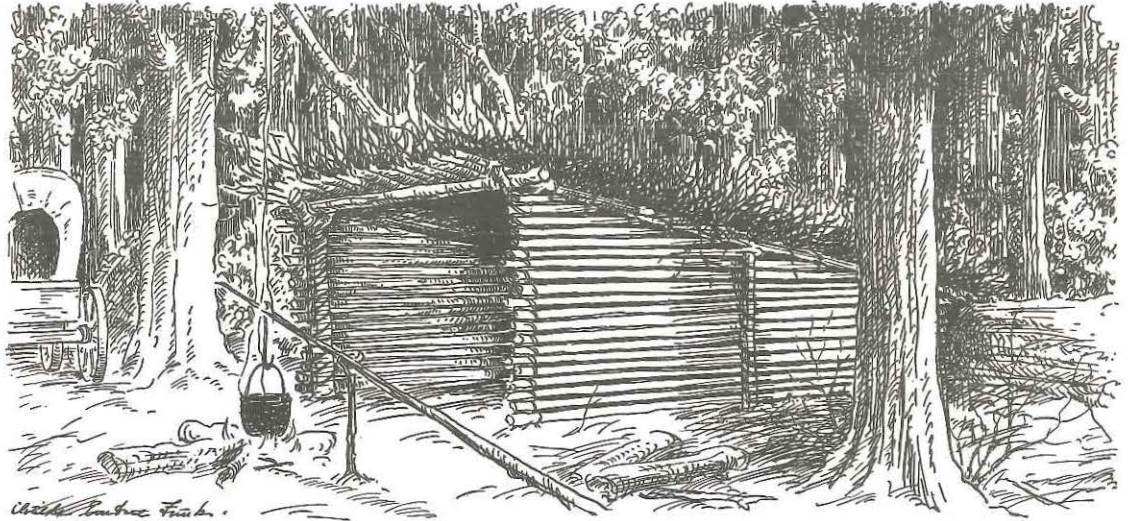


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INDIANA HISTORICAL LEAFLETS No. 3



Half-faced camp, the first kind of shelter built by pioneers.

PIONEER LIVING IN INDIANA

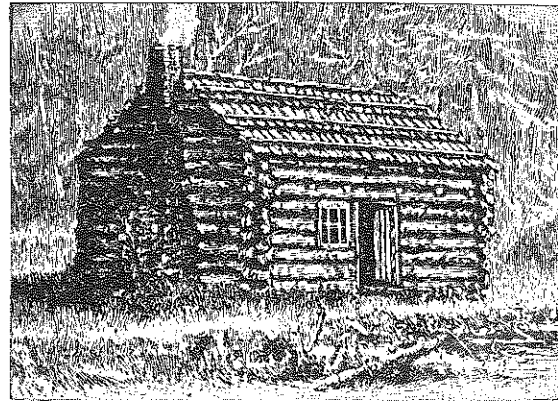
When pioneer families came into southern Indiana, they needed to build shelters as quickly as possible. They first made "half-faced camps" in which to live. The camps were made by setting two large poles with forked tops into the ground a dozen or more feet from a fallen tree. Another pole was laid across the forked poles. Then more poles were laid from the cross-pole down to the fallen tree to make a slanting roof. Over these poles a thick layer of brush was thrown. The two sides were built up of small logs placed one on top of another. The front was left open. Here a fire to cook the food was built. The shelter protected the family from the rain and wild animals during the summer months.

After the father and his sons cleared away some trees and planted their corn, they set about to build a log cabin that would be snug and warm in winter. They chopped down straight trees with their axes and trimmed off the branches. The trunks of the trees were then cut into logs about twenty feet long. The logs were rolled to the place where the cabin was to be built, and the day was set for a "house raising."

A HOUSE RAISING

The pioneer needed the help of his neighbors to put up a log cabin. He sent word around the countryside that on a certain day he would have a house raising. All the pioneer families for miles around gathered to help him. The women came to cook and visit while the men worked. By helping each other they made homes in the wilderness.

