Our Volunteer: Sue Shelden

By Laura Newton

When I think of Sue Shelden I think of “special touches.” I have worked with her on several special events, and she always knows how to turn something ordinary into something extraordinary, just by adding a few “touches” here or there.

Sue was president of the Museum Board in the early 1980s. As president, Sue was the liaison to the county which provided some of the funding. Sue was the perfect person for this role. In 1983, she started a family and this necessitated her leaving the organization to raise her daughters. She often saw her old friends around town and was always asked, “When are you going to come back?”

In 2004, after “getting her kids through school,” Sue returned to volunteering at what is now known as the History Center. She is on the Monroe County Historical Society Board of Trustees, and is very active in the Collections & Exhibits committee, and the Special Events & Fundraising committee. Sue single-handedly spearheaded the creation of the Tastes of Monroe County cookbook fundraiser and has incorporated many aspects of Monroe County and its people into events and activities that take place at the History Center today.

Many of the people Sue worked with in the beginning are still around to this day. Sue says, “I had such a great experience the first time around. The organization is like a fountain of youth. I love the history and all the programs we do, but the people are what brought me back!” She is quick to deflect attention from herself and give credit to the weekly meeting group, the Collections & Exhibits committee: “I could not be around a better group of people, than those I work with at the History Center.”

Sue is married to Mike Shelden, and they have two daughters, Sarah and Vanessa. She enjoys gardening, loves art and feels the best part of volunteering at the History Center is being close to great things.
MCHS Purpose Statement
The purpose of MCHS shall be to collect, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit the genealogy, history and artifacts of Monroe County, Indiana, as well as to research and interpret the relation of that county’s genealogy, history, and artifacts to the State of Indiana and the United States, and thereby to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Monroe County’s history, culture, and natural environment by all.

Staff
Jill Lesh: Managing Director
director@monroehistory.org
Erica Kendall: Collections Assistant
collection@monroehistory.org
Dara May: Office Manager
admin@monroehistory.org
Lisa Simmons: Education/Membership/Volunteer Coordinator
education@monroehistory.org
Jennifer Gowen: Library Associate
libassoc@monroehistory.org

Curators & Trustee Officers
Glenda Murray: President
glmurray@indiana.edu
Lee Ehman: VP of Finance
ehman@indiana.edu
Steve Rolfe: VP of Operations
srolfe@indiana.edu
David Musgrave: Treasurer
dmusgrave@unitedcommercebank.com
Jackie Gilkey: Secretary
jackie.gilkey@insightbb.com
Laura Newton: Associate Secretary
laura@visitbloomington.com
Liz Knapp: Curator of Collections, Genealogy Library Director
genealogy@monroehistory.org
Allison Lendman: Curator of Exhibits
812-332-2517

Events Schedule
All meetings and programs will be held at the History Center unless otherwise stated.

General Board Meeting
2nd Thursday of the month, 4 pm

Civil War Roundtable Meetings
2nd Tuesday of each month from Sep.-Jun. from 7-8:30 pm. For more information, please contact John Crosby at 339-2572.

3rd Thursday Series
Every 3rd Thursday of the month a free program is held, usually at 7 pm.

Genealogy Group
Every 1st Wed. of odd months, 10 am.

February
SAT 16 Wool Spinning Demonstration, 11-1 pm, w/ Pam Kinnaman
THR 21 3rd Thursday, “The Time and Place That Gave Me Life” w/ Janet Cheatham Bell, 7 pm
MON 25 Annual Benefit Auction, 6 pm

March
WED 5 Genealogy Group, “Government Records & Genealogy” w/ Autumn Gonzalez of the Indiana State Library, 10 am
THR 6 “Battling for Justice: Eleanor Roosevelt, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and American Politics” w/ Allida Black, 7 pm
SAT 8 Memory Project Workshop: “Researching Family History with Maps” w/ Lou Malcolm, 9 am, see page 4 for details
TUE 11 Civil War Roundtable, “The Grand Army of the Republic” w/ David Wiley, 7 pm
THR 20 3rd Thursday, “Beyond the Ballot Box: Elected Women of Monroe County,” a panel, 7 pm
SAT 29 Exhibit Reception for “Stained Glass: Quilts & Windows,” 1 pm

April
SAT 5 Memory Project Workshops: Understanding Local History Tools, w/ Nancy Hiestand, 9 am
THR 10 Annual Meeting & dessert, 7 pm

Exhibit Schedule
“Memories of WWII”
Opens: October 5
Closes: March 29
Photos, uniforms, and wartime memorabilia spotlight the faces and experiences of Monroe County residents during WWII.

