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New Albany, "A Flourishing Place"

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Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, remarked as he was traveling through New Albany in 1825 that "the little town . . . promises to be a flourishing place."¹

Early nineteenth century pioneers who took the long trek westward were generally seeking more than just new and isolated places to establish residences. Many, of course, were farmers and planned to continue the vocation and way of life with which they were familiar. But, too, there were many who were inclined toward business and trade—successful merchants in the East who were lured by the promise of even more success in the West—frustrated clerks and shopkeepers who looked to the frontier for their one big chance. To all with mercantile ambitions the newly established town offered an excellent opportunity for starting enterprises with a minimum of capital and a prospect of quick return of profits.

As incoming settlers established themselves in New Albany and increased the buying power of the community, there were merchants setting up shop to supply the demand.² Though there was some specialization from the beginning, most of the early businesses were of the "general store" variety. As a rule the merchants did not limit themselves to trade alone: there were doctor-merchants, lawyer-merchants,

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¹ Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, *Travels Through North America* (2 vols in one, Philadelphia, 1828), II, 128.

² Henry M'Murtrie and others estimate New Albany's 1820 population at about one thousand. *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs* (Louisville, 1819), 167. The 1830 census reports 2,080 for the town. *Fifth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, 1830*.

millers-merchants, butcher-merchants, furniture maker-merchants, and just about every other conceivable combination.

The expansion of the stores into wholesale and commission houses, a transformation that was already well on the way in neighboring Louisville as early as 1819,³ was proportionally slower in New Albany during its first two decades. This development could be only a gradual one and come about as the products from the surrounding farms were drawn to the town to be further dispensed to needful areas along the river. New Albany was but one of the dozens of settlements along the Ohio-Mississippi route that contributed its excess produce to the huge stock that accumulated at New Orleans. Surplus crops did find their way over the crude roads to New Albany, but farm land in its immediate vicinity was not sufficiently productive to make the town at this early date an important mart for farm produce. It was not until better wagon routes, and eventually a railroad, enabled New Albany traders to penetrate more deeply into the interior country that the town showed signs of becoming an important commercial center.

During the early years the supply of farm produce, if not wholly inadequate for commercial transactions, was spasmodic enough to cause occasional confusion. Henry M'Murtrie in commenting on this condition was referring principally to Louisville, but what he said applied equally to the younger and less organized commercial activity of New Albany. "The country in the immediate vicinity of Louisville can scarcely equal the demand created by them and the increasing population of the town. . . . When there happens to be six or seven steam boats in port at once, it is extremely difficult to procure the most common productions of the farm, and it is not uncommon to see people riding out on horseback to intercept the provisions destined for the market. The hotels, taverns, and steam boats *must* be supplied, cost what it will, and so great is the quantity required for that purpose, that the citizens of the town are very frequently at a loss for provisions for their table, if we except the articles of beef, mutton, and potatoes."⁴

Still, the exchange of goods between town and country was vital from the first, and though barter was the customary method of doing business, exchanged goods were successfully converted into salable merchandise by the more enterprising

³ M'Murtrie, *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs*, 137-38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 197-98.

tradesmen. River transport figured more and more in the process as the periodic surplus of farm goods was passed on down the river and the profits converted into new stocks of manufactured articles shipped in from the eastern cities.

Customarily, New Albany merchants traveled to the East at least once a year to restock their stores and prepare for the next season's exchange. If successful in the year's transactions, they would make the trip with full purses, but there were many last minute campaigns to gather enough of the outstanding debts to make the trip to the East possible. Those failing to realize sufficient cash from their businesses to replenish their stocks, gradually dropped out of the picture, only to be replaced by others who were willing to take the gamble. One of the standard items of the newspapers of the 1820's and 1830's was that referring to business failures and the combining or withdrawing from merchant partnerships. A few stalwart tradesmen withstood all the trials of the unstable market and were able to expand and prosper with the town. Others gave up completely, or moved from the town to try their luck elsewhere.

In 1819 five establishments received permits from the county officials to sell merchandise.⁵ By 1826 and 1827 an entirely new set of merchant names had made its appearance. Men of this later date, such as Elias Ayres, James Brooks, the Conners, and the Shields, established houses that were to last for several decades. The grocery and dry goods houses began to cluster in the area along High and State streets—just about where the Scribners had planned the business section. The early stores started on a retail basis, and as the outlying market developed, they expanded to include wholesale transactions as well.

