Holiday Sale

We are now accepting donated items for the annual Holiday Shop at the History Center. Please bring good quality holiday decorations and like-new gift items to the History Center any time during our open hours. Gift-type donations could include jewelry, small antiques, decorative items, and new and unused items such as gloves, scarves, games and puzzles. The holiday boutique will open November 1, so we need your donations before then if possible.

Not only will we have special donated items in the Holiday Shop, but the Museum Store has new and unusual books, cards, and gifts too.

Canopy of Lights Open House, November 24th

While you are downtown watching the Courthouse Square light up for the holiday season, don’t forget to stroll over to the History Center for our Annual Canopy of Lights Open House. There will be hot cider, cookies, holiday music, and our ever-popular holiday sale where you are sure to find that perfect gift for all of your favorite people! Doors will open Friday the 24th of November at 5 pm and will stay open until 9 pm. Drop by, bring the whole family, meet friends, and enjoy our charming museum and Museum Store.

The garage sale has had requests for 2 pianos in good condition. If anyone has one to donate, please contact the History Center for information regarding logistics.
Current Exhibits
Also available at www.monroehistory.org

Rechter Gallery:
Holiday Tradition: Toy Trains
During the 1950s and 1960s businesses employed toy trains to grab the attention of shoppers strolling by their store front windows. Subsequently, trains produced by popular toy companies such as Lionel and Marx became holiday staples. Come see several of these sets on display and learn about their roles in your favorite holiday movies and songs.
Open:
November 4th to December 30th

Brown Gallery:
Saving Grandma's Attic: For Ourselves and Our Posterity
Do you want to know more about museum conservation? Do you have questions about family heirlooms and how to take care of them? Visit the Saving Grandma's Attic exhibit to learn more and to find resources to help you take care of your priceless family treasures.
Exhibit open

Hill Gallery:
Devastation: The Aftermath of Hiroshima
After the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima the work to end the war wasn't over. Robert Clegg, Jr., a former Bloomington business owner and city councilman, was in the division of Army Corps of Engineers responsible for building airstrips that allowed the Allies access to Japan. Photographs from his personal scrapbook depicting the devastation will be on view.
Open:
October 20th to March 5th

Community Voices Showcase:
Bloomington Symphony Orchestra
The Bloomington Symphony Orchestra promotes a lifelong appreciation of music through the performance of the orchestral repertoire and outreach to the community in Bloomington and south-central Indiana.
Celebrating their 47th Season this year.
Open through Dec. 30th

Meet our new Exhibits Manager A.J. Gianopoulos
Ever since I went to Rome the summer before my sophomore year in high school I’ve wanted to work in museums. I grew up in Newburgh, Indiana, and left for Ohio when it came time to pick a college. I have a BA and MA in Art History and have interned at several museums throughout Indiana and Ohio. Prior to my arrival in Bloomington I was curator at the Wetzel County Museum in New Martinsville, West Virginia. I’m excited to come back to Indiana be a part of the Monroe County History Center where I not only get to tell the county’s stories, but help people figure out their own.
The Monroe County History Center welcomes A.J. and hopes you will stop by to say hello.
From the President

Just as the seasons change, so do the programs and exhibits at the Monroe County History Center. You won’t want to miss the upcoming exhibit featuring many of the trains from our collection. Andrew (“A J”) Gianopoulos, our Exhibits Manager and our newest staff member, has been hard at work to prepare interesting and informative exhibits for the coming year. Andrew is originally from Evansville, Indiana and most recently worked at the Wetzel County Museum in West Virginia and we are very excited to have him on our team!

This season is the “Eve of the Bicentennial” for Monroe County and for the City of Bloomington – both legally formed 200 years ago in 1818. Our staff is busy with planning, preparation and collaboration with other entities as we look forward to the big year. We have plans for several exhibits and programs that will focus on the diversity of Monroe County – including the history of African Americans locally. In addition, we will feature the history of the many smaller communities within Monroe County – some of which are no longer here.

The many, many volunteers at the Monroe County History Center make such good things possible – including the recent celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Rose Bowl Team at Indiana University. Bob Hammel and our Sports Committee put together a wonderful celebration of the community’s involvement and excitement with the magical football season of 1967. Thank you Bob and all!

