October/November 2019
Vol. 2019 Issue 5

Monroe County History Center

Museum
Research Library
Museum Store

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
Member — Free

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Historian Staff
Copy: Jennifer Borland, Susan Dyar, Hilary Fleck, A.J. Gianopoulos, Andrea Hadsell, Rose Hessert, Megan MacDonald, Penelope Mathiesen, Martha Wainscott

The Monroe County Historian
Preserving the Past for Future Generations
The newsletter of the Monroe County Historical Society, Inc.

Ghost Tours
What legends lie hidden in Rose Hill Cemetery? Explore the stories that have outlived the deceased at one of Bloomington’s most historic cemeteries. The Monroe County History Center hosts guided walking tours with costumed re-enactors who share secrets that lie beneath the stones—and some haunted history, too!

October 18th, 6:30-7:30 p.m.- Family-friendly tour (ages 10 yrs. and up)
October 19th, 8-9 p.m. - Adult, after-dark tour (ages 18 yrs. and up)

Tickets are $10.00 and pre-registration is required.

For more information and registration, please visit the City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation website at https://bloomington.in.gov/recreation/programs/10897.

Annual Holiday Sale
Opens October 29th

This year’s Holiday Sale will open October 29th. Find new and gently used gifts, holiday decorations, jewelry, scarves, and much more. Don’t miss out on these one of a kind items.

The sale will be open during regular business hours though January 11, 2020 and open during Canopy of Lights.

Regular hours are Tuesday - Saturday 10am to 4pm

Canopy of Lights

If you’re downtown for the lighting of the Courthouse Square this year, don’t forget to stroll over to the History Center for our Annual Canopy of Lights Open House. Kick off the holiday season and warm your chilly fingers with hot cider, cookies, holiday music, and our ever-popular holiday sale where you are sure to find the perfect gift for all of your favorite people! Doors open Friday November 29th at 5pm and will stay open until 9pm. Drop by, bring the whole family, meet friends, enjoy our new holiday exhibit, and visit the Museum Store.
Rechter Gallery:
Michelangelos of Monroe
At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, stone carvers came to America from Europe to help forge new identities for themselves and buildings all over the country. They quickly became a part of the community and passed down their knowledge to future generations to create a lasting legacy and tradition in Monroe County. “Michelangelos of Monroe” tells the story of limestone carvers in Monroe County from their artistic process to the impact of their work being on display throughout the region and country.

Open through October 12th

Holiday Exhibition: Dolls and Toys
Dolls and toys have brought tons of fun and memories to children for centuries. In this exhibition, dolls and toys from a variety of time periods will be on display along with some to play with and create new memories.

Open November 1st to December 31st

Hill Gallery:
The Many Paths to Monroe: Family Portraits from Our Permanent Collection
One way or another families start, settle, grow, and move through Monroe County, Indiana. Hidden deep within our archives are a collection of family portraits from the county’s history. They tell the triumph and tragedy of the people who left a mark on this community.

Open through January 24th, 2020

Brown Gallery:
For the past 200 years, the import and export of raw materials, finished goods, and even people has been a challenge for those living in Monroe County. Exhibits in the Brown Gallery tell the story of how Monroe County continued to grow despite obstacles presented by hilly terrain and a region without a major water source. The ongoing theme of the exhibits in the Brown Gallery will be transportation in Monroe County with changing artifacts throughout the year.

Community Voices:
Monroe County History Club
Our Community Voices display in the Deckard Education room features information and artifacts from the Monroe County History Club. Starting with only six members in 2013, the Monroe County History Club is a group dedicated to local history. Free and open to the public, local and regional historians and speakers present programs on the last Tuesday of the month. Programs are recorded by CATS TV and uploaded to YouTube.