“Stained Glass: Quilts & Windows”
Opens: January 25
Closes: April 26
An extraordinary exhibit of stained glass pattern quilts, windows, and photographs of windows from Monroe County churches. Photos are by Kendall Reeves, and many of the glass art pieces are by Bloomington High School South students.

“Collection of Collections IV”
Opens: February 5
Closes: April 19
The exhibit features interesting collections belonging to area residents. This year’s wide variety includes collections of accordions, monogrammed spoons, camels, miniature perfume bottles, eggs, and German beer steins.

“75th Anniversary of 1933 World’s Fair”
Opens: March 1
Closes: May 31
This exhibit complements the Indiana University 75th anniversary celebration of the Benton Murals created for the Indiana pavilion at the 1933 “Century of Progress” World’s Fair in Chicago. WE NEED: memorabilia related to the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair.

“Life in 1908” and “The Courthouse: 100 Years Under the Fish”
Opens: May 9
Closes: September 27
Two exhibits will combine to chronicle a century of our courthouse history and present a portrait of life in Monroe County when the Courthouse was built in 1908. WE NEED: turn of the Century items, photos, postcards, magazines, scrapbooks, letters, period clothing, and household items.
Update from the Managing Director

Annual Meeting
Please join us at the Annual Meeting of the Monroe County Historical Society on Thursday, April 10, at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will take the place of the April Board meeting. New officers and trustees will be elected, and especially delicious desserts will be served.

Slate of Nominees Available
The slate of nominees will be available in February on the MCHC website, www.monroehistory.org. Officers and trustees for 2008-09 will be elected at the annual meeting on April 10.

Spring Semester Interns
We are delighted to have five Indiana University students serving internships. Patricia Amis, a senior in Communication and Culture, is working with the Special Events Committee to plan and implement two receptions. Stephanie Custer, a senior in General Studies, has many Library projects, e.g. indexing & copying “petitions to establish time & place of birth” for Monroe County. Ryan Helling, a senior in Anthropology, is inventorying items in the Cook Gallery to confirm accession numbers and descriptions and is assisting with collections. Bobi Cross, a senior in Museum Studies, is an exhibit intern and is assisting with collections. Youle Wang, a graduate student in Graphic Design, is creating new marketing and signage possibilities.

Donations Needed for Annual Auction
Your donations are needed now for the Annual Benefit Auction on Monday, February 25. What you donate determines the success of this year’s fundraiser. Bring those treasures from your closet to the History Center at any time. If you have a unique or major contribution, give us a heads-up so that the item can be researched and listed in our newspaper ad. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m.; the auction will begin at 6:00 p.m.

Corporate Members

Monroe County History Maker ($1,000)
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We are grateful to Brett Haley for providing the auctioneering and to Pinnacle Properties for underwriting the event. Call 332-2517 for more information or for pick-up. (See flyer insert.)
**Not To Be Missed**

**Monroe County Memory Project**
Special Workshops at the History Center

- *Researching Family History with Maps and Cartographic Tools*
  Saturday, Mar. 8, 9-Noon with **Lou Malcomb**

- *Understanding Local History Research Tools*
  Saturday, Apr. 5, 9-11am with **Nancy Heistand**

- *Recording Your Family’s Oral History*
  Saturday, Apr. 19, 9-Noon with **Barbara Truesdell**

- *The Neighborhood Walkabout: Mapping a Sense of Place*
  Saturday, May 10, 9-Noon with **Phil Stafford**

Learn how to record the present for generations of the future. Each workshop will equip you with the tools to preserve personal memories for the historical record. Fee: $10/class for ages 18 years and up. For more information call 349-3737 or email PUB@bloomington.in.gov. Register online at www.bloomington.in.gov/parks.