Thank you to Liz Mitchell, Guy Loftman, Jim Sims and many others who are assisting with plans for the October 7, 2017 Rededication of the Historical Marker on the lawn of the MCHC that marks the location of “The Colored School.” The current site of the MCHC was the home of The Colored School from 1874 until 1915 when the Carnegie Library was constructed on the site. Thank you also to Steve Rolfe and Dean McElhinney for installing the newly repaired sign marking this historic location.

We’d love for you to partner with us in all of the excitement of the Bicentennial and all of the opportunities to learn and celebrate the history of Monroe County. Please join us as a volunteer, a donor, a visitor and a friend!

Linda Williamson, President
MCHC Board of Trustees

Calendar of Events

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<tr>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
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<tr>
<td>6th, 5pm, Closing reception for Nature, Wildlife, and Underwater: The Photography of Dr. Robert Wrenn</td>
<td>10th, 5pm, Hiroshima Photo Reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th, 3:30pm, Rededication of the Colored School Sign</td>
<td>11th, 11am, WFHB Saturday’s Child</td>
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<td>10th, 7pm, Civil War Round Table</td>
<td>14th, 7pm, Civil War Round Table</td>
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<td>14th, 11am, WFHB Saturday’s Child</td>
<td>16th, 4:30pm, Board Meeting</td>
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<td>19th, 4:30pm, Board Meeting</td>
<td>23rd, Closed</td>
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<td>28th, 1pm, HiStory Book Club</td>
<td>24th, 5pm, Canopy of Lights</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25th, 1pm, HiStory Book Club</td>
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Artifacts Needed!!

Collections Manager Hilary Fleck has returned to work after her maternity leave and is ready to answer your collections and donations questions. The History Center staff is preparing for Monroe County’s bicentennial next year and we are looking for donations to help with our planned exhibits. Items we are looking for relate to: local African-American history, school curriculum and classrooms in the 1960s, and local barber shops/beauty salons. Donations and loans are accepted at the History Center Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 4pm, or you may call Hilary at 812-332-2517 ex. 6 to discuss a pick-up of your items. Thank you!


October 6th, 2017
5pm to 7pm
Monroe County History Center

Monroe County Historical Society is pleased to announce our platinum level members.

Smithville Communications, Inc.

And

Rick and Carrie Snapp
Volunteer Spotlight

Dean McElhinney

Dean McElhinney started at the History Center as a volunteer greeter but his many talents were soon evident so he was quickly recruited to be a member of both the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Board of Trustees! Dean is retired from University Information Technology Services at IU. He and his wife Sandy, who still works at IU, have two sons.

Dean and Sandy love to visit homes by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright. For their next trip they hope to visit Midcentury Modern Homes in California.

On Wednesday mornings you can find Dean at our Greeter Desk from 10am to 1pm where he always makes History Center guests feel welcome. However, on a nice day, you’ll probably find Dean driving around town in his 1989 Black Mustang!

Odds and Ends Info

Hooray! There is now a Loading Zone parking place in front of the History Center. We hope this will make it more convenient for anyone dropping off something at the Center. It’s on the east side of the street, next to the alley between the History Center and the First Christian Church.

Hot off the presses! Copies of “Monroe County: Everyday Life in Indiana” should be in our Museum Store by the time you receive this newsletter! We are very excited about this book which contains over 300 photographs from our collection that chronicle the lives of Monroe County residents over the course of our 200-year history! This book was made possible by the contributions of staff, volunteers, individual and corporate members, as well as the community’s generous donations of photographs and artifacts. Watch Facebook and our website monroehistory.org for the announcement!

Another way to support the History Center at no cost to you: Most of us order goods or services from Amazon.com at times. If and when you do, use Amazon’s other name that offers rewards to the non-profit of your choice. Just type in Smile.Amazon.com and select “Monroe County Historical Society Inc.” before placing your order. Smile.Amazon.com is the same organization, just one with extra rewards for the MCHC!

Lobby Information Monitor: Be sure to check out the digital slideshow on our recently-installed information monitor just inside our front door. There are highlights of our programs and exhibits along with other information. Just takes a few minutes to watch the show.

Call 812-332-2517, Ext. 7 with questions about any of the Odds and Ends.
Remembering

Marjorie Counsilman, widow of Doc Counsilman died August 17, 2017. An amazing woman, Marge was in all ways a partner in Doc’s mentoring of young athletes, and was famous for the lasagna dinners she provided. While raising four children she was also an active member of the community in various organizations and also ran dozens of swim meets at Bryan Park Pool. She was a gardener, a voracious reader, a gifted writer and a world traveler. Swimming was not one of her strong suits, but she continued her daily swims until the age of 86 because, “It’s what my husband would have wanted.”