Open through December 6th

Monroe County Hall of Fame
2018 Inductees
Gayle Cook, Paris Dunning, William Hanna, Dr. Frank Hrisomalos, Lloyd Olcott, Joe Peden, Maud Showers, George Taliaferro, Vi Taliaferro, Charlotte Zietlow

Thursday, October 17th
4:00 to 6:00 pm
Fountain Square Ball Room • 101 West Kirkwood Ave, Bloomington, IN
From the Director

The other day we received a new toilet here at the History Center. You may think that's a weird way for me to start this note but I do have a reason. This toilet will have new life here but don’t expect to be able to use it when you visit. It will be going into our artifact collection. This particular toilet is made of wood and looks like a short chair. I’m not really sure why it’s so short but Hilary says it was originally designed to match either a suite of bedroom furniture or bathroom furniture so it was pretty fancy for its time. It has a door on the top that flips up and one in the front that opens out. Raise the top door and you look through a hole in the wooden seat into a ceramic bucket. Open the door in the front to pull the bucket out to be emptied.

You may be surprised to find out that this is actually the fourth toilet in our collection. Why do we bother to collect old toilets? For the stories they tell. Seeing this old toilet in real life makes it easier for all of us to imagine what life was like in earlier days. Reading a description or seeing a picture just doesn't work the same way. Sure, kids will look at this old toilet and giggle and whisper to each other, but maybe they’ll remember that toilet, or that old rope bed with the quilt that they saw in the log cabin, or those wooden toys or those weird old televisions with the tiny screens. Maybe they’ll feel lucky to have the things that they have today that make their lives easier. Maybe they’ll leave here with a little better understanding of what life was like for people that lived before them, for their families and people in their community. This is, of course, what we hope for when we share the stories of our history and why the History Center exists. If nothing else, when we see this old toilet we can all appreciate that we don’t have to worry about getting a splinter in our behinds when we’re using a toilet. Happy fall everyone! Come visit soon.

Susan Dyar, Director

Calendar of Events

October

- 8th, 7pm, Civil War Round Table at MCHC
- 10th, 5:30pm, The Terror of Indiana, presentation and book signing by Bob Moody
- 17th, 4pm, Monroe County Hall of Fame Reception at the Fountain Square Ball Room
- 18th, 6pm, Dearly Departed Ghost Tours at Rose Hill Cemetery
- 19th, 6pm, Dearly Departed Ghost Tours at Rose Hill Cemetery
- 29th, 10am, Grand Opening of the Annual Holiday Sale
- 26th, 1pm, HiStory Book Club at MCHC
- 31st, 10am, Memory Café at MCHC

November

- 9th, 10am, Shaking Your Family Tree Genealogy Conference at Monroe County Public Library and MCHC
- 9th, 11am, WFHB Saturday’s Child at MCHC
- 12th, 7pm, Civil War Round Table at MCHC
- 21st, 4:30pm, Board Meeting at MCHC
- 25th, 10am, Memory Walk at MCHC
- 29th, 5pm, Canopy of Lights at MCHC
- 30th, 1pm, HiStory Book Club at MCHC
Collections Corner
by Hilary Fleck

In honor of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage, Indiana Humanities spearheaded several initiatives with the Indianapolis Propylaeum, the Indiana Historical Society, and the Indiana Historical Bureau. Together, these organizations catalyzed the Indiana Women’s Suffrage Centennial commemorating the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 2020. Hilary Fleck, Collection Manager of the Monroe County History Center, was named one of four in Indiana to receive the May Wright Sewall Fellowship awarded by Indiana Humanities.

“I am honored to be one of the few selected for the May Wright Sewall Fellowship,” said Hilary Fleck, Collections Manager of the History Center. “I’m excited by the opportunity to explore several Indiana collections to unearth the Monroe County women who participated in the suffrage movement and all those who, through civic organizations or political office, transformed our community into the wonderful place it is today.”

Education Desk
By Andrea Hadsell

Even as students head back to the classroom, August and September were quite busy at the Monroe County History Center. Charlie Nelms and Jeremy Boshears had fascinating presentations about their new books. Copies of From Cotton Fields to University Leadership and The Covered Bridges of Monroe County are available for purchase in the Dunn Museum Store.

We had a fantastic day trip to Laconia, Indiana, to visit the antebellum plantation house and general store that were restored by Bill and Gayle Cook. And a trip to Cedar Farm is not complete without a stop at the Laconia General Store for a scoop of ice cream!

