You are cordially invited to an evening of History, Mystery and Fiction at the History Center’s Gala.

Our annual fundraiser gala will be held at Cook World Headquarters, 750 Daniels Way, Bloomington, on Friday, February 21, 2014 beginning at 6:00 p.m. This year our guest speaker is Michael Koryta. This year our silent auction features items from the French Lick Resort, Curry Auto, Cardinal Stage, Malibu Grill, Grant Street Inn, and more. You can bid on a massage, an American Girl doll, a Wine and Canvas package, or beautiful antiques. There is something for everyone. The popular Wall of Wine is back this year. Make a donation and select a bottle of wine for a delicious surprise. You could pick a bottle of wine valued up to $200! All the evening’s proceeds benefit the Experience History Campaign for the Interactive Exhibits Initiative.

Michael is the New York Times bestselling author of nine suspense novels. His books have won or been nominated for awards such as the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, Edgar® Award, Shamus Award, Barry Award, Quill Award, International Thriller Writers Award, and the Golden Dagger. Michael was raised in Bloomington, Indiana and graduated from Indiana University. Prior to writing full-time, Michael worked as a private investigator and a newspaper reporter for the Herald Times. Reserve your seats, or sponsor a table today! Call 812-332-2517 for more information.

Inclement Weather Closings

The History Center will be closed on any days that Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) closes for snow. Please check with the local media on snowy or icy days to see if MCCSC is open. If MCCSC is under a delay the History Center will open as scheduled at 10:00am.
Calendar of Events

All events held at the History Center unless otherwise stated.

February
- 5th, 4pm—Cemetery Committee
- 8th, 11am—Saturday’s Child
- 11th, 7pm—Civil War Roundtable
- 13th, 4:30pm—Board Meeting
- 14th, 7:30pm—Friday Folk Series
- 20th, 10:30am—HiStory Time
- 21st, 6pm—Annual Gala (see cover for details)

March
- 6th, 4pm—Cemetery Committee
- 6th, 7pm—Genealogy Group
- 8th, 11am—Saturday’s Child
- 11th, 7pm—Civil War Roundtable
- 13th, 4:30pm—Board Meeting
- 20th, 10:30am—HiStory Time

Current & Upcoming Exhibits
Also available at www.monroehistory.org

“Cracking the Code: Quilt Pattern Meanings” March 6, 2014 to August 1, 2014 In the past many thought that quilts made during the mid- to late 19th century were created to aid travelers on the Underground Railroad. However, research has found no documentation regarding quilt patterns as a form of communication for Underground Railroad travelers. This exhibit will examine different patterns and their purported meanings.

The Convention Center Quilt Show is March 6-8, 2014. The show and exhibit are on the bus route and FREE with HIQS wristband or hand stamp, during quilt show only.

Ross Lockridge, Jr. was born in Bloomington in 1914, where he attended Bloomington High School and Indiana University and aspired to write the next great American Novel. He began writing Raintree County in the mid-1940s. The 1,060-page novel was published in 1948. It explores 19th century Midwestern history, folklore, and landscape, all set on a single day, July 4, 1892. The exhibits explores his life before writing Raintree County and after, including the Midwestern iconography that inspired his book.

“Giants in the Cornfield: Civil War Sesquicentennial” Now through April 12, 2014 This exhibit presents an up-close and incredible look at the soldiers from Monroe County and their role in the battles of the Civil War.

Community Voices Gallery: “League of Women Voters” Now through March 29, 2014 Through photos, documents, written history, and objects you will be able to experience the activities of the Bloomington chapter of this nationwide organization. Exhibit opening reception, Friday, February 7th, 5:30pm.

G.A.R. Program at Mendelssohn Hall
By Penelope Mathiesen
On 31 May 1884, Mendelssohn Hall was the site of a Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) “Camp Fire” program given by local residents. The event would have been planned to celebrate Decoration Day (now known as Memorial Day), which was established after the Civil War to honor its veterans. The echoes of that conflict are reflected in the musical and dramatic selections presented to the audience.

The program opened with the overture “Solfitude” performed by the Bloomington Orchestra. It continued with musical numbers that included “Tenning on the Old Camp Ground” (Male Quartette); a solo, “The Vacant Chair” (Miss Mary Hind); a song, “One More River to Cross” (George Moreland); a duet, “Brave Boys Are They?” (Misses Henley and Hindu); and “Marching Through Georgia” (Male Quartette). The program ended with a solo and chorus, “Who Will Care for Mother Now.”

