Monroe County History Center
Preserving the Past for Future Generations
Newsletter of the Monroe County Historical Society, Inc.

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Monroe County History Center

Museum Research Library Museum Gift Store Educational Facility

History Center
202 East Sixth Street
Bloomington, IN 47408
812-332-2517
www.monroehistory.org
Hours
Tuesday – Saturday
10am – 4pm
Museum Admission
Adult – $2
Child (6-17 yrs.) – $1
5 yrs. & Under – Free Members – Free

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Sundae on Saturday
Saturday January 26, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm, join us for the annual Week of Chocolate event. You can build your own sundae with ice cream provided by Hartzell’s and chocolate toppings. While you’re here you can learn the interesting history of chocolate, banana splits, maraschino cherries and more! The Double Dip string band will be back again. Sundae’s are free with general admission.

Nancy Hiller’s Work a Permanent Piece of History

We are proud to announce that the library has an elegant new set of built-in bookshelves! Local cabinet maker Nancy Hiller designed and constructed the shelves to complement the existing interior and reflect the building’s history as a 1918 Carnegie library. The custom shelves are made of rift-sawn red oak and stained to match the room’s original fir trim. With a carefully scribed installation, the shelves appear as though they have been nestled in their place for ages.

The History Center is fortunate to own a piece of Hiller’s finely crafted furniture. Nancy Hiller is a formally trained woodworker with over 30 years of experience; you may also recognize her as a writer for Bloom Magazine or as the author of books in the museum store.

The bookshelf will serve as a home to the library’s collection of Monroe County materials, including city directories and yearbooks, and will stand as an example of the excellent craftsmanship of a local artist. One day people of Monroe County will regard Nancy Hiller’s pieces as the kind of historic treasure that we might now consider a Seward iron fence.

Visit Nancy Hiller’s blog posting about the shelves at: http://nrhiller.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/simple-and-easy-are-not-synonymous/
Alpha Hall, constructed in 1906 on the corner of Forest Place and Third Street, was the first women’s dormitory and first residence hall for either male or female students at Indiana University. (Men’s on-campus housing wasn’t provided until after 1937.) The four-story building was erected by a group of private investors. One of them, Theodore J. Loudon, a prominent local attorney, Spanish-American War veteran, and member of the Indiana National Guard, acted as general manager. Mrs. A. B. Foley served as matron. Bloomington’s Dickens Fellowship (see article elsewhere in this issue) held at least one meeting at Alpha Hall. A plan of the ground floor shows several large parlors, including one with a fireplace. Perhaps this was where the club met?

Indiana University’s military responsibilities during World War I included housing 200 men sent to campus for special radio communications training in 1918. They were first placed in the Old Gymnasium and the Assembly Hall, sleeping on military cots. In September, they were moved into Alpha Hall, taking their meals in the cafeteria. The new quarters must have seemed quite palatial by comparison! Alpha Hall was leased by IU in 1919 and renamed “Residence Hall.” The building was purchased by IU in 1936 and converted to classroom and office use. It was torn down in 1961, after Ballantine Hall was built.


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

“Civil Rights in Monroe County”
Exhibit Opened November 23, 2012 to April 27, 2013
The Civil Rights movements starting in the early 1900s to late 1980s are an important part of Monroe County history. Indiana University served as a stage for students to make change and voice their rights as African Americans, women and young adults making sense of the world around them. The exhibit follows individuals who had a direct impact in making change in the community and on campus, and the major demonstrations happening at the time.

“Monroe County Rocks the Historical Vote”
Exhibit Opened October 1, 2012 to March 23, 2013
With 2012 being a presidential election year, stop by the History Center to see different voting booths and styles Monroe County used to capture the vote.

“Small Voices, Big Impact: Children during the American Civil War”
Exhibit Opened September 1, 2012 to January 26, 2013
The American Civil War had a profound impact on both Northern and Southern people, especially young children. Small Voices Big Impact examines the stories and experiences of real young adults in battle and at home.

