

City fathers

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Group bought land that is now Monroe County in 1816

In October of 1816 a group of frontiersmen could be seen traveling by horseback and wagon toward the old Northwest capital of Vincennes.

AS INDIANA AUTUMNS go, it wasn't really a bad time of year for a trip to the "city." The common objective of the men making their way along trails and Indian traces to Vincennes was a federal government land auction to be held there.

Indiana, once part of the Northwest Territory, had at various times been the property of the Miami, Pottawattomie and Delaware Indians, and afterward, alternately, the land belonged to the French, English and American governments.

After the auction in Vincennes, part of the land destined to become Monroe County belonged to 142 persons, some of whom would put down their roots there.

The successful buyers gained parcels of land

Looking Back

By Rose H. McIlveen

scattered over Bloomington, Bean Blossom, Van Buren, Indian Creek and Clear Creek townships (not yet created until Monroe County was formed from land subtracted from Orange and Jackson counties in 1818).

NOT ALL THE PERSONS on the list of 1816 Monroe County land buyers were typical frontier homesteaders. Any purchaser could resell land whenever he wished. Speculators with extra money to invest bought parcels of land for the express purpose of turning a profit at a later

date when Monroe County was more heavily settled. Their names do not appear in the 1820, 1830, 1840 and 1850 census, because they never did live in the county.

A second group of the original land buyers do appear in the census rolls for those years. They put their roots down in the county, but were either too preoccupied with land-clearing and cabin-building to be distinguished from their neighbors, or they were just plain disinterested in getting involved in community affairs.

EXAMINATION OF the county histories of 1884 and 1917 yield a third group of the original land buyers who gave a limited amount of time to serve on early county juries. They were: William Anderson, David Chambers, William Chambers, John Cutler, Jonathan Gilbert, Solomon Green, Thomas Grimes, James Matlock, George Parks, Jonathan Rains, John Sadler, Samuel Scott, David Sears, George

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