The musical selections were interspersed with recitations, such as “Sheridan’s Ride” (Bedford Sudbury), “Somebody’s Darling” (Gertie Felsus), and “The Blue and the Gray” (Martin Orchard). The Perry twins performed the “Zouave Drill.” The rest of the program was described as follows: “A short drama ‘The Register’ was given and also prison scenes, tramps, etc., making the entire evening one of interest. Taylor Voss as the colored soldier was alone worth the price of admission.”

Notes
1. For more information on Mendelssohn Hall, see article elsewhere in this issue.
2. The G.A.R. was a fraternal organization composed of Union veterans of the Civil War. It supported political causes and sponsored commemorative events. For more information, go to en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Army_of_the_Republic
3. The commemoration was expanded after World War I to honor veterans of all wars. For a history of Memorial Day, go to the website of the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs: www.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/
4. In an effort to preserve Smithville High School’s relatively brief history, the names of all students who attended the school within a given year are being entered into a database. The database also includes the names of graduates from 1913 to 1935 who were identified in the 1936 yearbook, as well as names from class photos taken earlier than 1936 and available at the Smithville Museum and History Center.

To date, information has been added from yearbooks dated 1936 to 1940. A paper copy of the database is available at the Smithville Museum and History Center. It is also available online at the Indiana Genealogical Society website at: www.indgensoc.org/membersonly/county/monroe/smithville_alumni_1913-1939_search.php. Access to records from 1913 to 1939 is free to everyone; later years will be available online to IGS members only.

By Randi Richardson
The Smithville Museum and History Center at Red Men Hall has a wonderful collection of Searchlights, the Smithville High School yearbook. They were donated by generous members of our community.

Although the school was established in 1909, the first Searchlight was not published until 1936, the same year that the school was destroyed by fire. The last year of publication was 1974, when the school closed its doors to education.

With few exceptions, the collection is considered to be complete. Missing yearbooks include: 1941, 1943-46, and 1956-51. It is believed that no yearbook was published during those years, perhaps because of the war and its aftermath.

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Search for your ancestors in the Searchlights.

Searching for Searchlights

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Search for your ancestors in the Searchlights.

Photograph of Wilma Weinert’s second grade class, 1964. Some of these students were probably among the last to graduate from Smithville High School in 1974.
In 1883, the Mendelssohn Society gave up the hall and “rented a room in the Waldron block on the north side of the square.” At the same time, it reorganized and adopted a new constitution, which made “the giving of entertainment a secondary object, the prime object being the study of music.”

Mendelssohn Hall continued to be used for various entertainments, such as a G.A.R. “Camp Fire” program staged by town residents on 31 May 1884. Indiana journalist and poet James Whitcomb Riley was a featured speaker at Mendelssohn Hall in 1885 and 1886 (and possibly as early as 1879). Accounts vary as to the occasion when one of Riley’s audience members slipped or fell down the stairway and slid across the icy street, finally halted by the hitchrack surrounding the courthouse yard. In 1887, Mendelssohn Hall was renamed the Opera House, which opened with a minstrel show on February 23.

Henry B. Gentry’s show business career began at Mendelssohn Hall. In 1881, Professor Morris appeared with his Troupe of Trained Dogs. Gentry, then 16, was hired to replace Morris’s assistant and traveled with the Morris show for nearly seven years, learning every aspect of training and caring for the dogs. The association ended when Morris borrowed Gentry’s life savings of $700 and absconded. Gentry returned to Bloomington, rounded up a group of stray dogs, and debuted his own act at the renamed Opera House on 24 May 1887. From this beginning, the famous Gentry Brothers Shows evolved, with several units of dogs, ponies, and circus acts that traveled the eastern states and wintered in Bloomington for many years.

The Opera House was remodeled in 1890. The stage and dressing rooms were enlarged, new scenery was added, and the seating arrangement was changed. The “greatest improvement,” however, was the addition of “opera chairs” that made “everything comfortable as well as convenient.” The name of the hall was changed to the Kirkwood Avenue Opera House in October 1897. In 1898–99, it was known as the Bloomington Opera House. In April 1910, the name was changed to the Rex Theatre, which showed moving pictures. Early in 1913, the Switow Company of Louisville purchased the lease. The theatre was closed later that year.

In 1915, the second floor of the building was restructured to create two upper stories used for offices and storage. Over the years, the ground floor spaces were occupied by dry goods, furniture, grocery, jewelry, and hardware stores. Today, a plaque identifies the building as “The Old Opera House,” built in 1869 and renovated in 1888 by CFC, Inc., as part of the Fountain Square Mall. The steep staircase to the upper floor where Mendelssohn Hall was located is still visible through a glass street door between the display windows for the Andrew Davis clothing shops.