Hoosier Hills Food Bank provides over 3.2 million pounds of food annually to 92 food pantries, shelters, kitchens and youth programs in Brown, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange and Owen counties. Food bank partner agencies serve over 25,800 hungry Hoosiers each year. Non-perishable Food Needs: canned meat, canned vegetables, canned fruit, peanut butter, cereal.

Alpha Hall: IU’s First Women’s Dorm
By Penelope Mathiesen

Alpha Hall, constructed in 1906 on the corner of Forest Place and Third Street, was the first women’s dormitory and first residence hall for either male or female students at Indiana University. (Men’s on-campus housing wasn’t provided until after 1937.) The four-story building was erected by a group of private investors. One of them, Theodore J. Loudon, a prominent local attorney, Spanish-American War veteran, and member of the Indiana National Guard, acted as general manager. Mrs. A. B. Foley served as matron. Bloomington’s Dickens Fellowship (see article elsewhere in this issue) held at least one meeting at Alpha Hall. A plan of the ground floor shows several large parlors, including one with a fireplace. Perhaps this was where the club met?

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A little more than thirty years after Charles Dickens’ death in 1870, the Dickens Fellowship was founded in 1902 to celebrate the life and works of the famous novelist. It was based in London with branches elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries that were independent and scheduled their own events. One such branch was formed in Bloomington in 1907. The History Center’s library holds its book of minutes, a 7 x 9 inch composition book bound in brown cardboard. Tucked in the front of the book are several letters that M. A. (Mary Allouis, or Minnie) Waldron sent to fellow members in Bloomington during her 1915 sojourn in Lake Hamilton, Florida. One letter begins: “Greetings to the Dickens Fellowship, from the Land of Flowers—My Dear Fellows: Monday 2:30 to 4:30 Jan. 11 Reviewing David Copperfield and with you in spirit.” (As is mentioned later, the letter was written at the exact time the Fellowship held its weekly meeting.)

Meetings were not devoted solely to serious discussion! The minutes for 2 March 1908 reveal that Mrs. Brown served refreshments “in a most hospitable manner, in a style suitable to the Dickens taste, and enjoyed equally as much as any repast served the Pickwickians on the town, irrespective of strong drinks.” And on 4 May 1908, members and their children arrived “with well filled baskets for the Pickwick picnic, which was heartily enjoyed by all present.”

Minnie Waldron compiled the book of minutes with a flourishing hand and an enthusiasm that suggests the degree to which she threw herself into the activities of the Dickens Fellowship. The History Center holds a blue book containing her essay, “Dickens as an Educator,” written “for the Dickens Fellowship, Bloomington, Indiana.” The blue book is dated 28 March 1916—around the time she began attending classes at Indiana University. For more information on her remarkable life, see the article elsewhere in this issue.

Bloomington’s Dickens Fellowship met every Monday from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the homes of members (all were married women) and at least once at Alpha Hall, a women’s dormitory on the Indiana University campus (see article elsewhere in this issue). For each meeting, members were assigned chapters of the work to be discussed. They also gave reports (such as a biography of Dickens), addressed issues raised in Dickens’ novels (such as workhouse reform in Oliver Twist), and read papers written by themselves or others. On Monday, 21 October 1907, Minnie Waldron read Henry Panceost’s article, “Charles Dickens in Representative English Literature.”

Happy Holidays to all!

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New Items in the Library

genealogy@monroehistory.org

Penelope Mathiesen and Elizabeth Schlemmer

New Items in the Library

* Monroe County, Indiana. Jail Register 1890s. Digitized images of original ledger on CD. Gift from Indiana University Libraries.

New Items in the Collection

collection@monroehistory.org

Compiled by Rebecca Vaughan

Items recently accessioned into the collections include:

*A 1950’s woman’s wool dress suit (purchased for honeymoon travel). Gift from Cathie Lynch.
*One pair of corduroy pants worn in a Senior Cords contest. Gift from Dennis Hamilton.
*Slag from Virginia Iron Works, Monroe County. Gift from Cathy Meyer.
*Whiffletree and wrench from a barn in northern Monroe County. Gift from George Hegeman.
*Panoramic photograph of the 1927 graduating class of Bloomington High School (or possibly middle school). Anonymous donation.
Looking for a unique gift this holiday season?

