

FIRST SETTLEMENTS.

As the settlement of a new country usually follows the water courses, it will be readily understood that the scene of the earliest activity in Putnam county was at the Forks of Eel. Among the first who had come hither were James Athey and John M. Colman, who entered adjoining tracts of land in that vicinity. They were natives of Kentucky and had emigrated from Bourbon county to Fort Harrison near Terre Haute, arriving in 1816. Two years later, after a journey to the Vincennes land-office, they set out on horseback to take possession of their newly acquired lands. Early in the spring of 1818 Athey cleared a portion of his land and put in a crop of corn, it being the first cultivation by a white man of the soil of Putnam county. Colman did not remain very long and in time returned to Vigo county. A little later Benjamin Croy came and still later Otwell Thomas and Reuben Ragan. These men assisted Athey in erecting a dwelling, the first structure built in the new county. Soon after, and a short distance north of the new settlement at the Forks, Webster's mill was built on the banks of Walnut, being the first piece of machinery to "wake the echoes of the surrounding solitude with its monotonous hum." By the close of the year four families had settled along the lower edge of the county.

Putnam County, Indiana, as it was in 1818, from the New-Deeds, Indianapolis