Contributors

July and August 2017

The History Center wishes to acknowledge and recognize those who provided financial gifts to support our operations in July and August 2017:

Supporter Membership

David Lemon
Mary and Julian Livingston

Donations

Saundra Taylor

Contributor Memberships

Lee Ehman and Barbara Wilcox
Jim and Cathy Murphy
Kate Kroll
Jerry and Jane McIntosh
Dan and Debbi Conkle
Richard and Kathy McFall
Patrick and Glenda Murray
Barbara Hawkins and Robert Poortinga
Richard and Maribeth McKaig
Debbie Lemon
James G. Jenkins
David and Karita Musgrave
Ellen Boruff
Lee and Eleanore Dodge
John and Helen Hollingsworth

Welcome to Our New Members

Barbara Hawkins and Robert Poortinga
Pauline Winters

E-Newsletter

If you would like to receive your bi-monthly newsletter by email rather than hard copy, you can request that change by calling 812-332-2517, Ext. 7., or email mchcvolunteers@gmail.com.
Our Kroger Community Rewards total for the year since we began the program is $1247.64. We know you have a lot of choices when it comes to donations so we thank you most sincerely for choosing the History Center! You can link your card to the Monroe County History Center online at krogercommunityrewards.com or call 812-332-2517, Ext. 7 for assistance. (History Center Acct #45993)

Cemetery Workshop Recap

The Monroe County Cemetery Committee held a successful class and workshop on August 11th and 12th. The class on Friday night was taught by Jeannie Regan-Dinius of the Indiana DNR, and Amy Thompson of the Purdue Extension agency. The Saturday Workshop was led by John Walters, a recognized expert in cemetery restoration. Many local and out of town guests participated in both the class and the workshop. The lecture focused on cemetery law and invasive plants while the hands-on workshop focused on cleaning and resetting headstones.

If you would like information on upcoming cemetery work days, meetings and workshops, send an email to mchcooperations@gmail.com to be added to the cemetery contact list.

Museum Store

Clay City Pottery

“One of the few family potteries still making traditional stoneware. Established in 1885, the descendants of Beryl Griffith have been making pottery for well over a hundred years.”

Visit our collection of Clay City Pottery available for purchase in the Museum store.

New colors and styles just arrived and would make wonderful Christmas gifts.
News from the Library

mchclibrary@gmail.com
Compiled by Megan MacDonald and Penelope Mathiesen

The following items have been recently accessioned:

* Beth Lau, compiler. *Veteran's Enrollment Records, Monroe Co., Indiana, 1890*. 2017. Each entry includes the veteran’s rank, race, township, number of children, and injuries received.

* Leake, Patsy, ed. *History of University Courts*. N.d. Covers the building history and background of families living in the neighborhood (Sare, Bowman, Sage, Buskirk, Tourner) and includes photos. Gift from Patsy Leake.


* Taped conversations with Inez Harlos and Albert Hoadley, recorded September 12 and 13, 1989. Audio cassette tape. Topics include Bloomington history, families, and University Courts. Gift from Patsy Leake.

IGS Web Site Adds Prisoners Database

The Indiana Genealogical Society’s newest online database, submitted by Meredith Thompson, is *Prisoners at Indiana State Prison North, Michigan City, Indiana Who Died (1860–1898)*, available in the Members Only section at: www.indgensoc.org. Each entry includes the inmate’s name, date of death, age, cause of death, and remarks. (For example: William Blue died on 26 July 1861, age 31, shot by a guard while attempting to escape; he was from Tippecanoe County, convicted of forgery, and sentenced on 22 October 1860 to two years in prison.) Other correctional institutions whose records may be found in prisoners databases on the IGS web site include the Indiana Boys’ School, Indiana Girls’ School, Indiana State Prison South, and Indiana Women’s Prison. The site also offers many other databases created from state, county, and local records.
In 1871, Monroe County commissioners announced that they had appropriated money to aid in the construction of a one-lane bridge over the west fork of the White River connecting Gosport in Wayne Township, Owen County, to Stinesville in Bean Blossom Township, Monroe County. 1 Aid accurately described the commissioners’ level of commitment, because the bridge was to be a joint endeavor between the two counties. Scarceley a year later the bridge was complete. 2