Notes
3. “Glimpses of the Bloomington Methodist Church from 1874–1885, from the Records of the Board of Trustees,” Church Files, Research Library, Monroe County History Center.
Claude Rice — The History Center Remembers a Longtime Friend

Claude F. Rice, long-time volunteer, researcher, and supporter of the History Center passed away on January 6, 2014, at the age of 92. He and Betty Ramsey were teenage sweethearts while attending Bloomington High School and were married on May 29, 1941, the day after graduation. They were happily married for 68 years until Betty unexpectedly passed away in 1999. Claude is survived by his daughter Claudia Hazel, and her husband Paul Jr., of Bloomington, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Like most young men of the World War II era, Claude served his country in the Armed Forces. He was inducted into the Army on June 24, 1942. He was part of the 779th Air Materiel Squadron, 15th Air Force until his discharge on October 8, 1945. His unit received several awards, including the Presidential Award. Claude returned home to Bloomington and began working at the Crane Naval Ammunition Depot. He moved Betty and Claudia to Crane and lived there until they purchased his present home in June 1950. He received various awards and citations during his 35 years of government service and racked up over 200,000 miles in air travel before his retirement in November 1977.

Claude became a member of Fairview United Methodist Church in March 1950, and made many contributions to the church in his 63 years as a member; he was also the Fairview United Methodist Church Historian. In addition to his church activities, Claude was active in the Masonic Order and Eastern Star of Odon, Stone Belt Shrine and York Rite of Bloomington, and Murat Shrine of Indianapolis.

Claude was a lifetime member, and long-time volunteer, of the Monroe County Historical Society. He was the co-author of a book about the families of Monroe County, “Family Heritage 1987”, currently available for purchase at the History Center. Claude was remembered by a fellow researcher and volunteer in the Genealogy Library, Penny Mathiesen: “Claude Rice created or helped produce a number of indexes and other publications for the use of Monroe County genealogists and local history researchers. The areas he covered include cemetery information, census records, coroners' inquests, court records, divorce records, marriage records, naturalization records, tax duplicates, and veterans' records. His publications continue to be used in the Research Library.”

Claude will be missed by the many community members and organizations that he gave his time to, soselflessly, over the decades.

Mendelssohn Hall: An Early Bloomington Performing Venue

By Penelope Mathiesen

Mendelssohn Hall occupied the second floor of a building known as the “opera block,” located on the south side of Bloomington’s courthouse square near the intersection of Kirkwood and Walnut. Construction was begun in 1868 by M. John Smith and Isaac Kahn, replacing a building from the 1820s. There were two retail spaces at street level; a staircase between them led to the second floor. The first tenant on the ground floor was Mr. Durand, a jeweler. The Showers and Hendrix Furniture and Casket Company was the first tenant of the upper story and used the space as a showroom from 1869 until 1872, when it was replaced by a billiard parlor.

The Mendelssohn Society, formed in 1875, rented the second-floor space in 1878, after which it was known as Mendelssohn Hall. The society’s membership consisted of townspeople as well as Indiana University faculty and students. The venue was known “as a top-flight source of entertainment in Bloomington’s earlier days.” The society staged or sponsored events that included cantatas, concerts, Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, plays, recitations, and the works of Felix Mendelssohn. “Home talent was favored most of the time but the Society often brought in out-of-town performances.”

Mendelssohn Hall was also used for other purposes. In 1879, it served as a temporary location where the congregation of the Methodist Church met while awaiting construction of a new building at the corner of Third and College, after their 1843 building at Sixth and Madison was deemed unusable.

As a physical space, Mendelssohn Hall was long, tall, and narrow, with an 18-foot ceiling but only 15 feet in width. During its tenure, the Mendelssohn Society added a proscenium arch, a stage, and a small balcony. The hall was said to be equipped “with all the modern acoustic appliances.” Coal oil (kerosene) lamps were used for footlights.

There was some method for cooling the air, according to an August 1882 article disputing the need for a new opera house:

“Mendelssohn Hall, in all its finery and splendor, seats its brilliant audiences in such royal style and comfort. The merest talent was favored most of the time but the Society often brought in out-of-town performances.”