The Dearly Departed Cemetery Tours of Rose Hill return for 2019! We are again partnering with the City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department to provide family-friendly and spooky tours of the cemetery featuring some of the lesser known stories buried there. Based on the success of last year, we have doubled the number of tours so there will be more opportunities for those who would like to join us. Registration is required prior to the event and tickets are available on the City of Bloomington’s website.

Girl Scouts from all over southern and central Indiana are invited to participate on November 2 in “Girl Scouts Can!” where we will learn about food sources, food sustainability through history, and the canning and preservation process. November also sees the start of our annual holiday programming. Be sure to join us for a festive evening at our annual Canopy of Lights Open House the day after Thanksgiving. Hot cider will be available to keep you warm!
Volunteer Spotlight
Sue Ellen Bowman

Sue Ellen Bowman’s excellent organizational skills and natural leadership abilities help make the Garage Sale Committee a powerful organization that has brought the annual sale revenue to over $100,000 for several years in a row. The ever-growing success of the annual sale provides a substantial portion of the History Center’s funding each year.

Her expertise in pricing items, honed by her tenure as co-owner of Robinson House Antiques in Spencer, is invaluable in getting great prices for the donated items. Sue Ellen purchased the historic Robinson House in the early 1990s. She and her husband, Jack, and brother and sister-in-law Ralph and Linda, renovated the house and after installing 700 plus rolls of wallpaper, they opened the unique antique and fine gifts shopping experience.

Over the many years of her leadership the sale has raised more than $750,000 to support the History Center’s mission. Support is also provided through the Garage Sale Committee’s Holiday Sale in November/December and the new Pop-Up Boutique Sale that started in April this year.

Before her volunteer work with the History Center, Sue Ellen’s Master’s degree in Social Work took her to a variety of places including nursing homes, inner cities, and sometimes to companies where she consulted with employees who were experiencing issues with various social situations. She worked with people of all ages throughout her career. She was also instrumental in organizing an agency that worked in several Indiana counties to help area children and adults get through the trauma and aftermath of tornadoes.

As a dedicated History Center volunteer, Sue Ellen helps the History Center continue to grow and prosper in new and exciting ways. We appreciate her hard work and all the support she has provided. Her knowledge and expertise are evidenced through the Garage Sale committee’s operative phrase: “when in doubt, check with Sue Ellen!”

News from the Museum Store

From Cotton Fields to University Leadership: All Eyes on Charlie, A Memoir

Charlie Nelms had audaciously big dreams. Growing up black in the Deep South in the 1950s and 1960s, working in cotton fields, and living in poverty, Nelms dared to dream that he could do more with his life than work for white plantation owners sun-up to sun-down. Inspired by his parents, who first dared to dream that they could own their own land and have the right to vote, Nelms chose education as his weapon of choice for fighting racism and inequality.

From Cotton Fields to University Leadership is an uplifting story about the power of education, the impact of community and mentorship, and the importance of dreaming big.

Available in the Museum Store for $20.00
MCHC Contributors and New Members
October and November 2019

The History Center wishes to acknowledge and recognize those who provided financial gifts to support our operations in July and August 2019:

**Patron Membership**
Scott Sieboldt

**Benefactor Memberships**
Allen Dunn
David and Margaret Lemon
Julian and Mary Livingston
Jerry and Phyllis McCullough

**Sustaining Membership**
John Bethell Title Company

**Supporter Memberships**
Lee and Eleanore Dodge
Lee Ehman and Barbara Wilcox
Molly Faries
John and Helen Hollingsworth
Vicki King
Debbie Lemon
Richard and Maribeth McKaig
David and Karita Musgrave
Glenda & Patrick Murray
Jacqueline Fernette and David Pesel
Gordon Lee Pollock – Membership in Memory of Sue Shelden
Rob and Missy Santa