For many years the bridge served the two counties quite well and aided in the development of communities on either side of the river. In 1939, however, travel on the bridge was nearly brought to a halt when a passing motorist carelessly flipped a cigarette butt onto the dry flooring of the bridge. In no time at all, the bridge was in flames. Thanks to a crew of volunteer firemen who responded quickly with the town fire truck, the conflagration was extinguished before it could do excessive damage. 3

After the turn of the century, high-powered automobiles rushed across the loose, wooden flooring of the bridge with ever-increasing popularity. This took a toll on the bridge because it was designed solely for wagons, and by the early 1950s, the bridge was quite dilapidated.

Repair of the bridge became a long-standing matter of controversy. Owen County wanted Monroe County to fund the necessary repairs, and Monroe County was less than enthusiastic about the matter. At some point, the bridge was condemned and vehicular traffic on the bridge was banned.

Foot traffic continued to make good use of the bridge, as well as an occasional car that circumvented the barricades. Then in the early fall of 1953, a farmer on the Monroe side of the bridge discovered that one of the wooden spans of the bridge looked like a “sway-backed” mule. The ancient structure had slipped, was sagging dangerously, and looked as though it would soon give way. 4

Monroe County remained adamant in their refusal to fund repair of the bridge. They noted that the county surveyor and an outside engineering firm hired to inspect the structure found the bridge unfit for repair. Meantime, in the summer of 1955, the State Flood Control Commission recommended that the bridge be razed to prevent a tragedy should the bridge be torn loose by high waters. 5

Summer turned to fall. In the early morning hours of 27 October 1955, vandals set fire to the bridge, but volunteer firemen were able to extinguish the flames before much damage could be done. 6 At 12:45 the following morning, the same firemen were called to the scene of another fire at the bridge. The roof and flooring were already ablaze by the time the Gosport fire truck pulled to the edge of the bridge. Firefighters extended their hose as far as it would go into the bridge and began spraying water.

Suddenly there was a loud crack. Immediately the bridge collapsed, plunging ten firefighters 30 feet into knee-deep water. All of the men were injured. Bert Dittemore, Jr., the assistant fire chief, died when his head was submerged beneath the water and held down by a heavy cable from the bridge.

A week later, three boys admitted setting fire to the bridge both Wednesday and Thursday nights as a Halloween prank and a means to settle the controversy over which county was responsible for the bridge repairs. 7 In November, two of the boys were sentenced to serve terms of 1-to-10 years in the Indiana State Reformatory for arson; the third boy was committed to the Indiana Boys’ School. In December, the governor granted clemency to all three based on their previously good records. 8

Today, nearly all evidence of the bridge has disappeared. Only the piers remain as testimony to what once was.

Notes
1. Bloomington Republican Progress, September 13, 1871, p. 3.
2. Bloomington Progress, January 17, 1872, p. 3.
5. “Gosport Bridge May Go to Vote This Fall,” Bloomington Star Courier, July 29, 1955, p. 1A.
Temperance and abolition in the early decades of the 19th century, and suffrage in the latter half, were some of women’s central causes. Social reform movements involved women’s participation and leadership in these causes. Education was one factor in preparing them for these roles, and in the early 1800s female seminaries and academies provided this opportunity in the absence of public education.¹

Education was important even on the frontier. In 1806, the First General Assembly of the Indiana Territory passed an act establishing Vincennes University, and further stipulated that its trustees “are hereby required to establish an institution for the education of females.”² After Indiana became a state, the legislature passed the 1818 County Seminary Law whereby a county seminary trustee could collect income from fines and fees toward establishment and maintenance of a public seminary.³

Monroe County citizens also favored education, going on record in 1822 in support of a public seminary.⁴ Thus it was that the state’s first women’s school was founded not in Vincennes, but in Monroe County. Some accounts state that an early “Female Institute” opened in 1824 or 1825, directed by Martha Young, sister of Indiana College’s Professor Baynard Hall. After Young and her brother left Bloomington in the early 1830s, locals recruited Cornelius Pering, recently from England, as principal. He began teaching in 1832 in a small house at what is now 426 South College. By 1833 the seminary trustee had garnered the required $2,000 to erect a permanent building. Lots 313 and 314, on the northeast corner of College Avenue and 7th Street, were purchased in 1834 and a 30’ x 50’ two-story brick structure was erected.⁵ The first class began there in the spring of 1835. During the period from 1835 to 1842, the five-month winter and summer terms’ average enrollment was 53, with about 400 women completing the course of studies.⁶

