

Fortescue Cuming wrote that Wabash Island was five miles long, contained 3,000 acres and has a "wooded interior."* If the voyager was correct as to the area, the present 1,200 acres are a commentary on the ravages of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers.

When the cultivation of corn began is uncertain. Cattle were raised here first, with the old-time rail fence enclosing the pastures. Cultivation had to await the gradual clearance of timber, which was sold and shipped down the river.

Under the jurisdiction of Union County, Wabash Island is divided into three farms. Eighty bushels of corn to the acre have been grown. At present there are nine houses, three stock barns, and four corn cribs, the largest, with a capacity of 13,000 bushels, on the Waller and Sugg farm.

Once the island housed fifteen or more families, but the introduction of the corn-picking machine in 1938 has cut the population to one family and a few farm hands.

Among early residents were the Reburns, Burlisons, Jacobs, Breezes, Weedmans, Freeburgers, and Harrises. For some reason, doctors were never attracted to the island. An old Mrs. Kettles, steeped in the lore of ancient home remedies, long tended the sick.

The rivers have been a constant threat to the inhabitants and have taken their toll of lives, though, happily, they have often been cheated of their prey by an almost miraculous chance in the matter of rescues. In the severe winter of 1917 the island, for a few days, was cut off from the rest of the world because of the ice in the Ohio. The river finally froze until it could be crossed by cattle, hogs, and even wagons.

Education has not been neglected. In 1910, Miss Emma Whitworth started a shanty-boat school. The county school superintendent interested himself in its development, with the result that a building was erected in 1911 on ground given by Nace Waller on condition that it would revert to him in case the school discontinued. This happened in 1923, after years of support, the accumulation of a good library, and an attendance of from twenty to thirty pupils.

Afterwards the schoolhouse was the scene of religious services conducted by ministers from Uniontown and Morganfield, until it was destroyed by the 1937 flood, which reached past the second floor of many houses, destroyed large stores of corn, and killed two mules, sixty or seventy hogs, and several cows.

*Reprinted by permission of the publishers. The Arthur H. Clark Company. from Thwaite's *Early Western Travel Series*, volume 4