

# A little history of our county name and townships

by Dean Bolin

If one stepped foot anywhere on land now known as Spencer County and settled prior to when Indiana became a state, they would be residents of Knox County. Knox County extended northmost to Canada. It was provided for by the Northwest Ordinance as a method for the identification and settlement of the area, eventually leading to joining the nation as a state.

Two years ago the county celebrated Indiana's Bicentennial. At the time of the state's admittance to the Union, what became Spencer County was actually part of two different counties, Warrick (the western part) and Perry (the eastern part.) These counties were formed shortly before Indiana became a state. Within two years, the population had grown large enough to allow for the formation of a new county. That was achieved by Daniel Grass at the Statehouse, creating Spencer County in honor of the War of 1812 military hero Spier Spencer. Spencer is addressed in a separate article.

With the formation of counties, the township system was also established. Those now living in Spencer County were under different townships, often using different names. Those

knowing the Lincoln story may recall that Lincoln's family cabin was in Hurricane Township, a part of Perry County. With the new county came new names for the most part.

The first township (and one of the largest) takes its name from the most prominent geographic feature in the area – the Ohio River. The river was the life blood of the community, a major transportation artery that provided both a way to enter the frontier while at the same time being an obstacle for anyone wanting to travel. Many of the counties situated along its banks acknowledged the importance by naming a township "Ohio." Ohio Township may very well be a throwback to its Warrick County days. Spencer County's Ohio Township was part of an originally larger Ohio Township in Warrick County. [Note: If this is true, it did not last long as Anderson Township was formed in southeastern Warrick County and Spencer County's Luce Township was later established from the larger Ohio Township.]

The rest of Spencer County's townships received names to recognize and honor prominent men and families that were often (but not always) one of the first to settle in the area. For instance, Grass Township was

named for Daniel Grass in honor of his efforts in creating the state. Other examples can be found with Luce Township, whose name was believed to be in honor of David Luce, Carter Township for Thomas Carter and a little later, Huff Township for Aquilla Huff. It is not clear which member of the Hammond family was honored by having a township named after him/her and in this case, the locals say the name honored the family as a whole. All of these took an active interest in the community.

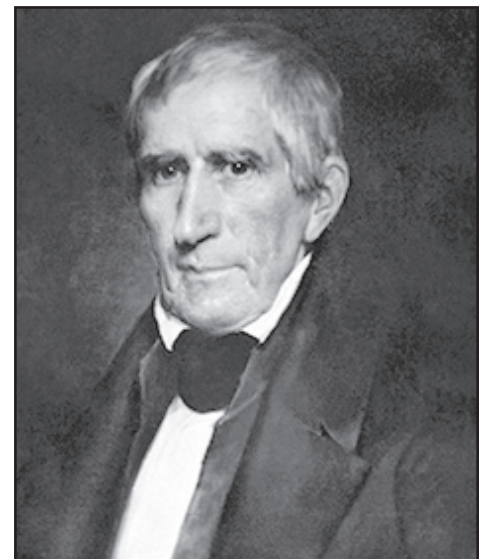
The early townships tended to be large. The Northwest Ordinance created the typical township that would be a square of 36 sections. However, when a geographic feature interfered with the regular pattern, the smaller section would be attached to one of the larger existing townships. Ohio Township is a good example of this, where the southernmost part (Patronville is in the northern Section 5 of the smaller section) is almost a section unto itself, repeatedly bordered by the river. Grass Township also had this feature due to Pigeon Creek bordering it on the west.

It did not need to remain that way. Once a certain population level was reached, the citizens there could "break away" from the original township and form their own. This

was why Carter and Huff townships already mentioned were formed.

The last three townships were formed in the

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William Henry Harrison, Indiana Governor and President of United States.

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