Give the gift of history! A membership to the Monroe County History Center is a present that lasts all year long and it is tax deductible. This is a perfect gift for a relative, friend or colleague.

Bring history to life for a special person on your gift list this holiday season. An acknowledgement card will be sent along with membership information. A gift Membership form is included on the last page of the newsletter.

It’s easy to give!

By Phone – Call the History Center, 332-2517, ext. 1.
By Email – Send information with your credit card to admin@monroehistory.org.
Online – monroehistory.org and follow the prompts
By regular mail - Membership, 202 E. Sixth Street, Bloomington, IN 47408

New members this year:

Jim Ackerman
Jim Alexander
Lawrence Allen
Daniel Barrow
Carey Beam
Tony Branam
Catherine Elder
Scott Evans
Tom Froehle
Sue Gingles
Kathleen Glaser
Carol Grammer
Helmut Hentschel
Wendy Calman and Homer Hogle
Kari Isaacson
Teri Klassen
Susan Armeny and Paul Langley
Erin Leake
Jenny Mack
Dennis Maloy
Diane Matacale
Mark and Julie McMath
Martin Minner
Rod and Carol Mullis
Cindy Oswalt
Madonna Paskash
Steve and Debby Reed
Eric and Lee Ann Sandweiss
Elizabeth Schlemmer
Angi St. Clair
Jim and JoAnne Steele
Susan Sullivan
Rebecca Vaughn
Janet Weiser
Elyse Werling
Nancy White
Bob Zaltsberg

In 1916, several Indiana University professors urged Minnie Waldron to enroll in a few classes. She went on to complete a Bachelor’s degree in 1920, a Masters degree in 1921, and a Ph.D. in Sociology in 1924 when she was in her sixties. She also took courses from the Indiana Law School; in 1922, she was the first woman admitted to the Monroe County bar. Active in many areas, she valued her affiliation with St. Charles Catholic Church above all else.

She started a fund to establish St. Charles School and wrote a booklet, History of St. Charles Catholic Church, Bloomington, Indiana: Including a Synoptic Early History of the County and City (1934).

Mary A. Waldron died on 14 April 1940, age 82, two days after receiving second-degree burns when her apron caught fire as she was preparing supper for herself and her son, attorney Charles Waldron. She is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. The old City Hall where she conducted her social welfare work was renovated and reopened in 1992 as the John Waldron Arts Center, thanks to funding from Cecile Waldron, the widow of Mary’s son, Charles. According to the sermon at her funeral, Mary A. Waldron was known for unselfish devotion to the public welfare. “Prudently and justly she rendered that service, winter or summer, rain or shine, hot or cold, no matter what the day might be Minnie Waldron was on the job.”

Mary A. (Minnie) Waldron, who served as secretary of Bloomington’s Dickens Fellowship (see article elsewhere in this issue), was much more than that. Mary Allouiz Shiel was born in Martinsville on 28 March 1858 to John and Mary Shiel, both Irish immigrants. The family moved to Seymour, Indiana, where the 1880 census lists John Shiel as a leather merchant and his daughter Mary (called Minnie) as a schoolteacher. Minnie married John B. Waldron on 18 November 1884. John B. was from Bloomington, where his father (also an Irish immigrant) owned the Waldron tannery, which he had purchased upon a recommendation from John Shiel (Mary’s father). The two men must have been connected through the leather trade. John B. and Minnie Waldron settled in Bloomington, where he worked as a bank clerk, but their married life was brief. John B. died on 10 May 1886, leaving his wife with an eight-month-old son, Charles.

The widowed Minnie went back to live with her family in Seymour. She returned to Bloomington in 1899 after the death of her father-in-law, who had become wealthy through numerous business and real estate interests. Minnie first lived with her mother-in-law and later set up her own home. Beginning a life of good works, she helped organize the Bloomington Charity Association (the town’s first such group) and thereafter was a leader in many other social service organizations (Body of Children’s Guardians; Anti-Tuberculosis Association; Public Health Nursing Association; Red Cross; Travelers’ Aid; Free Employment Bureau; Women’s Christian Temperance Union; American Association of University Women; Local Council of Women, the founders of Bloomington Hospital; and the City Library Board, formed when the 1917 Carnegie library was built).

