

# Pioneers Carved Fulton County Out Of Wilderness

Wauseon Republican, Thursday, July 30, 1959 — B-6

Fulton was the last county to be formed in the Northwestern part of Ohio, and it is one of the last three to be formed in the State.

By an act of the Ohio Legislature the two adjoining counties, Williams and Henry, were formed April 1, 1820. Fulton county was formed February 28, 1850, almost 30 years later. Why was not Fulton county formed earlier?

Most of the territory that now comprise Fulton county was covered by dense heavy timber but there were sections of low lands that were covered with water a large part of the year that needed expensive drainage to make it available for farming. This territory was one of the favorite hunting sections of the Indians. In the deep forests there were bears, wolves, deer, foxes and plenty of wild game and along the river, creeks and low lands there were beavers, otters, minks, muskrats and other furbearing animals,

while the water attracted ducks and wild geese.

An atlas of Fulton county published in 1888, giving a separate map of each township and the names of the owners of the farms shows that the State of Ohio then owned 40 acres in section 35, in Gorham township, which was in the Bean Creek Prairie.

Into this wilderness came brave men. Some were prospectors, others were looking for the fur trade with the Indians while others came, some bringing their families, looking for a suitable location where they could establish a home and spend the rest of their years. The heavy timber and the water caused many who were seeking a location for a home to pass by what is now Fulton county believing it would be too expensive for them to clear the forests and drain the land, so they sought other locations. But there were those who stayed believing that the wilderness could be con-

verted into good farms. They ing the land for farming. Thus built log houses and began clear-settlements began to dot what is now Fulton county. The first permanent settlement was made by Eli Phillips, in 1833 at Seward, two miles east of Lyons.

## Lauber Hill

At times two or three members of one family came together and located in the same community so they could be helpful one to the other in establishing homes in this new country. It was in German township, at Lauber Hill, two miles east of Burlington, where the first colony settlement was established in Fulton county. One of the early historians in this county in 1887 wrote the following concerning this colony:

"The first settlement in this township was made by German pioneers in 1834. They were Nicholas King; Jacob Bender, wife, and seven children; Christian Lauber, wife and four children; Jacob Grundy, wife and five children; Moses Kibbler, wife and six children, and Christian Rupp and family. Accompanying these families from the fatherland were Henry and Jacob Roth, Christian Reigsicker and Michael Figy, all young men, unmarried.

"This colony was composed of forty-three persons, all told, and most of them from Millhausen, a small town in Switzerland. Besides these were one or two families from the north of France, but nearly all fresh from the Old World.

"The first house put up by these colonists was erected by Christian Lauber soon after his arrival upon section ten, Lauber Hill, where the family still resides at this day. The rest of the heads of families soon selected their land and cabins were built in quick succession. The only shelter they had at that time was the sunny side of large stumps protected by putting up blankets.

"The men of this colony all made their mark on the calendar of time that well defines the type of a generation that is passing away; whose record for good deeds is worthy of merit to history. They, we can say, brought beauty out of a wild forest; they changed wilderness into strength; they created means where there was none, and what these colonists were to German Township in her infancy will live for all time."

Thus Fulton county has gone forward changing a wilderness into one of the leading agricultural counties in Ohio.

Frank H. Reighard