Typical of the 1820 merchants was E. Baldwin. His assortment of goods, as advertised in the *Chronicle*, was restricted to staple foodstuffs and articles that could not be made around the home. Among the items were "Kanhawa" salt, molasses, tea, sugar, coffee, and lump sugar. He offered quite a selection of footwear "just received from the Eastward," which consisted of men's leather shoes, men's coarse shoes bound and unbound, grain shoes broad strips, grain shoes narrow strips, and men's wax calf boots. He was will-

⁵ Minutes of the Commissioners of Floyd County, Indiana, November 10, 1819, p. 46.

ing to take flaxseed, beeswax, and feathers in exchange for goods purchased in his store.⁶

The earliest notices of specialization in the retail trade have to do with the drug, leather, meat, and furniture concerns. Asahel Clapp established a drug business that was to prosper beyond the Civil War years. He received his stock from both Philadelphia and New Orleans, and, like his fellow merchants, tried to set his price low enough to avoid having prospective customers crossing the river to Louisville.⁷ Clapp was one of the most highly respected men in the Ohio Valley for his various medical and geological achievements, but from his newspaper advertisements he apparently had no convictions against "representing in this area" many of the eastern producers of fantastic remedies and quack panaceas.

A number of men followed the leather business from the earliest days, combining the jobs of processing the raw hides and selling the finished products. Seth Woodruff bought out George Barclay in 1821 and kept on hand "sole, upper, and harness leather . . . also a first rate two horse waggon & harness." These articles were to be sold "low for cash, or bartered for wheat, corn, bacon, or whiskey." Ashbrook & Walker offered "all kinds of Bridles, Martingales, Harness, & Trunks. . . . By their close attention to business, they hope to merit a share of public patronage."⁸

The embryo of the furniture business, which was to be one of the more successful enterprises in the town many years later, could be found as early as 1827. Again there was the combined process of manufacturing and selling. Levi Cobb's sale of "Windsor chairs" shows that at least some of the citizens of New Albany were buying articles for more than strictly utilitarian purposes.⁹

The meat or butchering business also began early in the town,¹⁰ and though the local output never measured up to that of Cincinnati, Louisville, or even Madison, its steady increase suggests that it was a profitable venture. Again New Albany was limited by the poor productive quality of its rural hinterland, and other towns were able to maintain and even increase their advantage in this respect.

⁶ *New Albany Chronicle*, November 18, 1820, and January 13, 1821.

⁷ *Ibid.*, December 27, 1821.

⁸ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1821. Evidently Woodruff's zeal was not directed against liquor. *New Albany Recorder*, March 3, 1827.

⁹ *New Albany Recorder*, March 3, 1827.

¹⁰ *New Albany Chronicle*, July 28, 1821.

Industry in the new town was naturally restricted by the scanty resources and labor supply, as well as a limited market. But there was one industry in New Albany, dating back to the town's infancy, which stirred the pride of nineteenth century inhabitants and the romantic nostalgia of later citizens. This was the building of steamboats. New Albany's only real bid for nation-wide recognition was to come with its steamboats.

In spite of the general interest in river lore, and in boat-building in particular, information on the construction of New Albany boats is rare. After the industry had progressed so that every detail on the pioneer boats held a popular fascination, the old settlers of the town tried to piece together from memory tales of the old boats and their builders; from these come some details, accurate and inaccurate. Newspapers of the 1820's present no tangible data, for the handful that remain do not coincide with any of the launchings.¹¹ The best sources of material are the general contemporary accounts of the river, such as James Hall's *Statistics of the West*, Samuel Cumings' *Western Pilot*, or, again, M'Murtrie's *Sketches of Louisville*. Without such works from which to draw a few facts and figures, the story of early steamboat building in New Albany would now have to be based largely on myth and rumor.