*Co-sponsored by City of Bloomington Housing and Neighborhood Development Department, Indiana University Center for the Study of History and Memory, Monroe County History Center, Monroe County Memory Project, and the Museum of the Person.*

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**The Time and Place That Gave Me Life**
with Janet Cheatham Bell
Thursday, Feb. 21, 7pm

Bloomington resident Janet Cheatham Bell will recount her experiences growing up as an African-American woman in Indianapolis and coming of age as a student at Indiana University from the 1940s to the 1960s. Based on her recently published memoir *The Time and Place That Gave Me Life*, Bell’s presentation will spotlight the race and gender issues she encountered.

Janet Cheatham Bell, native Hoosier and publishing entrepreneur.

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**“Beyond the Ballot Box: Elected Women of Monroe County”**
with a panel of local women
Thursday, Mar. 20, 7pm

A panel, including Tomilea Allison, Iris Kiesling, Joyce Poling, and Flo Davis, will share their experiences of running for office and serving as elected officials. The diversity of panelists is intended to shed light on the historical changes in local attitudes toward women candidates and office holders.

This presentation is part of the free “3rd Thursday” program series.

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**“Battling for Justice: Eleanor Roosevelt, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and American Politics”**
with Allida Black
Thursday, Mar. 6, 7pm

Allida Black is project director and editor of The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, a project designed to preserve, teach and apply Eleanor Roosevelt’s writings to discussions of human rights and democratic politics. Her presentation will focus on Eleanor Roosevelt’s view of public service.

Dr. Black is a Research Professor of History and International Affairs at George Washington University. She is also an author, philanthropist, and advisor for PBS, A&E, the History Channel, and the Discovery Channel.
The Politics of Memorials

The Politics of Memorials:
From Lexington to Concord to 9/11
I.U. Continuing Studies Program
at the History Center
3 Wednesdays, Apr. 2, 9, 16, 7-8:30pm

Monuments, memorial sites, and museums from the Revolutionary War era through September 11, 2001, will be examined. Case studies will be used to explore the politics involved in the creation of monuments and also discuss the ongoing controversies related to the yet-to-be-built 9/11 memorials from the instructor’s viewpoint as a consultant.

Instructor: Edward T. Linenthal. Professor of history and editor of the Journal of American History, Linenthal is a frequent consultant to the National Park Service, most recently working on the Pennsylvania 9/11 memorial.

Fee: Early Bird Discount by March 26 - $50; after March 26, -$55. To Register: Call 812-855-5108 or visit www.continue.indiana.edu.

Canopy of Lights Open House

472 people stopped by the History Center during the Canopy of Lights celebration on Friday night, November 23, 2007, for donuts and hot cider.

Visitors enjoyed the museum and holiday music by pianists Joyce Poling, Jennifer Gowen, and Patsy Powel (pictured at right with Steve Rolfe).
New Books on the Shelves


Sarkes Tarzian Newsletters

The following collection is now available in the Genealogy Library: *Sarkes Tarzian, Inc., Employee Newsletters. “Sparks from Sarkes,” April 1955–February 1967. Books 1–3.* The newsletters have been photocopied and organized in binders. Especially valuable to genealogists are the many identified photographs of Sarkes Tarzian employees and their families. The newsletters include a “Do You Remember” feature with pictures of early locations of the business. There are also group photographs from company events such as the Christmas Candlelight Service, the Easter Egg Hunt, and the Annual Sarkes Tarzian Family Picnic. The Sarkes Tarzian plant on East Hillside Drive had its own picnic area and swimming pool right on the grounds to the north of the building. This area is now part of Deer Park Manor.

Airfields of Indiana

Several publications related to early Indiana airfields have been received by the Genealogy Library. Russ and Evelyn Ryle have donated “Airfields of Indiana 1910–1942,” which includes many illustrations and statistics from Indiana aviation history. The Ryles have also donated a reprint of the 1930 catalog of aeronautical supplies for John S. Cox & Son of Terre Haute, Indiana.