**Supporting Donations**
Scott Loman
Diamond G. Mather
Estate of Jean M. Warholic

**In honor of Carol Darling**
Charles and Laura Lawless

**Memorial Donations**

**In Memory of Kitty Burkhart**
Conservation Club
Veronica (Sebeok) Wald

**In Memory of Juanita Hedrick**
Ted and Loretta Condra
Kathy Dewitt and the Zimmer sisters
Lorna and David Estes
Mr. and Mrs. Skip Harrell and Family
Mike and Kathy Hedrick
Ken and Linda Kortea
Shirley Mingee and Kevin Burkett

**In Memory of Sue Shelden**
Dee Bassett
Sue Ellen Bowman
Georgean Brown
Karen Cline
Gayle Cook
Christie E. Coplen
Linda L. Coplen
Mary Lee Deckard
Helen DeSawal
Russ and Sue Dukes
Audrey Duncan
Linda Forshee
Jackie and Bill Gilkey
Kay Harrell
Carter and Kathleen Henrich
Peter Henrich
Mary Ellen Kerber
Allison Lendman
Kathy McFall
Nancy Kryway
Glenda and Patrick Murray
Cinda O’Connor
Gordon Lee Pollock
Linda Stafford
Janet Stavropoulos and Michael Molenda
Teresa Steinsberger
Linda Williamson

**New Members**
Allen E. Headley
Trish Ierino
Gordon Lee Pollock
Donna Wilber

**Announcements**

- The Gayle Cook Youth Scholarship Fund continues to serve students county-wide. Donations are always welcome.
- Giving Tuesday, December 3rd is an opportunity to support the History Center using our Smile.Amazon.com wish list.
- Please remember to link your Kroger rewards card to the History Center. Account # QC479
Remembering

**Kitty Lee (Brown) Burkhart** passed away Saturday, July 20, 2019 at the age of 94. She was a dedicated supporter, member, and volunteer of the Monroe County History Center and was also active in many other social and philanthropic organizations in the community. Kitty also served as a docent at the Andrew H. Wylie House Museum. Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.DayDeremiahFrye.com](http://www.DayDeremiahFrye.com).

**Juanita Jones Hedrick** passed away Sunday, August 4, 2019. Juanita was a long time, devoted member of the Monroe County History Center. In addition to caring for her family, she also served on the IU Credit Union Committee Board and was the first woman to become president of that board. She was also a 25 year member of the National Secretaries’ Association and a member of the IU Staff Council for many years. Online condolences, photos, and memories may be shared with family and friends at [www.allen-cares.com](http://www.allen-cares.com).

**Larry D. Hodge**, of Nashville, Indiana, died August 2, 2019. He was 69 years old. He is survived by his wife, Cheryl (Drew) Hodge, and a large extended family. Larry was the father of Gary Hodge, who in partnership with his wife Susan, provide custodial services for the Monroe County History Center. Online condolences for Mr. Hodge may be given at [www.DayDeremiahFrye.com](http://www.DayDeremiahFrye.com).

**Evelyn Powers** was 71 years of age when she passed away August 19, 2019, while visiting Fort Walton Beach, Florida. She graduated from Bedford High School in 1966 and went on to study theater and music at Northern Michigan University. She was a champion on behalf of those suffering from AIDS, for victims of domestic violence and abuse, for libraries and literacy, for veterans, and for the arts. Online condolences can be shared at [www.reebfuneralhome.com](http://www.reebfuneralhome.com).

**Peggy Robertson**, long-time realtor in Bloomington, passed away August 12, 2019 at her home in Brown County. She was 76 years old. Peggy owned Morrow Realtors for the past 32 years and during that time was awarded the distinguished Years of Service Award by the Bloomington Board of Realtors. She was a founding member of the Bloomington Chapter of Women’s Council of Realtors and also served on the Bloomington Board of Realtors Professional Standards Committee. Condolences may be given to the family online at [www.DayDeremiahFrye.com](http://www.DayDeremiahFrye.com).
MCHS Receives Funds to Restore Commissioners’ Books

The office of the Monroe County Commissioners recently gifted the Monroe County History Center funds to repair and restore two of the commissioners’ books in our Research Library collection. We are very grateful for their donation. The books have now been returned to us, and we are so happy with the results of this restoration project.