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The following entry from an 1884–85 theatrical directory describes Mendelssohn Hall for the benefit of traveling performers:

“BLOOMINGTON, 3,000. R. R. Louisville, New Albany & Chicago. Mendelssohn Hall, A. R. Howe, manager; seating capacity, 400; rental, one night $10; license, tickers. Size of stage, 14 x 24; no scenery; hall poster, J. G. McPheters. Newspapers: Courier (Sat.), Progress (Wed.), and Telephone (Sat.). Hotels: National, regular rates, $2 (special also); Orchard, Falkner.”

(Continued on page 10)
News and New Items from the Library
genealogy@monroehistory.org
Compiled by Penelope Mathiesen and Nicole Bieganski

Library News

The Research Library has received a $4,000 grant from the Wahl Family Charitable Trust for the conservation of Commissio...es’ Book A. This project is being undertaken in preparation for the Monroe County Bicentennial, since Book A is the document where the naming of the town of Bloomington is recorded. The grant proposal was written by Lee Ehman, Library Volunteer, and Nicole Bieganski, Research Librarian.

Nicole Bieganski recently attended a lunch meeting of the Monroe County History Center Club. She presented information about the services that the Monroe County History Center and Research Library offer and learned about the club’s interests.

At its December 2013 meeting, the Research Library Committee generated a list of library priorities for 2014. The list includes: organization of the library’s oral history collection, the continuation of the library’s deed book digitization project for the state archives, and the continued expansion of the library’s community, church, and vertical files.

The Research Library has welcomed several new volunteers in the past several months to assist with accessioning and archival processing. The Library’s three Fall 2013 student interns have returned for the Spring 2014 semester.

You can now find the library on Facebook: Search the Monroe County History Center Research Library and “like” the page to keep up with the latest library news.

Past issues of the library’s e-newsletter are now available in an online archive on the History Center’s website. Selected e-newsletter tab under the Research Library section on the Center’s homepage.

New resources in the library:

The following items have been accessioned recently:


* Trails of 1834 in Indiana, engraved by S. Augustine Mitchell. 1834. Map showing trails and county, community, creek, and river names.


Civil War Roundtable

The Civil War Roundtable meets monthly, from September to May, on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm in the History Center’s Deckard Education room.

Every month there is a new topic, presented by a member, or friend, of the Roundtable. In March Roundtable member Steve Rolfe will present “A Monroe County Boy Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of James Frank Fee.” These letters were discovered in Batesville, IN and were loaned to the History Center for scanning and transcribing before being sold at auction. Steve will talk about the trials and tribulations young Frank faced in leaving behind the comforts of home and facing a long, lonely war.

Please stop by the Center to hear about a how Frank fared during the war, and while you are here please visit our newest exhibit, “Giants in the Cornfield: Civil War Sesquicentennial” to get a first-hand look at Monroe County’s involvement in the country’s bloodiest war.

Attention Car Enthusiasts!

Do you own a classic car or belong in a car club? The History Center is organizing a car show and we want you! The Center is also putting together an exhibit about the local transportation. If you have items related to the Monon, Dixie Highway, dealerships, or stories about local transportation, we would love to know. To share your memorabilia and for more information about the car show, please contact Jenny Mack at 332-2517 ext. 5 or email at exhibitdesign@monroehistory.org.

Greeters Needed

Are you willing to volunteer at the greeter desk one or more times a month?

We need volunteers from 10am to 1pm and 1pm to 4pm to greet patrons as they arrive at the History Center. Greeters may also help guests in the gift store, do clerical tasks, scan documents, etc. Take on as many or as few other activities as you prefer. Contact the History Center at (812) 332-2517, extension 3.
**Blooming Time in Monroe County**

Our MCHC Cemetery Committee visits many of the county cemeteries throughout the year. As we endure the sub-zero temperatures, I thought you might enjoy knowing where you can see some of the best flowers come spring. Many cemeteries now have rules about planting various flowers so make sure to check out the cemetery rules before planting anything, but do plan a trip come spring to one of the cemeteries to see the flowers and appreciate their symbolism.

Rose Hill and Maple Grove Cemeteries are abundant with peonies, traditionally known for “healing.” Peonies usually bloom in May near Memorial Day. Remember the peony is also Indiana’s State Flower.

Keller, as well as numerous other smaller cemeteries, have daffodils. Daffodils stand for chivalry but in cemeteries conote “rebirth” or “resurrection”.

Harmony Cemetery as well as Knightbridge/Salt Creek Cemeteries have many irises, usually the tradition blue ones. Iris represents inspiration. In mythology Iris was the messenger of the gods, guiding the souls of girls and women into the otherworld. Thus it is often used on graves for women.