Minnie’s obituary characterized her aid to the needy as tireless but not random: case investigations were swift and sure, and those who failed to be deserving could expect no assistance. Prior to the erection of the City Hall on the northwest corner of Fourth and Walnut, she conducted Bloomington’s welfare work from her home on the corner of Fourth and Rogers. (In 1914, she moved to another house one block north on Rogers.) When the City Hall was completed in 1915, she received an office on the third floor and came to work every day into her early eighties, even as her health declined. She conducted her welfare work without accepting any salary, thanks to the benefit of the Waldron estate.

Minnie Waldron took advantage of opportunities to travel, including a trip to New Haven, Connecticut, in 1910; a sojourn in Lake Hamilton, Florida, in 1915 (with a side trip to Cuba, enthusiastically described in a letter to Bloomington’s Dickens Fellowship on stationery from Havana’s Hotel Ohio), and a year in New York and Washington, D.C., in 1922.

The Henry and Cecilia Wahl Gateway Gallery
INSTALLATION COMPLETED FOR PHASE 1 OF THE INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS

Phase 1 of the Interactives Project and Campaign was completed Wednesday, November 21. Our huge Kodiak bear now roars with the touch of fur; you can listen to the music of Joshua Bell, John Mellencamp, Hoagy Carmichael and David Baker. A huge piece of local limestone donated by BG Hoadley provides the backdrop for the display of, “What’s under our feet,” showing different layers of rock and stone found in several surrounding locations. These are but a few of the new exhibit displays in the Henry and Cecilia Wahl Gateway Gallery.

We are indebted to the Trustees of the Wahl Family Charitable Trust for the funding of the new gallery. The funds were given in recognition of the community and charitable work done by Henry and Cecilia Wahl. A dedication ceremony is scheduled for January 2013.

Our thanks are extended to the following for their contributions to Phase I:

Robert Dodd, Board Member, assistance with large county map on gallery floor.
Pat Fell Barker, BG Hoadley Limestone Company, large limestone on display.
Walter Gray and the Indiana Geological Survey - limestone display core samples.
Monroe County Retired Teachers for use of excerpts from “Echoes from One-Room Schools.”
Joshua Bell, John Mellencamp, Robert Baker, for use of musical excerpts and photos.
The History Center is again having its popular holiday sale featuring great donated bargains in holiday decorations, books, gift ware and jewelry. Bring your like-new donations to the History Center any time, so the shelves can be re-stocked.

Not only do we have special donated items in the holiday shop, but the Museum Store has new and unusual books, cards and gifts for you to see, too. Both stores are open during all normal History Center hours, Tuesday-Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm.

New books from the I.U. Press available in the Museum Store, that will make great gifts, include: David Baker, A Legacy in Music, by Monica Herzog; Showers Furniture Company, by Carroll Krause; and Herman B Wells, by James H. Capshaw.

Every year our holiday sales bring in thousands of dollars to help with programs and events, thanks to all of you.

Volunteer Spotlight: Adam

Adam McGlothlin came to Bloomington in March 2009 to finish his History and Geography studies. In August 2012 he started with the Monroe County History Center. At the History Center, Adam works in the research library entering information and descriptions of the library’s maps into the museum’s database. Adam also spends time in the museum’s collections department, most recently he has been working with the Butcher Collection. (The Butcher Collection contains several items of Major General Joseph O. Butcher - Bloomington son and alumni of Indiana University.)

Not surprisingly, Adam enjoys amateur cartography, the study of maps. Adam also has an interest in brewing science: the making of home brews and wine.

Adam says he is enjoying his time here and is learning a lot. He likes working with the maps and is finding fun stuff in the collections department.

In spring, Adam is sure to find many other fun items at the Monroe County History Center as he continues working with the museum no longer as a volunteer, but as an intern.