New in the Library

The following items have been recently accessioned:

* Another Templeton Genealogy, comp. Ralph Templeton. 2019. Focuses on the descendants of Robert and John Templeton and their families, among the first to settle in Indiana about 1801. Gift from Robert Templeton.


* Index of Locations for Louden and Monroe County Title Abstract Books, comp. Lee Ehman. 2019. Provides the history of ownership (buyer and seller) of each parcel through time.

* James H. Skirvin and His Descendants. N.d. Contains genealogical information, newspaper clippings, city directory information, and photos of family members, including Hoagy Carmichael. Gift from Paula Cain.

* John Skirvin Sr. and Descendants. N.d. Contains genealogical information, maps, published excerpts, and photos. Gift from Paula Cain.

* Stinesville Churches, comp. Ron Baldwin. N.d. Includes newspaper clippings, membership records, letters, and other information on Stinesville Baptist Church, Stinesville United Methodist Church, St. John’s Lutheran Church/Old Dutch Church, Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Vernal Baptist Church, and Mt. Pleasant Christian Church. Gift from Ron Baldwin.


Shaking Your Family Tree Genealogy Conference hosted by the Monroe County History Center

Date: November 9th  Hours: 10:15 am to 5:00 pm

Location: Monroe County History Center and Monroe County Public Library

Uncover new ways to dig into your family history with this one-day genealogy conference! Learn from local and regional experts how to utilize research tools to aid your search. Check the Monroe County History Center’s website for more details.

There will be four sessions and a tour of the Monroe County History Center library archives during the conference.

To register for sessions at MCPL, visit: https://bit.ly/2kPd2VA or the MCPL website

To register for sessions at MCHC visit: monroehistory.org/events-programs/

Topics include:

- Introduction to African American Genealogy
- Getting Started with DNA
- Research Library Open House
- House History How To
- Using the Monroe County History Center for Genealogy Research
Tornado Sweeps through Clear Creek in 1917
By Penelope Mathiesen

On Saturday, 26 May 1917, Oscar Schacht, a resident of the Clear Creek community south of Bloomington, made the following entry in his diary: “A tornado swept our neighborhood this evening doing great damage.” This laconic comment did not begin to describe the effects of the tornado that ravaged Clear Creek and other parts of Monroe County.

The storm swept through Bloomington and Clear Creek “a few minutes after 6 o’clock and while no lives were lost the property and crop damage [ran] to many thousands of dollars.” It brought wind, lightning, hail as large as goose eggs, and broke “hundreds of windows.” “It killed chickens all over the county and knocked the hair from horses and cows which had no shelter.” Lightning flamed the skies. “The wind shifted and varied greatly and the fish wind-vane on the court house would for a time jump 45 degrees in a second.” So much rain fell that in Bloomington, “Spankers Branch flooded the district south of the high school building.”

Tornado insurance covered some losses, but other owners’ coverage was inadequate or nonexistent. The Showers Brothers Co. was hit especially hard, suffering losses of equipment, furniture stock, and production time estimated at $75,000 to $125,000—with no insurance. The factory lost 4,800 of its distinctive saw-tooth skylights to the hailstorm, and the heavy rain that followed “flooded the factory from top to bottom,” soaking “33,600 pieces of furniture on the way through the factory and also 40 carloads packed for shipment.” Edward Showers, general manager of the factory, took charge of cleanup and the temporary repair of the roof with tar paper. Meanwhile, “men were put to work at the Nurre glass plant cutting skylights and 3,000 were ordered by long distance from an Illinois factory.” The Nurre factory also suffered broken skylights and flooding, but Mr. Nurre estimated “that $5,000 will cover the damage to the building and contents.”

The Monon freight train No. 72 was running through Clear Creek “when the terrific wind and hail [sic] blew an empty coal car and two cars of stone from the track. At the same time the cab windows of the big locomotive … were broken and flying stone and timbers from wrecked houses of the little town were striking the running train.” As the train slowed to a stop, the cries of a family in a nearby collapsing house could be heard. “The crew went to their assistance before trying to clear the wreck.”