The Indiana Postal History Society published a special newsletter issue in August 2007: “2006 Indiana Air Parade Event Cover Project.” It includes many color photos of postal history items, such as covers printed especially for the Indiana Air Parade from Ft. Wayne to Bloomington on 18 July 2006. Also featured are photos of classic airplanes, maps of early airmail routes, airport dedication covers (including Monroe County’s Kisters Field, 25 August 1946), and special event aviation covers in Indiana (for example, the 80th anniversary of the world’s first official airmail flight was celebrated by the flight of the balloon Jupiter from Lafayette to Crawfordsville, Indiana, carrying 23 letters and 123 circulars).
The first annual Monroe County Historical Society Gala held on Friday, February 1st was an overwhelming success. A capacity crowd of 150 gathered to hear our own Gayle Cook present, “Preserving Indiana’s Domes,” an account of her dome restoration experience beginning with the Monroe County Courthouse murals through restoration of the West Baden Springs Hotel. In addition, attendees bid on silent auction items and enjoyed a cake made in the image of our county courthouse.

The silent auction raised $3,000, and ticket sales and donations totaled more than $5,000. The Founders’ Endowment will receive the proceeds of $8,000.

A big round of applause to the Endowment Committee members and volunteers: Susan Lyons, Glenda Murray, Sue Shelden, Rachel Peden McCarty, Mary Oliver (in Memory), Jill Lesh, Jamee Wissink, Dave Musgrave, and Sue Bowman.

Above: The Courthouse cake for dessert.

Above: Karita and Dave Musgrave.

Top Right: Glenda Murray talks with Judy O’Bannon; Marsh Davis, president of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, is behind them.

Bottom Right: Appreciative diners fill the Fountain Square Ballroom.
Thank You to Our Gala Sponsors

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Blanche Showers: The Original “Hello” Girl for Bloomington's First Telephone Exchange?

By Penelope Mathiesen

A 1938 newspaper article, “Bloomington’s Original ‘Hello’ Girl Tells of First Telephone Exchange,” describes the beginnings of telephone service in Bloomington:

Bloomington’s first “hello” girl still lives in this city. She is Mrs. Erle Showers, of north Walnut street. The girls who worked the switchboards at that time were called “hello” girls because “hello” was their invincible answer—whether they felt extra cheery or whether they felt tired and crabby from their long day’s work in the heat of the summer days. (In those days they didn’t even have electric fans to keep one cool, you know.)

When you wanted to call in to the Daily Telephone back in 1895 you merely asked the operator for number 46—or you said you wanted the Daily Telephone office, and she knew the rest. She quickly memorized each new number as they were added to the list.

Number 46 and other places of business frequently requested by subscribers were recalled ... by Mrs. Showers as she reminisced about the days when telephones were rare in this locality. Just who had No. 1, she didn’t seem able to recall—but she quickly recalled that No. 2 was the Wicks store; No. 33 was Louden and Louden, attorneys; No. 9 was Showers Brothers Factory and 31 was the hotel. ...

In those days the telephone exchange office could well have been called an information bureau. People used to ask Mrs. Showers the same kinds of questions that the newspaper offices now answer for the public. They would call and ask where the fire was, what the correct time was, and other such questions of general interest.

The biggest thrill that came to a “hello” girl in those days was when a long distance call came in from Indianapolis or Chicago—that was something. It was a rather complicated system, however, and sometimes they found great difficulty in getting the two parties connected. Rarely were the parties able to hear each other very well. The calls from Indianapolis came through Spencer and several other out-of-the-way communities—so that it seems...
something of a wonder that the conversing parties were able to hear each other at all.

The board of directors for the first stockholders was composed of W. W. Wicks, president, J. D. Showers, vice-president, and Walter Bradfute, treasurer. Among the other stockholders were Ben Adams, William Adams, J. H. Louden and W. D. [sic] Showers.

The first employees [sic] of the exchange was Bert Sanders, local painter who also lives in Bloomington. It was when the work became too heavy for him to handle that Mrs. Showers, then but a very young girl was added to the “force.” Later, Mrs. Morton Carter, who lives on south Grant street, was also employed to “plug in” the calls.

Bloomington’s first “hello” girl was born ca. 1881. The Monroe County, Indiana, 1900 census lists Blanche Pedigo, age 19, residing with her parents, William and Margaret Pedigo. Her mother died in 1900. Her father, a grocer, died in 1902. After his death, Blanche went to live with an older sister in Lebanon, Indiana.

Blanche Pedigo and Erle (“Earl” or “Earle”) Hull Showers (b. 1881) married in 1905, somewhere other than Monroe County. He was the son of Bloomington residents Charles Hull and Maude Coatney Showers. His father and his uncles, James D. and William N. Showers, were partners in Showers Bros. Co. His mother helped establish Bloomington Hospital and was the first board president.

