

Farming by the Chanta-nun-ga
By Barbara Mercer, Pendleton Historical Museum

Pendleton, Indiana was a small town by the falls on Fall Creek, consisting of fur traders, settlers, and a few Indians. The settlers came to find a new home close the water. The fur traders liked the easy access to the water for trapping; the Indians like the trapping and made their encampments close to “Chanta-nun-ga”, place of the big noise.

When the animals became scarce, the fur traders and the Indians moved on to find a place where the animals were more abundant. The settlers stayed to make their home in this fertile valley. They cleared the land for farming. At first they cleared just enough land to provide for their families. The crops adapted well to the fertile ground. The main crops were corn, beans, wheat, oats and grass crops used to feed their animals. Vegetables were raised in their gardens for table use.

In the 1800’s and early 1900’s crops were planted by hand, tilled and harvested by hand. The first few years the farms were small in size; the farmers raised the amount of crops that they and their families could handle.

When the farmers started using oxen and horses to work the land they got more bushels per acre in less time in the field, approximately 60 bushels per acre. They were then able to raise cattle and domestic animals with the extra grain and increase the size of their farms.

The use of machinery came to the farm, first were steam engines. They were big and bulky but did a fine job of working the land. The tractors came next; they were lighter and smaller, easier to move around from field to field. The field equipment like rakes, plows, harrows and combines followed.

The farmers could produce more per acre and sell grain to others or trade for things the farmers needed. They increased the size of their farms and were able to produce more while spending less time in the fields and more time with their families.

Pendleton became a busy farming community. Corn was the main crop followed by beans, oats and grass crops for hay. For more information about farming in this area please visit the Pendleton Historical Museum. On display is a large selection of hand tools used in farming and homesteading in this area and the stories to go with them.