



The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History, Vol. 4 (Classic Reprint)

Indiana Historical Society

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Excerpt from The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History, Vol. 4

The resources of Indiana were for years almost wholly agricultural, and the citizen was, to the greatest possible degree, self-supporting and self-sufficient within the limits of a very narrow life. The farm supplied the farmer not only with most of the food that went upon his table, but with flax and wool for his clothing and hides for his shoes. He was, not infrequently, his own tanner and shoemaker; with his ax and draw-knife and shaving-horse, supplemented, perhaps, by a "burning-iron" for an auger, he was as often cabinet-maker as husbandman, possessing, indeed, a versatility and resourcefulness that, considering his scant equipment, was astonishing. The housewife and her daughters not only cut and made the family garments, but spun and wove the fabrics for the same. The immense advantage of division of labor by expert specialists which, along with improved machinery, has at the present so multiplied and cheapened commodities, they practically entirely missed, though a step in this direction was the itinerant "spinsters" and shoemakers, told of by some chroniclers, who went from home to home plying their trades where required.

But with all this self-sufficiency with which the average pioneer began life in the new country, he was by no means independent of the advantages of civilization, and his dependence increased as, with thrift, his wants increased. Of a large class few were satisfied with spicebrush tea and parched grain coffee, with wholly home-made clothes and conveniences, and with the total absence of finery and luxury. In copies of the Vincennes Sun of 1816 we find sundry modest advertisements of unspecified merchandise. These advertisements rapidly grow in number and in length.

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