The 1907 city directory lists Erle and Blanche Showers at 309 N. Walnut. In the 1910 Monroe County census, several lodgers share their household. The 1920 census shows them living with Erle’s mother, Maude, and stepfather, James B. Wilson. Erle and Blanche are absent from the 1920–1926 city directories. After working at Showers Bros. Bloomington plant, Erle moved to Los Angeles, later worked at the company’s Burlington plant, and finally returned to work at the Bloomington plant. Erle and Blanche are in the city directories at 314 N. Walnut from 1927 until the year of his death. Erle died on 20 May 1940. The Monroe County Death Index indicates he was buried in Indianapolis. Blanche disappears from Monroe County records after her husband’s death.


Where Was Bloomington’s First Telephone Exchange?

By Penelope Mathiesen

Bloomington’s first telephone exchange, established in 1895, occupied upstairs space in a building on North Walnut. Faris Market (208 N. Walnut) later operated at this site, now home to the Restaurant Tallent. In the beginning, there were fewer than 100 connections, and only one conversation could be carried on at a time. Soon, a new system was installed, with three switchboards that could handle up to 300 telephones. Several years later, the telephone exchange moved to 100 1/2 W. Sixth. In 1929, it moved to 119 E. Seventh. It is not certain when the present-day building was erected at Seventh and Washington, but the telephone company’s address at 301 N. Washington first appears in city directories in 1958.

In the early years of telephone service, the busiest times of day for operators were from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Women ordered their groceries in the morning and made social telephone calls in the afternoon. Most homes with telephones had them in the dining room, perhaps for the convenience of the housewife, who spent much of her time nearby in the kitchen. Many homes had an extension in the upstairs hallway. Telephones in those days were large, box-like affairs fastened to the wall and powered by batteries that often ran down.

From “Bloomington’s Original ‘Hello’ Girl Tells of First Telephone Exchange,” by Virginia Barnard (Bloomington Telephone, 6 January 1938) and Bloomington city directories.
The Pest House

By Mary Lou Mitchell

On 15 December 1902, Indiana University purchased a two-story house sitting on five acres where Templeton Elementary School now stands. It was for people with communicable diseases. At that time, it was 1/8 of a mile from any other residence. The price was $2,700.

Harvey Pryor, who had had smallpox in his family, was placed in charge of the house. He and his wife lived rent free and had a $50 fuel allowance. The first patient cost $30 a week and $10 a week for each additional patient. In 1905, the total cost for seven patients was $360.01, plus $19.50 for disinfecting.

In April of 1915, a cesspool was recommended and the zinc bath tub was to be replaced with a more modern and sanitary one. The second floor rooms had wide boards for the floor with cracks from 1/8 to 1/4 inch space between. Double beds were replaced with single beds—cost: 3 beds, $26.55; and 3 mattresses, $13.50. In February 1918, there were 13 patients—12 with scarlet fever and 1 with smallpox. The 1918 flu epidemic didn’t hit this part of the country until fall of that year.

After World War II, the area around the house was converted to a trailer court to accommodate returning soldiers with families who were attending IU. The house was turned into a rental at that time also. The family living there was told that their children would have to go to Elm Heights school as the school district line went through the middle of the house. This was so ridiculous as Hillside School, now Templeton, was only a few feet away. They were told that where their children slept would determine where they would go to school. So they simply moved the bedrooms from the north side of the house to the south side. Problem solved.

With “modern” medicine the house was no longer needed as a hospital. In addition to Bloomington Hospital, in the 1950s the IU Health Center was built on Jordan Avenue. In 1957, the house was demolished. The accompanying photograph is the only picture available. It is now a part of the Bryan Park neighborhood history.

Note: This article originally appeared in the Bryan Park Neighborhood Association’s Neighborhood News (August 2005) and is reprinted by permission of the author.

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In Memory of Robert E. Burton (1918—2007)

Bob Burton died Dec. 15 at the age of 89. Bob and his late wife Joan shared a passion for genealogy and local history. Bob was active in community affairs and was a pillar of the Monroe County Historical Society. He served as president from 1989 to 1991 and was instrumental in a successful merging of the MCHS, the Museum Board, and the Genealogy Society. He also became president of the Indianapolis chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and treasurer of the Society of Indiana Pioneers. Bob will be missed.