“The fine new Clear Creek church and the graveyard which adjoins it came through without a scratch.” Four hundred telephone customers in Bloomington lost service, “and every line going through Clear Creek went down,” which represented a substantial loss for the Smithville Telephone Company.

In the vicinity of Clear Creek, houses, barns, and outbuildings were demolished. Fields were damaged from flooding. East of town, Phillips School was minus its roof. Roads were washed out, bridges gone, and timber lost. The front of the Clear Creek Post Office and General Store was removed by the wind, and rain flooded the building, but Postmaster Dillman carried tornado insurance. None of the U.S. mails were lost.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Shigley and their four children were traveling in their Studebaker just north of Clear Creek when the worst of the wind hit. “It caught the big automobile as if it had been a toy and rolled it over three times. The fact that the top was up likely saved their lives.” Their house a mile west of Clear Creek was largely undamaged, but the garage was “reduced to kindling wood.”

Notes
In 2018 the Monroe County History Center acquired a diary kept by Peter Matthews during his enlistment in the Union army as drummer for the 19th Indiana Regimental band. Born in 1841, Matthews was the oldest of twelve children whose father, John Matthews, owned a quarry business in Ellettsville. The diary runs from 24 August 1861 to 15 July 1862, after which time Congress passed a bill dissolving regimental bands and Matthews was sent home. Matthews's diary is handwritten, with many misspellings and little punctuation, but it offers a fascinating glimpse of the experiences and perceptions of this young Hoosier musician-soldier during the Civil War.

The 19th Indiana Regiment was stationed in Virginia near Washington, D.C., in what Matthews refers to as “the land of Succession” (29 September 1861). Matthews never participated in a battle, and his contact with the Rebels was chiefly restricted to civilians, especially women, in the communities through which they passed. On 23 April 1862, he reports marching by “houses [where] we could see many of the Ladies crying the supposed cause having relations in the rebel army.” Some of these were “bold” women who “turned up there lips and pretty noses at the yankees and telling us that we will never take Richmond or never can and theyed wade waist deep in blood before they would give it up.” Matthews encounters more such “insolent” Southern women in Fredericksburg, VA. “[A] great many stories are told,” he writes, “of the way they ‘carry on’[,] When walking out they’ll step off[,] the sidewalk to keep from goin under our flag calling it a hateful rag & one was so insolent as to spit in a passing captains face” (22 May 1862).

On 25 April 1862, the cavalry brought in ten “successionist” prisoners whom Matthews describes as “rough looking fellows.” On 22 June 1862, Matthews reports visiting “the tomb and monument of Mary mother of Washington,” which had been vandalized by Confederate soldiers. “It is shocking to see how shameful it has been treated [by] the sacrilegious rebels,” Matthews writes in disgust. The most sympathetic reference to a (former) member of the enemy troops is Matthews’s account of a Rebel deserter who one evening was nearby “listening to our music,” and “w[hen] we struck up ‘Star Spangled Banner’ the tears began rolling Down his cheeks and he walked away” (8 May 1862).

The men lived an outdoor existence, and the weather was therefore a major factor in their comfort or lack thereof. On 24 February 1862, Matthews describes a “furious gale” that continued all day and night, blowing down tents and overturning a wagon that was “smashed … to Peaces.” “I never saw it blow so hard in all my life,” Matthews remarks. On March 15 his regiment had to march sixteen miles in rain that fell “in torrents and unceasingly.” “The boys generally were in the Best of Spirits,” however, “and seemed to mock [the] Elements for there warring. Of course we were wet thoroughly drenched but what of that,” Matthews writes, adding cheerfully, “A soldiers life is always gay.” On other occasions, he was not able to maintain this upbeat attitude. A 9 April 1862 entry describes a night camping in rain, sleet, and snow that Matthews eloquently calls “the most Dismalist time I ever experienced.” He goes on to recount the many discomforts of their situation:

“[You] can not get any fire to do much good and if you stand out you get wet and in the tent you freeze the smoke is on the ground and I thought my Eyes would come out them were so bad. … the water runs in your tent the Blankets get wet no way to dry them we [have] to sleep if sleep you can get in your wet clothes the ground is so flat that the water can not run of[F]”