The first recorded steamboat built at New Albany was a 364 ton affair, constructed by Shreve and Blair in 1817 or 1818.¹² The Shreve in this partnership was the same Henry M. Shreve who broke the Fulton-Livingston monopoly and successfully introduced his improved version of the steamboat to the western waters. Shreve was not actually a resident of New Albany, but rather one of the more illustrious "transients" who was attracted to the river town. His sphere of operations was anywhere along the Ohio-Mississippi river system where he might promote and publicize the steamboat. That he chose New Albany for one of his early ventures in steamboat building indicates that the town had some natural advantages for this activity even in 1817. Shreve's boat, the "Ohio," went to work in the Louisville trade, but after a life span of two years, it was reported to be "worn out."¹³

¹¹ It was the custom, at least in the later papers of the town, to mark the occasion of the launching with a detailed description of the boat.

¹² M'Murtrie, *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs*, 203.

¹³ The average life span of steamboats of this period was four years. *Ibid.*

Of the forty active steamboats on the western waters listed by M'Murtrie in 1818, two were built in New Albany. In addition to the "Ohio," there was the 217 ton "Volcano," built by John and Robeson De Hart. William Blane, the English traveler, recorded as New Albany built boats the "Post Boy" and the "Indiana." An unsubstantiated article in an 1864 New Albany *Ledger* gave some details on the "Indiana." She was a sternwheeler, with a tiny room on the main deck serving as a cabin. The New Albany merchant, Charles Paxson, built her, and as captain took her to New Orleans. While in that city in the spring of 1822 most of the crew died from yellow fever. As a result the superstition prevailed that steamboats were unlucky, and it was a long time before another crew could be rounded up to bring the "Indiana" back to its home port.¹⁴

Another story of an old settler stated that the "Oranoke," was built "way back about 1819."¹⁵ The launching of this boat did not occur on the town river front where the industry later centered, but up above the town on Silver Creek. According to the tale as related over fifty years following the event, a ship carpenter by the name of Garrison built three boats on the creek, two on the Clark County bank, and one on the Floyd County bank. With the high water they were launched and floated down to the river. Even this early there was a bottle of wine to break over the "Oranoke's" prow, and the usual excitement attending such memorable events—including the fainting of two ladies when the boat splashed into the water.¹⁶

Facilities for building the boats were not elaborate, the physical plant being little more than a cleared off spot along the river bank. Light, durable timber was abundant in the region of the town, and this in part accounts for the choice of

¹⁴ William N. Blane, *An Excursion Through the United States and Canada During the Years 1822-23* (London, 1824), 119-21. According to James Hall, *Statistics of the West at the Close of the Year 1836* (Cincinnati, 1837), 234, the "Post Boy" was the first steamboat on the western waters to carry mail. *New Albany Ledger*, April 16, 1864. The term "built" used in reference to steamboats sometimes mean that the person mentioned in connection with the boat contracted to have it built. The prospective owner often stayed around the yards in an advisory capacity during the construction. Paxson died about 1822. Probably two or three old stories are woven together in this tale.

¹⁵ *New Albany Ledger*, March 18, 1884.

¹⁶ According to some writers on steamboat history, breaking the bottle over the prow of the boat at this time was an exception to the rule. Drinking the contents was the standard practice. See Herbert and Edward Quick, *Mississippi Steamboatin'* (New York, 1926), 116.

New Albany as a boat-building center, both in the early years and later. The actual work on the boats was probably performed by ordinary carpenters and other craftsmen under the direction of men more specialized in the work—Peter Tellon, Martin Himes, John Evans, George Armstrong, D. M. Hooper, or Mathew Robinson.¹⁷ In 1826, Robinson received permission to establish a boatyard in front of his house on Water Street, so long as "the said Robinson does not interfere with the common passage of the street."¹⁸

Engines for the first New Albany built boats came from other cities which had the necessary facilities for producing them.¹⁹ One of the major problems in the building of the early boats at this point was installing the engines. Until specialists in this type of work came to the town, the job was done by the carpenters and mechanics who usually had very little theoretical knowledge of how it should be done. Experts in this line were eventually attracted to the town. Two Cincinnati men, Morton and Cox, established their foundry in New Albany prior to 1826 for the repairing of steamboat engines. Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, when passing through the town noted that "it has a factory of steam-engines, which finds good employment here," but there is no evidence that these men actually built new engines.²⁰ The only known record on the foundry business in the town at the end of the decade is this advertisement: "Cox & Miller respectfully informs the Owners & Commanders of S-Bs, & the Public in general, that they carry on the above business in all its various branches at their establishment, adjoining the Iron Foundry of Messrs. Morton & Cox, in N-A Ia. Mill-irons, of every description & of the best materials, will be furnished at the shortest notice, & on the most reasonable terms."²¹

¹⁷ This group of early builders is listed in the *New Albany Ledger*, January 6, 1868.