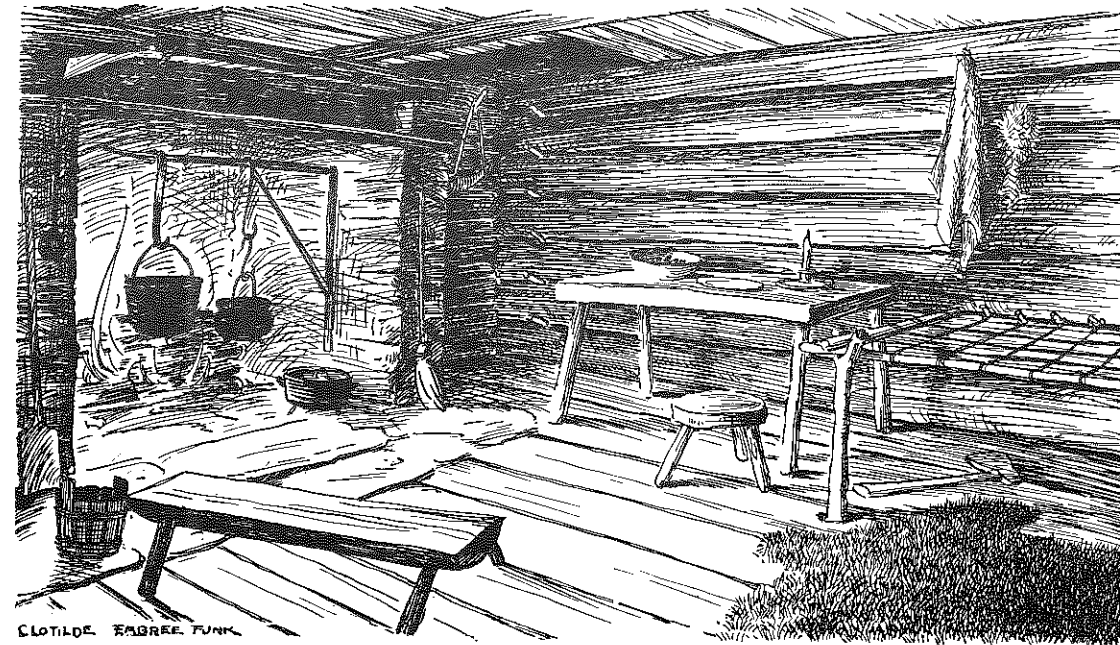
With their axes the men cut deep notches in the ends of the logs. They lifted the logs into place one on top of another, fitting them together in a square by the notches. The four walls of the new cabin rose higher and higher. Four men worked at the corners to keep the walls straight and true. When the walls were higher than a man's head, two gable ends were built up to a point with shorter logs. A long pole, called a ridgepole, was laid across the point of the gables. When this was done, the four corner men stood on their heads on the ridgepole to celebrate.



Common log cabin built in Indiana.

At noon every one was ready for the big dinner on the long tables under the trees. After dinner they all sang songs, played games, danced, or watched races. This was the fun of a house raising. Toward the middle of the afternoon, each family set out for its own home. The neighbors wanted to reach home before dark, for there were streams to cross and poorly marked trails through the woods to follow.

The heavy work of building a cabin was finished, but the pioneer settler and his sons had to finish the house by themselves. They placed poles from the top of the log walls to the ridgepole. Then they laid slabs of wood, called shakes, over them for a roof. Openings were cut in the walls for a door and windows. A chimney was built at one end, either of sticks and clay or of stones and mortar.



CLOTILDE FABRE FUNK

Interior of a log cabin. Note ladder of pegs to the loft.

A great stone fireplace was made on the inside. The cracks between the logs of the walls were packed with clay. Sometimes a loft was made by putting a ceiling in the cabin. The children often slept in the loft; they climbed a ladder to get up to it. Finally a floor of rough planks was laid in the cabin. Abraham Lincoln lived in a cabin like this with his mother and father and sister.

At first the cabin windows were left open in the summer and closed with wood shutters in winter. Sometimes oiled paper was used to cover the window. It let in some light and kept out insects. Glass for windows was expensive to buy, and only a few of the pioneer homes had glass windows.

PIONEER FURNITURE AND FOOD

The pioneer family often brought to Indiana with them in their covered wagons or on river boats a chest of drawers, kitchen utensils, bedding, a spinning wheel, and a clock. All other furniture for the cabin had to be made. The dining table was made by splitting a slab three or four inches thick from a large log. This slab was set on pegs for legs. Benches were made of split logs set on short legs. The bed was no more than a post set on the floor near a corner, with two rails fastened from it to two walls of the cabin. A rope was wound back and forth across the bed to form a web. This was the bed spring. For a mattress a bag of wild grass or straw was laid on the ropes.