Readers can rejoice with Matthews when he reports in the next entry, “This has been a fine sunny Day dried thing [s] a good Deal and cut and carry wood for to make fire … for our cooks” (10 April 1862). By the end of May, the weather had become oppressively hot. On 30 May 1862, the regiment set off at 9:00 a.m. with “the road very Dusty and the sun very hot.” Many of the men began tossing out clothes and other items from their knapsacks to provide relief from carrying a heavy load in the heat. Matthews speculates that “thousands of Dollars worths of Clothes has been throught away to day Pants shirts knapsacks Blankets and every thing to lighten the poor fellows[,] a good many of them had to pull out of ranks with exhaustion.”
Holidays provided occasions for reflection as well as celebration. On 25 December 1861, Matthews writes, “Christmas Day[.] In former days what charms is the name. … And what a change from a year ago[,] one at home spending a happy Christmas now in the service of my country in Vir[gi]nias “Sacred Soil.” … I feel like I would like to be a[t] home to see how the[y] spent the Day I confess I felt a little melancholy.” After recounting the events of the day, however, which included playing for the Colonel and his guests, eating, and drinking, he concludes that it has been “Quite a pleasant Christmas after all.” On New Year’s Eve, Matthews notes, “Tis the last Day of the year, and what a year has it Been it has witnessed many Joyful and many sad events but has brought us no Peace to this war which it introduced: an unlucky bad portentous year I’d call it.” He and his fellow soldiers “sat up late chatting … in the Best of Spirits till the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty one was no more and the new year began its course.”

The entry for 4 July 1862 begins with the unhappy reflection, “It was to be hoped that Richmond would be ours by today but such is not the case[,] McClellan must be reinforced before he goes in.” From that point, however, Matthews’s mood brightens as he describes the day’s festivities, which include raising “the old Stars & Stripes to the breeze,” watching (and betting on) mule, foot, and horse races, and repairing to General King’s headquarters in the evening for fireworks and speeches. “Our battery made the old houses ring to day in firing the salutes of thirty four Guns at sun rise and noon and sun set,” Matthews concludes, and “thus passed the memorable 4th of ’62.”

On 4 March 1862, Matthews notes, “This Day one year ago Presd. Abraham Lincoln was Inaugurated—One short year he has made a man immortal.” Given his admiration for Lincoln, Matthews must have been thrilled to be part of a “Grand review” of 75,000 troops on 20 November 1861, which President Lincoln attended, along with General McClellan and “a host of Officers.” After the review, Matthews reports, “The troops then began to move and Ours was the last Brigade and [by] the time we was Past it was sun Down,” but “as we moved by the President he seemed very much Pleased at Our appearance.” Matthews must have felt an even greater personal satisfaction when on 26 November 1861 his band was summoned to Washington, D.C., where, among other activities, they “went over to the White House and serenaded the President of the United States.”

In his very first entry on 24 August 1861, Matthews explains that he has “come to the conclusion that I would never regret having spent a few moments each day in writing a kind of an autobiography. I[t] will be pleasant shurely in old age—if I[t] please divine providence to spare me—to refer to this little book to see how I spent my time while young.” Readers 150 years later are grateful to Peter Matthews for recording his thoughts and experiences during the months he served in the Civil War, for his diary entries—as poorly spelt and punctuated as they are—bring this critical period in U.S. history vividly to life.¹

Note

¹ In 2018–2019, entries from Matthews’s diary were posted on the WFIU/WTIU website (indianapublicmedia.org-news-civil-war-diaries), where for now they are still available.
Membership Form

Annual Membership Levels
- □ Student $10
- □ Teacher $20
- □ Individual $40
- □ Family/Grandparents $50
- □ Supporter $100
- □ Benefactor $250
- □ Patron $500
- □ Sponsor $1000
- □ Sustaining beginning at $10 a month

Check if you are interested in:
- □ Volunteer Information

Renew online or donate online at:
http://monroehistory.org/join-and-give

Send to:
Monroe County History Center
202 East Sixth Street
Bloomington, IN 47408

Print Name

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Phone

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