¹⁸ *New Albany Ledger-Standard*, January 1, 1875.

¹⁹ The "United States," built at Jeffersonville in 1819, and called by M'Murtrie "the finest merchant steamboat in the universe," received its two engines from England. *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs*, 204.

²⁰ Henry A. and Kate Ford, *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties* (2 vols., Cleveland, 1882), II, 221; Bernhard, *Travels Through North America*, II, 128.

²¹ *New Albany Recorder*, October 13, 1827. According to Benjamin Casseday, *The History of Louisville From Its Earliest Settlement Till the Year 1852* (Louisville, 1852), 135-36, there was only one foundry at Louisville throughout this period.

The boat building industry during its first fifteen years was not important because of the capital investment or monetary value of its output. Such commonplace pursuits as house building, grocery selling, and hog slaughtering probably surpassed it in these respects.²² Yet there was a concentrated outlay that was conspicuous in a frontier community where people were not in the habit of dealing in large lump sums. The total value of the seventeen boats built from 1818 to 1830 was \$270,151.00, this being an average of \$15,891.23.²³ A fifteen thousand dollar project certainly would be enough to excite the curiosity and interest of the early citizens. And of course there was an inexplicable drama about the whole boat-building procedure that now lies concealed beneath the surface of a few stray statistics.

If the early industry followed the pattern of later years when boatbuilding was at its peak, capital did not come from within the town itself but from outsiders who sojourned in the town just long enough to have the work completed. As will be shown later, this practice gave a precarious financial basis to what was outwardly a prosperous business.

New Albany's standing among the early boatbuilding centers of the west can be seen from these statistics compiled by M'Murtrie in 1819.²⁴

Boats	Tons
Two at Pittsburgh, by R. Whiting, 180 each	360
One ditto, by Stackpole and Rogers	250
Two at Wheeling of 500 and 100	600
One at Steubenville	90
One at Marietta	130
One at Maysville	110
One at Cincinnati, by Noble and Moore	400
One ditto, by Breedlove and Bradford	400
Two ditto, for a company at Nashville, 250 each	500
One at Portland, Ky. by Gray and Anderson	300
Three at New Albany, by Shreve and others, each 220	660
Four at Clarksville, In. from 60 to 200	500
One at Salt River, by a company at Elizabethtown, Ky.	160
One at Vevay	110
One at Madison	120

²² There are no figures to show this for the early years, but the census reports for the later period indicate that this was the case.

²³ This estimate is based on figures found in *The Commercial and Manufacturing Advantages of New Albany, Indiana* (New Albany, 1857), 9.

²⁴ M'Murtrie, *Sketches of Louisville and Its Environs*, 204.

One at Rising Sun	90
One on the Wabash River	80
Two at New Orleans, 200 each	400
	12,770

This later list, taken from Hall's *Statistics of the West*, gives a comparison of the centers in the number of steamboats produced up to the year 1836.²⁵

Pittsburgh	173	Wheeling	19
Cincinnati	164	Marietta	18
Louisville	33	Steubenville	12
New Albany	32	Jeffersonville	10
Brownsville, Pa.	22	Nashville	8

Also largely from Hall is this list of boats built at New Albany through the year 1830. Information taken from other sources is noted.²⁶

Name of Boat	Year Built	Tons
Ohio	1817 or 1818	364
Volcano	1818	217
Oranoke*	1819	
Post Boy*	1819	230
Indiana	1821 or 1822	180
Lady of the Lake	1826	170
Cleopatra	1826	150
Daniel Boone	1826	264
Hibernia	1826	200
Galena & St. Louis Packet	1826	130
Wabash	1827	186
Atlas	1827	160
Criterion	1828	200
Souvenir	1828	140
La Fourche	1829	200
Rapide	1830	160
Chieftain	1830	120
Wanderer	1830	186

The list shows that following the building of the "Indiana" there was a four-year lull in the industry. But it came back with renewed vigor in 1826, marking this as the top year in the early period.

