Col. John Ketcham and Ketcham’s Mill

By Lee Ehman

Colonel John Ketcham (1782–1865), born in Maryland, was an early settler in Monroe County. Prior to his arrival, Ketcham had fought Indians during the War of 1812 as an Indian scout in the “Mounted Rangers.” In a chilling remembrance he recalled that: “In my first month’s service [in 1813] I killed and scalped an Indian, was very proud of it, [and] got leave to go to Kentucky to show my Daddy and Mama. I guess they thought I had done about right.”

After the war’s end in 1815 and before coming to Monroe County, Ketcham participated in the Indian removals from the territory from his home in Jackson County, Indiana. One his muskets is displayed in the log cabin located in the second-floor gallery of the Monroe County History Center.

In the fall of 1818, John Ketcham moved to Monroe County with his wife, Elizabeth [Pearcy], with whom he would have 12 children, and settled in the northwest corner of Clear Creek Township, on what is now Fluckmill Road, beside Clear Creek. The location was three miles west of Smithville and a mile northeast of Victor. In what became known as the Ketcham settlement, or “Ketcham’s Mill,” he built a millrace in the creek. It powered a grain mill, sawmill, and woolen mill, the first in Monroe County. The mill only operated at flood stage, running day and night when the water was high enough. Grain and lumber were shipped south from the mill. The building burned twice, in 1849 and again in 1909.

Of note in the settlement was the Old Settler’s Ground, where the annual settler’s meeting was held. Ketcham helped found the group in 1851. Also, during the last weekend in August, the place hosted a revival meeting, where thousands would come for sermons and sings, and eat community style.
Ketcham’s Mill (Cont. from p. 1)

They also liked to drink sulfur water from springs in the creek bed. The meetings ended in 1899 because the Monon Railroad blocked access to the grounds.5

John and Elizabeth first lived in a log cabin, and then built a stately brick house called “Blick a Bonnie,” or “Pleasant View.”6

Ketcham built the first county courthouse, and the stone for that building came from the Ketcham farm. He served in the Indiana Legislature and on the Indiana Seminary Board of Trustees. In 1822 he was made a colonel of the 20th Regiment of the state militia.7 He served as associate judge of the county. He was a Jacksonian Democrat, serving as a presidential elector in 1836; an advocate of the Free Soil movement;8 and a Methodist by religion.9

John Ketcham was memorialized as a charitable man, lending money and, after slaughtering hogs, setting aside pork for neighbors and giving corn to the needy.10 But he might not have been a likeable man to everyone. As Daisy Woodward Beck recalled: “I never met the gentleman. He must have been superior in many ways. But fairness compels me to state that his son, Great-Uncle Absolem, once said that while his mother was a good woman and he hoped to meet her in Heaven, he hoped he wouldn’t ever have to see his father (Colonel John) again.”11 Colonel John Ketcham died in 1865. Elizabeth died in 1876. Both are buried in the Ketcham Cemetery.

Notes

2. Ibid., 28.  
3. “Interview with Mr. Frank O. and Mrs. Daisy W. Beck, Mr. Austin, and Mrs. Ellda Ketcham.” From the MCHC Research Library Family File, “Kail, Mary Rose, 1924—.”  
5. Counties of Morgan, Monroe, and Brown: Historical and Biographical, ed. Charles Blanchard (Chicago: F. A. Battey, 1884), 397–99; see also “Interview.”  
6. Daisy Woodward Beck, “All the Years Were Grand.” From the MCHC Family Files, “Kail, Mary Rose, 1924—.”  
8. Ibid.  
10. Ibid., 28.  
11. Daisy Woodward Beck was John Ketcham’s great-great granddaughter. Unpublished and undated interview, from the MCHC Research Library family history collection: “Ketcham History” (CS71 K483 1866).
Mt. Salem Cemetery Workday, 31 December 2021

By Scott Emery

It was the last day of the year. The weather didn’t give us much time to plan in advance for such a very nice day, which was certainly not the typical New Year’s Eve. The temperatures had been back above freezing for two days, and that Friday was supposed to be 60 degrees, though mostly cloudy. It’s important to have temperatures like that for multiple days in a row, because our epoxy doesn’t work when the headstones are below 35 degrees, and, due to the density of the stones, they warm or cool slowly.

There is quite a bit of dampness in Mt. Salem Cemetery. Combined with the many trees around the edges, that encourages a large amount of moss to grow on the headstones. And there has been quite a bit of vandalism in the cemetery over the years. Many of the broken headstones were sinking into the mud and would have been gone from sight within a few years.

Several broken headstones near the entrance were selected and placed on workbenches for a gentle cleaning. Following the cleaning, a specialty epoxy, recommended by the National Park Service, was applied to the broken pieces. Clamps and bracing boards were used to make sure the broken pieces didn’t move while the epoxy was curing. (Photo 1)

The headstone for Emma Ross had the top part broken in three pieces. The headstone for William Ross only had one break. Yes, he was 116 years old when he died. (Photo 2)

While the epoxy was curing on the other headstones, we probed next to the cemetery fence. We discovered the headstone for Avis Ross, buried three inches underground. It had been buried for over 30 years. Now it will be repaired and set back up in the cemetery. (Photo 3)

NOTE: Before anyone starts probing in a cemetery, they must secure permission from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The Perry Township Trustee had done this for us in advance.
News from the Library

library@monroehistory.org
Compiled by Megan MacDonald and Penelope Mathiesen

New in the Library

Monroe County deed record indexes for the years 1818–1926 have been combined into one and can be searched online at: www.monroehistory.org in the Research Library’s Indexes and Resources folder. There are separate alphabetical indexes for Sellers (Grantors) and Buyers (Grantees).