In Memory of Morris Binkley Sr. (1916-2008)

Morris Binkley died Jan. 19 at age 91. He supported the Historical Society through his role on the County Council, and with his late wife, Alice, on the Historical Society Board of Trustees. Morris was proud of his genealogy, traced by Alice on his mother’s side to an early teacher of Abraham Lincoln, Caleb Hazel, a known anti-slavery influence. They loaned many items for exhibits, most recently their wedding attire. Morris’ mother’s fudge became a campaign trademark during four terms on the County Council. His mother’s recipe is in the Taste of Monroe County cookbook.
News from Other Places

IGS 2008 Annual Conference in Evansville
The Indiana Genealogical Society’s Annual Conference will take place in Evansville, Indiana, on 5 April 2008. The featured speaker will be J. Mark Lowe, Certified Genealogist. He has served as president of the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Southern Kentucky Genealogical Society. He is a frequent speaker and writer on genealogical topics. The conference will be held at The Centre in downtown Evansville. Attendees should be sure to visit the Willard Library and take advantage of its genealogical resources. The library has served the city of Evansville since opening its doors in 1885. For more information on registration, lodging, and conference activities, go to: http://www.indgensoc.org or write to: IGS, P.O. Box 10507, Ft. Wayne, IN 46852. (From the IGS website.)

Indiana Catholic Church Records
Lloyd Hosman has published a useful guide, “Catholic Church Records at the Indiana State Library,” in The Hoosier Genealogist: Connections (Spring/Summer 2007). The Indiana State Library holds microfilmed records of Indiana Catholic Churches founded before 1917. These include 78 of Indiana’s 92 counties and four of Indiana’s five dioceses. The microfilmed records, organized by diocese, contain baptisms, marriages, first communions, and confirmation classes. The library’s finding aid provides an alphabetical list of the churches in each diocese. Hosman assumes that many researchers will know the county and perhaps the town of their ancestors but not the name of the church. He has therefore compiled a list organized by county, town, and church name to help researchers find the microfilmed records they seek.

Warren County Library Reopens
The Williamsport-Washington Township Public Library has reopened after a year of rebuilding. An October 2006 arson fire destroyed most of the collection, including the genealogy section. Access has been restored to the Warren County, Indiana Historical Records Database, a joint project of the Warren County Historical Society and the library. For more information, go to: http://www.wwtpl.lib.in.us (From IGS Newsletter, December 2007.)

New & Renewed Members


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Sundaes on Saturday: A Week of Chocolate Event

Above: Volunteers Marilyn Skirvin, Sue Shelden, Janice Partenheimer, Penny Mathiesen, and Jackie Gilkey (left to right) host the “design your own sundaes” table where 204 visitors selected an array of toppings to enjoy over ice cream donated by Bruster’s Ice Cream.

Above: Marty Mundy, Teri Klassen, and Lynn Manzenberger (left to right) provide an afternoon of old time fiddle music.

Above: Pam Kinnaman and Kaylene Hendershot demonstrate wool spinning.

Right: Carol Darling immerses visitors in the one-room school experience of 1885.
**Monroe County Historian**  
Volume 2008, Issue 1  

Brought to you by the  
Monroe County  
Historical Society  

Society established 1905  
Museum established 1980  

For subscription information contact the Monroe County History Center at 812-332-2517.

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**Membership Form**

**Annual Membership Levels**  
- Student/Teacher……………… $20  
- Basic……………………… $35  
- Family……………………… $60  
- Sustaining…………………… $100  
- Patron……………………… $500  

**Corporate - Service Organizations**  
- Exhibit Supporter…………….. $100  
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- Monroe County History Maker… $1000  

**Method of Payment**  
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Check if you are interested in:  
- Volunteering  
- Genealogy  
- Civil War History  
- Planned Giving  

Please write your information as you would like it to appear.

**YOUR ITEMS ARE NEEDED NOW!**

**“Annual Benefit Auction”**  

**Monday**  

Feb. 25  

6:00 p.m.  

**Send to:**  
Monroe County Historical Society, Inc.  
202 East Sixth Street  
Bloomington, IN 47408