Steamboat building was the most picturesque industry in early New Albany, but also located in the town were a number

²⁵ Hall, *Statistics of the West*, 263.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 252-63. For the "Oranoke," see *New Albany Ledger*, March 13, 1884; "Post Boy," Blane, *An Excursion Through the United States*, 119-21.

of other minor "manufactories" which helped to give it that thriving appearance so often noted by contemporary observers. The output of the various workshops was not great, and with perhaps one exception, there is no evidence that New Albany-made products were designed for more than the local market. Many of the articles were undoubtedly crude, just a step beyond being "home made"; but the extent to which the population engaged in these crafts suggests that during the first few decades of the town there was a demand to be fulfilled.

Already some mention has been made of the early attempt to establish mills in the new town. A mill was one of the enterprises most obviously needed in a new settlement, not only to grind grain, but to saw logs and fashion lumber for the many buildings. Josiah Trublood's mill was already in operation on Falling Run Creek when the Scribners came, but it was too restricted by periodic high water and droughts to suffice for the growing community. The Scribners shipped in a small steam engine from Pittsburgh, and after a failure or two had their mill running by 1815. But another mill a few miles up the river at the Falls was too much competition for them, and they had to convert their ambitious project into a "roosting place" for hogs.²⁷ Then came the Paxson mill, which was the first really successful industrial enterprise in the town. It established on a firm footing an industry that grew as the town grew. By 1819, Paxson's mill was valued at three thousand dollars, and was the most valuable piece of property in town.²⁸

The most ambitious industry started in New Albany in the early years was the Indiana Cotton Manufacturing Company. John Badger, a recent arrival from the East, first organized the corporation in 1820, supported by seven of the town's more prosperous citizens. A year later three of the participants dropped out and the company was reorganized. An editorial from a local paper shows what the company planned to do. "The New Albany Cotton Manufactory, in this town, is in operation; they will shortly be able to manufacture

²⁷ Ford, *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties*, II, 151, 152.

²⁸ The assessor at first put it down for eight thousand dollars, but upon another instance of "mature deliberation," the county commissioners lowered it to three thousand dollars. Minutes of the commissioners of Floyd County, November 19, 1819.

from 1000 to 1500 yards of cloth per week, & supply the country with what yarn will be called for. They have now eight looms in operation which average from 18 to 24 yards per day each. We have seen some of their cloth which we think equals any we have ever seen that was manufactured in America. Dr. Joseph Whitcomb has been appointed agent for the company, & has plenty of cloth for sale at his door, much cheaper than imported. "Thus," as Mr. Niles says, 'step by step we are getting up the ladder of independence.'"²⁹

The machinery was operated with the power supplied by a pair of persistent oxen trying to climb a tread wheel. The only report of wages in the mill is from an old resident of 1882 who worked there when a boy; for a week's labor he was paid cotton yarn worth 37½¢. In spite of this evidence of thrift on the part of the managers, the cotton manufactory did not prosper in New Albany, and the proprietors after a few years moved it down to Doe Run, Kentucky.³⁰ In the latter quarter of the century cotton cloth manufacture in New Albany was attempted again with more success. In the 1820's the town had too much of the frontier about it to serve as a site for a project of this type and scale. Yet, the attempt shows that outsiders and the wealthier townspeople alike had some regard for the natural advantages of the place and were willing to take a chance on its future prosperity.

Many of the small craftsmen devoted their time and skill to supplying the citizens with garments of one kind or another. Henry Reinaking moved from Louisville in 1821 to set up his tailoring business. H. Bogert, boot and shoe maker, executed "orders for every description of work in his line." William Humphreys ran a "wool carding" shop, where he prepared rough wool for home use, and in addition he was a partner in the hat business. "The subscribers will manufacture at their shop in N-A, opposite Messrs Paxson and East-burns, Gentleman's Beaver, Castor, Rorum & Wool HATS of a superior quality and newest fashion, also Ladies and boys hats, of every description. They give at the above place the highest price for FURS Boys will do well to save their Rabbit skins. Wm. Humphreys, Isaac Brooks."³¹

²⁹ *New Albany Chronicle*, September 15, 1821; Ford, *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties*, II, 225.