Daisies represent innocence. Mums may mean different things depending on color, for example, white is truth, red is sharing, and bronze is excellence. Violets symbolize faithfulness. Roses are most often seen as the symbol of love.

Many of our tombstone have plants and flowers engraved. Pay particular attention to the Tree Stump tombstones which are often engraved with ferns (humility, frankness, and sincerity), calla lilies (native of South Africa, symbolizes beauty and marriage), and lily-of-the-valley (early spring bloomer and thus represents renewal and purity). I particularly remember these from Rose Hill, Little Union, and Mt. Gilead.

For more on symbolism in the cemetery, read *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* by Douglas Keister, or visit our webpage at: http://www.monroehistory.org/donating.php, or the website of the Association for Gravestone Studies at: https://www.gravestonestudies.org/.  

~ Submitted by Lou Malcom, Co-Chair of the Cemetery Committee

**Volunteers and Interns**

Things are hoppin’ right now at the History Center with our new volunteers. We’ve had an overwhelming response to our call for interns this semester. Some are earning college credit for their internship but many are doing straight volunteering rather than for college credit. This year we even have a SPEA intern earning class credit at our Greeter Desk! We have a great crop of volunteers; however, we do still have some openings on Wednesday at our Greeter Desk.

New volunteers working with Jenny Mack in Exhibits are: Chinedu Amaefulu, Vianna Newman, Monica Powers, Carrie Klemm, Rachel Miller, Sarah Ostaszewski, and Abigail Werner. Jacob Kipfer and Ingrid Barce work with both Exhibits and Collections.

New interns assisting Rebecca Vaughn in Collections are: Ingrid Barce, Maggie Bruce, Ava Dickerson, Lilyana Gandour, Jacob Kipfer, Bridget O’Reilly, and Sarah Trew.

Nicole Bieganski, our Genealogy Library Manager, is working with new interns Beth Lau and Stephen King.

One of our new volunteers at the Greeter Desk on Tuesdays and Thursdays is Shannon Callahan. Carrie Klemm with Exhibits, Jacob Kipfer in Collections, and Beth Lau from the Genealogy Library also fill in some shifts on our Greeter Desk as part of their volunteer time.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the History Center — we couldn’t do it with you! If you have some flexibility in your schedule and would like to volunteer at the History Center or you know someone who would, please call Martha at 332-2517, ext. 3.

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**Collections’ Corner**

The Monroe County History Center (MCHC) welcomes gifts of artifacts, books, historical documents, photographs, audiovisual materials, and other items pertaining to the history of Monroe County. The museum currently houses approximately 65,000 items dating from prehistory to present day with an extensive collection of materials from the last 200 years.

Due to limited storage needed for proper long-term care of our artifact collections and archives, the MCHC has developed acquisition guidelines and asks that prospective donors contact the museum in advance to schedule a delivery time to bring in their materials. Donors must sign a Temporary Custody Receipt Form providing background information about the objects under consideration.

The form is available on the museum website (www.monroehistory.org) and can be filled out ahead of time or completed at the History Center. Sharing the stories behind your objects and their connection with Monroe County is invaluable. This information will be used to build exhibit content and will assist the museum in its efforts to preserve the collective narratives of the county.

After the Temporary Custody Receipt Form is submitted by the donor, the Collections Committee will meet to determine whether the items should be acquired and to which MCHC collection the objects should be transferred (Permanent, Library, or Education/Prop). The donor will then be notified of the committee’s decision.

**Acquisition Guidelines:**

**Relevance to MCHC mission and focus on cultural or natural history of Monroe County**

**Research value: detailed provenance or story of object(s) and intended use**

**Physical condition of object(s) and preservation/conservation needs**

**Adequate storage to properly house item(s) long-term**

**Object(s) must be legal property of the donor**

Thank you for considering the Monroe County History Center for your donation. Should you have any questions, please contact MCHC Collections Manager Rebecca Vaughn at 812-332-2517, ext. 6 or mchccollection@gmail.com.

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**New Items in the Collection**

*collection@monroehistory.org*

Compiled by Rebecca Vaughn

- Child’s cradle, c. early 1900s. Gift from Dallas Rinker.
- Indiana school geography textbook and student essay on Native Americans, 1892. Gift from Mary Lee and Norman Deckard.
- Contemporary Waffle House menu, date not specified. Gift from Jamee Wissink.

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**Text from the 1892 Geography Textbook**

By Rebecca Vaughn