

Irish numbered among county's early merchants

Although the majority of the Irish who settled in Monroe County before 1850 were attracted to farming the cheap land, there were others who tried their hands at providing goods and services to make a living. The population of the county in 1850 was 11,286 persons, all in need as some things that farms alone could not provide.

Probably the earliest of the Irish to be in business in the county was one of the Blair family. *The History of Morgan, Monroe and Brown Counties, Indiana* lists among the first few county businesses "Blair and Lowe," who operated a horse-powered grist mill. According to the history, "The grain was ground in a rude manner, and was bolted by hand, the owner of the grain doing the turning." Blair and Lowe's cut of the grain — for providing the equipment — was one-sixth.

The county history lists the manufacturers and sellers of liquor in Bloomington and only one Irish name was among them. That was because the majority of the immigrants were Scots-Irish Presbyterians, a denomination that strictly forbade imbibing.

In May of 1836, John Campbell proudly announced in the Bloom-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

3-29-1986

ington Post that he was opening a new store. Getting the jump on the season, he told the Post readers, "I take this method of informing the citizens of Bloomington and its vicinity that I have on hand and am now opening a handsome assortment of spring and summer goods of as good a quality and at as fair prices as any in the place." No fly-by-night merchant, Campbell continued, "I would further remark to the kind and enlightened citizens of Bloomington and vicinity, that I have located myself permanently and expect to spend the remaining part of my life among them." And he did.

Another Irish family who came to Monroe County to stay were the Fees. William, born in 1785, emigrated with his parents and acquired an American wife before

see Looking back, page A2