³⁰ Ford, *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties*, II, 225.

³¹ *New Albany Chronicle*, March 17, May 5, 21, 1821; *New Albany Recorder*, March 3, 1827.

In addition to the previously mentioned leather, furniture, and foundry trades there were other industries in the town of a heavier nature. Charles Butler contracted to make wagons and coaches according to the specifications of his patrons. Dorman Smith established himself in town about 1827 "to execute all kinds of coopering with the exception of cedar work." The same year C. F. Fontaine began to manufacture sheet iron and tin plate for both the retail and wholesale trade. There is no known record of just how elaborate his establishment was. Charles Woodruff made tools at his "Plane Manufactory." His customary notice in the *Chronicle* included this somewhat puzzling advertising approach: "If the present pressure of the times effect the Mechanics generally as it does the subscriber, they will find it to their advantage to use more Planes, & his reduced prices will make it an object for them to give him a call."³²

There are no direct references to an acute labor shortage in the early years of New Albany, but there is evidence that while the town was in the process of settlement there was work enough around for everybody. If a newcomer could not find some means of supporting himself in the town, he had but to move on down the river till he found a place more suitable. Many stayed on, some to work as clerks in one of the stores, most to work as laborers. Obituaries show that many poor young men who stopped at New Albany to seek their fortune were honored at their death as prosperous and influential citizens. Many more remained poor, and about all that could be said at the time of their decease was that they had been stalwart citizens. The part that these "stalwart" citizens had in building up the place cannot be over estimated. As an ambitious settlement, eager to expand and become more populous, no other sentiment than that of welcome to all comers could prevail. The man with brawn to contribute was particularly welcome.

The small industries, as well as the surrounding farms, received a considerable share of their labor by way of the apprentice system. This can be seen from the number of apprentices who were reported to have escaped from their masters. The unflattering descriptions publicized by the wronged masters suggests that the system was not working too well and

³² *New Albany Chronicle*, May 5, 1821; *New Albany Recorder*, February 3, October 13, 1827.

that some of the relationships were anything but cordial. Here is one published by E. Patrick for his runaway printer, Robert Harrison. "He is about 17 years old, rather small of his age, has large swelled knees occasioned by the rheumatism, has most generally sore eyes, & is pretty fond of whiskey. The day he absconded he filled up several blank tickets, which were printed for a gentleman in this town, & passed them as genuine bills. . . . A boy of his age & genius who will be guilty of forgery is prepared for most dangerous offenses."³³

What little information can be found on wages during this period indicates that compared to present day standards they were unusually low. The traveler Isaac Holmes reported that in 1819 Louisville mechanics received from \$7.50 to \$10.00 a week, and a similar, or slightly lower, rate must have applied in New Albany.³⁴ Female domestic help could be hired as cheaply as seventy-five cents a week.³⁵

A stable circulating medium was absent in the commercial transactions of the early town, and the contemporary writings attest to the confusion that resulted from this condition. Since "hard" money was scarce, the choice lay between worthless paper currency or no money at all. Paper from the branch banks of the state was refused by most citizens and was hardly considered current money. The newspapers ran a regular column designating the banks whose notes were received for cash at the Jeffersonville land office. This land office did not redeem its own notes of less than five dollars. The nearest offices whose notes were considered good risks were as far away as Shawneetown, Illinois, and Chillicothe, Ohio. The new Bank of the Commonwealth of Kentucky had nicely engraved notes, but they were worth only fifty cents on the dollar. Merchants like Paxson and Eastburn had a profitable sideline in buying in the more valuable paper on outside banks in exchange for the current money of Indiana.³⁶

³³ New Albany *Chronicle*, November 11, 1820.

³⁴ Isaac Holmes, *An Account of the United States of America* (London, 1823), 284. There are no data that give this information directly. The one dollar a day figure is based on the record that the county officials received about this amount; also on the fact that as late as 1856, after the economy of the town was considerably advanced and stabilized, workers in the local ship yards received only \$1.25 a day. See New Albany *Ledger*, July 17, 1856.