In summer the cabin was lighted by the open windows and door. In winter, when the windows and door were closed with shutters to keep out the cold, the fireplace gave most of the light. Candles were made by dipping strings into tallow, which is melted fat, and hanging them up to harden, or by pouring tallow into metal molds containing a string for a wick. Small lamps were made by laying a wick in a saucer of tallow.

The early settlers in southern Indiana had no grocery stores or bakeries where they could buy food. They had to grow their food or hunt for it, but food was plentiful. There were turkeys, prairie chickens, quail, and wild pigeons. There were deer, bears, squirrels and rabbits in the woods, and all kinds of fish in the streams. Children hunted for sweet acorns, nuts, wild plums, and wild berries. Maple syrup and sugar were made in the spring from the sap of the maple trees.

Many pioneer families brought with them a cow, a horse or an ox, a few pigs or some sheep. If they could not bring them on foot or by boat, they bought a few

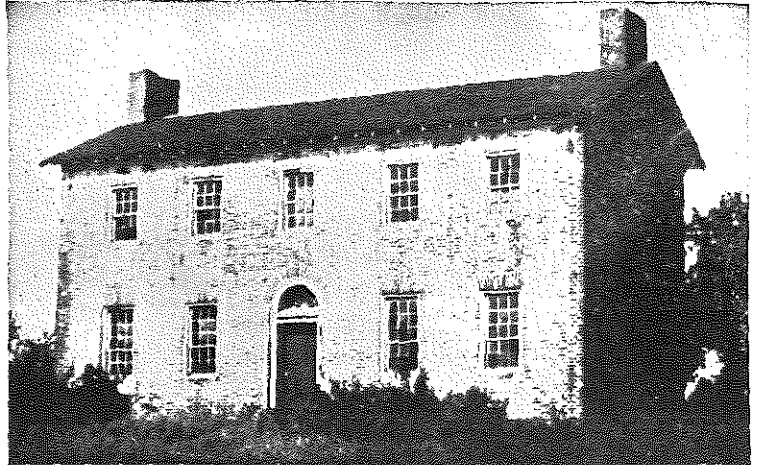


Two-story, hewn-log house with porches and brick chimneys.

animals as soon as possible, in order to have milk, butter, cheese, meat, and wool. Cattle ate the thick grass, drank from the streams, and wandered in the clearings. Corn and potatoes were easily grown, even among the stumps remaining in the fields. Cabbages, onions, peas, beans, turnips, squashes, and pumpkins were planted in the gardens. If there were children about your age in the family, the father planted some popcorn and watermelons. Cornbread was the common bread. Later, when a mill was built in the neighborhood, flour was used for bread and cake.

A BETTER HOME

The pioneers worked hard to clear the land and raise more corn and wheat. They made larger pastures and could raise more cattle. When they raised more crops and cattle than they needed, they shipped them to the cities in the South and East. After a few years the pioneers could afford better houses and furniture.



Two-story brick house built when settlers could afford a fine home.

Often the settler built a two-story house from logs that were trimmed off square. Overlapping boards might be nailed to the logs to make a neat siding. Or the settler built a large house of brick or stone. The bricks were made of clay and baked hard. Soft limestone was found under the soil in southern Indiana that could be cut into blocks. Some of these early houses are still standing. Usually they had no porch, only a front door in the center. A chimney stood at either end, as every room needed a fireplace for heating. Better furniture was bought for these houses.

The first settlers in northern Indiana lived in log cabins like those in southern Indiana, but not for as long a time. Northern Indiana was settled later, after Indiana had formed a state government and after the southern part had filled with settlers. Northern Indiana was flatter country and large parts of the land were prairies, or grassy plains without any trees at all. So it was easy to have a large farm without having to chop down a lot of trees. Roads were quickly made across the flat open country, and some rivers flowed into Lake Michigan. It was easy to send crops to market and to bring new things home. For these reasons, the settlers in the north prospered quickly. Within three or four years after arriving, these pioneers were able to buy boards and bricks for fine houses and barns.

Published by the Indiana Historical Bureau, State Library and Historical Building, Indianapolis 4. Edited by Professor Joy M. Lacey, Indiana State Teachers College. Picture on page 11 is of reconstructed dwelling at Spring Mill State Park, courtesy Department of Conservation; picture on page 12 is of Knowlton house, near Mt. Auburn, Shelby County, courtesy Indiana Historical Society Library.