and sewed it into garments. Many of the terms used are now almost obsolete, and are remembered only by some of the older residents. The earliest resident of the township was, doubtless, William ADAMS, who came with his family from Kentucky in about the year 1816. He settled on Raccoon bottom in the heavy timber, and probably built the first house, a log cabin 18x20 feet, with stick chimney and other primitive accoutrements which have been so often described in other portions of this work that repetition here is unnecessary. The log cabins were nearly all alike.

About the same time the Green family arrived from New York. They settled near Creal's mills, at which place they afterward built the first grist and saw mill in the township. It was not an extensive establishment, having only one run of stone, but was counted in the early days a great acquisition to the advantages of pioneer life.

In about 1818 the brothers John and Samuel Adams settled just west of where Fountain station now is. The former was a blacksmith and the latter a farmer. Blacksmiths were indispensable in the pioneers times. They not only shod horses and sharpened plows, as in later times, but made almost every article that was wrought from iron. A blacksmith was a genius. He could make a lock, repair a gun, make any part of a wagon, make screws and bolts, and a hundred other articles which are now made in the cities by machinery, and which the modern blacksmith has no occasion to handle.

Starling Lambert was also one of the early settlers, coming here with a large family from

Kentucky, in 1818. He settled on the Raccoon bottom, from which he afterward removed to the head of the creek.

The first laid-out road in the township was the old Greencastle road from Terre Haute to Greencastle. On this road, about two miles west of the present site of Fountain, was located the first store. It was kept by Richard Pruet.

JOHN Hoffman came to Nevins township about 1818, and settled on Sec. 29, R. 7, where he entered eighty acres of land. Mr. Hoffman was a native of Pennsylvania, and at the age of seven sat on the lap of Washington. His first pair of boots was presented to him by the "Father of his country." He claims to have driven the first cut nails ever manufactured in the new world. He emigrated to Ohio in 1812, and served under Gen. Hull as butcher, and was a witness of the inglorious surrender of Hull's army. He was among the first to look for a location for the county seat of Vigo. He moved the first family to the county seat with an ox team. He was the first born of a family of twenty-two children, three girls and nineteen boys.

The first school-house was located about one and a half miles north of Fountain, in the midst of the timber. It was built of logs, with nearly one entire end left open for the admission of the ample fire logs of the time. The first teacher was John McGinnis, and the school was taught upon the subscription system, and consisted of about eighteen or twenty pupils, for whose tuition was charged the moderate sum of \$1.50 per pupil for the term of three months.

The first doctor in the township was Alexander Hodgkiss, located on the Terre Haute road near Markle's mill. He was a competent physician and possessed an extensive practice.

The first preacher is supposed to have been Rev. Billings, a Baptist by denomination.

The first church was built by the Christians about two and a half miles northwest of Fountain. It was built of logs, 36x40, and only the walls now remain, the roof having fallen in. The first preachers who dispensed the word from its pulpit were Michael and Job Coombs, brothers.

There are in the township ten school districts, which is double the number that existed in 1860. About 700 children attend these schools. The first post-office in the township was known as Fruit Hill post-office, and John Bell the postmaster. This was soon discontinued and one established at Fountain, known as Fountain station post-office, with G.W. Moreland as postmaster. This was later called Hunter post-office, which name it still bears. E. Moreland is postmaster.

The little village of Coal Bluff is situated on Sec. 8, R. 8. Daniel Webster first commenced to operate for coal on the present location of the village about 1871, and being successful, a village composed mainly of miners soon sprang up. A post-office was established June 8, 1876, with C.M. Stetson as postmaster, who still holds the office. Mr. Webster soon sold his mining interest to the Coal Bluff Mining Company, of Litchfield, Illinois. This company employ about fifty men and mine from 50 to 100 tons of coal per day. The mine is a slope and not a shaft, and the coal bed is about seven feet thick, extending through a hill. The deposit is nearly exhausted at present, when the company will remove to Fountain. Another mine is operated on a small scale below the Webster mine.

Source:

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by H.W.Beckwith

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