³⁵ "February 24 . . . Charity Carter came and began work for us today, at 75¢ per week." Asahel Clapp, *Diary*, 14. A copy of this diary is in the Floyd County Historical Society Collection, New Albany Public Library. The original diary is in the possession of the Indiana Medical Association.

³⁶ New Albany *Chronicle*, May 15, 21, June 20, 1821.

To the confused money market the town trustees in 1821 added two hundred fifty dollars of town currency. This was to be eventually returned to the town treasurer in payment of the corporation taxes. Also contributing to the general hodge-podge were the "tickets" issued in small denominations by private citizens. There was no way to curb the widespread forging of signatures and counterfeiting.³⁷

Notices of litigation and threatened litigation for non-payment of debts were standard fillers in the weekly newspapers. Town merchants customarily ran paragraphs of warning to those who were slow in paying up their bills. "The subscriber having put his books into the hands of David S. Basset, Esqr. for collection; those therefore who may be indebted are requested to call on him at his office without delay and discharge their respective accounts; and thereby save costs and further trouble. Jacob S. Cooper."³⁸

The threats were not baseless, for the advertisements of sheriff sales were likewise frequent. This one shows that justice sometimes cut pretty near the quick. "James Pearson vs. John Lamb & J. W. Green. By virtue of a writ of *fi facias* [*sic*] issued out of the Floyd Circuit court, I have levied and took part of lot No. 8, Lower High Street; it being 30 feet in front & rear & eighty feet deep, with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, in the town of N-A—Also, the following articles of personal property, 2 bedsteads and bedding, one dining table, one work stand, nine chairs, and one cow, taken as the property of John Lamb, which I shall sele [*sic*] at public auction on the 11th day of July next, at the court house door, between the hours of 10 and 12 a.m. James Besse, Shff. F. C."³⁹

An elaborate system of barter tended to ameliorate the currency situation, especially between the merchants and the neighboring farmers. Here is how the editor of the *Chronicle* collected his debts from the country people thirty miles away. "The subscriber informs his patrons in Washington County that he expects to take country produce in payment of debts due for the paper—He will hereafter state when he will be in Salem, so as to receive the kinds of produce that may be brought to him. He will take Pork, Beef, country sugar, but-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1821; New Albany, *The Microscope and General Advertiser*, December 15, 1824.

³⁸ New Albany *Chronicle*, February 3, 1821.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1821.

ter, country linen, woolen, etc. Those who wish to pay him in Butter at $13\frac{3}{4}$ cents per pound, may leave it with Mrs. Potts, who will keep an account of it—none will be received but good. E. Patrick."⁴⁰

Most of the legal action in the local courts concerned debts and land exchange. Many settlers came to the new settlement, purchased plots of land, and then, failing to "make a go of it," took off for somewhere else. The land being the only tangible asset of the debtor, it was gained by the creditor through a "foreign attachment."⁴¹ Thus there was a constant shifting of land ownership. Speculators in land could not fail to profit by the unstable economy, but taxes had to be considered in any ambitious program to "buy up the town." Excess capital went into enterprises whose profits were not so distantly removed.

Lawyers made an early appearance in the town, and from the number who professed to practice law, there was considerable legal business to be attended to. Much of the work consisted in preparing briefs in debt collection cases, or giving advice to one or another of the participants in a land dispute.⁴² Occasionally a divorce suit served as a break in the routine. What training was required, or what standards prevailed in the profession at this time, is not revealed, but the New Albany lawyers kept their few law books at their elbows as they prepared their impressive legal tracts. The Latin terms often suffered at the hands of the printer when the notices were published in the *Chronicle* or other papers, but this detracted little from their air of authority.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, November 18, 1820.

⁴¹ Nine sheriff sales of land were advertised in the November 18, 1821, *New Albany Chronicle* for *Levari Facias*, *Fieri Facias*, and *Venditioni Exponas*.

⁴² One of the first acts of the new county government in May, 1819, was the selection of six petit and three grand juries. Minutes of the Commissioners of Floyd County, 25.