The Seminary consisted of three departments: Primary, Junior, and Senior. The Primary curriculum included orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography; tuition was $5. Juniors studied orthography, English grammar and composition, rhetorical reading, geography, practical arithmetic, history, and penmanship; tuition was $8. Seniors studied ancient and modern geography and history, English grammar, natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, geometry, mental and moral philosophy, and rhetorical composition; tuition was $10.⁷

Pering was a passionate advocate for women’s education and its salutatory impact on society:

“It is becoming more and more evident from the nature of our social relations, that the surest way to effect a universal diffusion of general intelligence is liberally to educate our females, to make ample provision and spare no pains for giving them a thorough, solid and useful education…. The amount and importance of the influence which they exercise over manners, opinions and customs cannot be overrated, and if the age is to be purified, elevated and adorned, it must be by female encouragement and example.”⁸

The Seminary trustees made a presentation to the County Commissioners in 1842, at the end of Pering’s principalship. Their report echoed Pering’s lofty rhetoric, but also emphasized the equally important, but more practical, teacher education function of the institution: “Many of [the graduates] are now engaged in teaching, and their services as already stated are sought for and prized.”⁹

The second principal, from 1843 to 1856, was Mrs. E. J. McFerson. She was a sister of Daniel Reed, professor of ancient languages at Indiana University, after whom the present Reed dormitory is named. Mrs. McFerson was beloved “for her rare elements of mind and heart.”¹⁰ The third and last principal, from 1857 to 1863, was Eliphalet P. Cole. He had three assistants,¹¹ one of whom, Margaret McCalla, was a Seminary graduate and later a local teacher and then first female superintendent of schools in the state of Indiana. McCalla Elementary School, situated at 9th and Dunn streets, and now home to Indiana University’s sculpture department in its Fine Arts School, was named in her honor.
Many leading citizens favored free public education, but the majority of voters did not, and in 1849 the question was defeated, 667 to 1,040. While this delayed the first public high school for 14 years, it bolstered Female Seminary enrollments. In 1852 the legislature decreed that all seminary property be sold and the money transferred to the common school fund. By 1855 the Female Seminary changed its finances to be self-sustaining.

At the same time the local Episcopal Methodists began the short-lived Bloomington Female College and Academy, with Rev. Thomas H. Sinex as first principal, followed by Rev. M. M. Tooke and Rev. A. D. Lynch. Classes were held in the church, and the women boarded in a house on 6th Street between Walnut and Washington streets. The curriculum was similar to that of the Female Seminary. The Female College closed in 1861, as the Civil War began.

The 1860s saw the decline and demise of the Female Seminary. The Methodist Female College competed for students. In about 1863 the high school in Bloomington was founded, and in 1867 Indiana University admitted its first women students. Thus the need for a separate women's school waned, and the Female Seminary closed its doors “on or about the year 1866.” In 1871 its trustees sold the property to the Bloomington Schools Trustees, but it was never again used as a school. The building was razed in 1924 by the Masons, who built their temple in its place. This building still stands, and is now known as One City Centre.

The Female Seminary played its part in furthering the capability of women in advancing social reform. As Welch and Ruelas conclude:

“The contributions of those who founded, fought for, and taught at the female seminaries and academies in the United States cannot be overstated when put into the context of how women began to obtain social justice in this country…. The social justice obtained by women was an outgrowth of their education, with education feeding into social changes that could not be stemmed once begun.”

Notes

11. Ibid.
13. Bennett P. Reed, “Two Female Academies Here During 1850’s,” Bloomington Daily Herald Telephone, October 24, 1956, sect. 2, p. 2. Both Fischer and Blanchard assert that the Methodists considered buying the Female Seminary property for their college but then backed out.
15. Ibid., 163–66.
16. Welch and Ruelas, 100.
Join Us!
Do you want to help preserve history? If so, call 812-332-2517 ext. 7 to learn about volunteering in one of the many History Center departments.

Membership Form

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Bloomington, IN 47408

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