Recent Acquisitions


* Gothic. 1913. Bloomington High School yearbook.


A Note from the Director

By Daniel Schlegel

Welcome to our latest issue of the Monroe County Historian. We are so pleased to be able to add another four pages of content. There are so many interested community members with questions that we thought expanding this member benefit might be a fun way to engage with everyone. For anyone that is on the go or prefers to get their magazines and newsletter online, you can let us know and we will send you an electronic version of this newsletter.

Each staff member has a section to talk about what they’re working on or help explain frequently asked questions for their department. This way there is a window into each of our staff members’ daily activities. Working at a museum has many unique facets, and my friends and family always ask for stories. This gives us the opportunity to share on a bigger stage many of our experiences and frequently asked questions.

We wanted to highlight some of the artifacts from our collections with two new sections. “Seen at the MCHC” is for items on display that might be easily overlooked while touring the facility. Our other new section, “Found at the MCHC” is where we can showcase unique items from the collections. The picture featured in “Found at the MCHC” gave us quite a few laughs and conjured up a number of ideas. Hopefully, we’ll find someone that can fill in some details of the real story!

You might have noticed we’ve added a calendar of events on the back cover. This would be easy to clip and hang on your fridge or bulletin board to see all of the activities going on at the History Center. Use this handy calendar to decide which events and exhibits you plan to visit!

We really hope you enjoy our new additions to the newsletter. You may want to contribute to the new sections with fun or unique items you notice on your visits here. It is always a pleasure to hear what our visitors have enjoyed or noticed.

On a sad note, we are saying good bye to our exhibits designer, A.J. Gianopoulos. He has accepted a new job at the Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science as Curator of Art. We wish him well as he begins his new journey. A.J.’s very passionate about artwork and is very excited to get back into the art scene.

The History Center is looking towards our next fiscal year, which starts on April 1st. We have some very fun activities and upcoming exhibits planned to showcase the history for our wonderful county. Some of the events are already listed on the back cover of this issue, and we will share and promote all of our activities and exhibits as soon as the dates are locked in.

Finally, one of our members, Paris Caporale has presented us with a great opportunity. So please join us at Nick of Time Antiques (703 W. Temperance Street, Ellettsville) for their spring sale for OUR MEMBERS! Bring your History Center membership card to enjoy a 30% discount off the items in the shop. And Paris Caporale has generously offered that 10% of all of his sales the weekend of April 15-17 will be donated to the Monroe County History Center. We are so lucky to have a community partner that wants to help support the History Center and our members at the same time.

As usual, feel free to see us anytime. We always enjoy repeat visitors and hearing the fun stories.

See you soon, Daniel
Volunteer Spotlight

By Andrea Hadsell

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month! We are so grateful to have the dedicated corps of volunteers who give their time, energy, and passion to the History Center. This last calendar year, our volunteer corps contributed almost 6,000 hours of volunteer time across all of our departments and fundraisers. What a truly amazing feat!

Save the date for April 18 – our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon is returning in person! We will recognize this year’s recipients for the Liz Knapp Library Volunteer of the Year and Gayle Cook Volunteer of the Year awards. More details will be available closer to the date.

The Monroe County History Center Board of Trustees is a group of volunteers from our community who act as stewards for the History Center’s mission. The Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings on the third Thursday of every month.

We would like to welcome the newest members of the Board of Trustees. We are so excited to work with you and for your input into our community!

Education Updates

By Andrea Hadsell

This winter had a very active start at the History Center! PuzzleFest celebrated a record-breaking win in its team division. “Emily and the Dickinsons” had the fastest time of all seven years, completing this year’s 500-piece puzzle in just twenty-eight minutes. We also welcomed visitors of all ages for several receptions celebrating new additions to our rotating and permanent exhibits. The Friday Musicale shared beautiful piano music by Florence B. Price, a trailblazing African-American composer. You can watch the performance linked on our website: https://monroehistory.org/events/friday-musicale/

We are preparing for an interesting spring and summer with schools and summer camps visiting the History Center virtually and in-person. Many schools still have restrictions in place regarding traveling during the school day, so we continue to be creative in bringing the collection and exhibits to Monroe County classrooms.

As we see a return of students to the museum and library, we see an increase in requests to utilize scholarship funds for financial assistance. The Gayle Cook Junior Historian Scholarship Fund covers admission fees, hands-on workshops and lessons, and guided tours. A $25 donation to this scholarship fund allows 25 students to learn more about our community’s history. We encourage you to consider donating to the scholarship fund or our travel reimbursement funds by visiting monroehistory.org/join-and-give/

For more information on upcoming programs, be sure to follow our website and social media.
Museum Store News

By Daniel Schlegel

Our Museum Store has slowly been undergoing changes and updates over the last few months. A few things have been moved, and new books and titles have been added. There are so many more ideas for the store, but we want to hear from you, our members, on what you would like to see. More on that below.

The Garage Sale Ladies have been working very hard to bring fun and unique items from the Garage Sale warehouse to Sue Sue’s Boutique in the hallway by the Museum Store. It looks so great and so fresh that items are constantly moving in and out of that space. Those ladies certainly know how to pick just the right items and make the space look welcoming.

As we envision the future of the Museum Store, we want to know what our members and visitors would like to see. We are working to get authors in to do readings and book signings. But what else would you want to see? Shirts with our logo? Coffee mugs? What is something that you would be excited about? We really want to hear more from you. Please feel free to send ideas to: membership@monroehistory.org

Operations News

By Justin Robertson

It’s hard to believe that it’s been almost a year since I officially started working in operations at the History Center. We’ve been so busy that the year has flown by! In that time, I’ve done bookkeeping and accounting for many successful fundraisers and events, including not one, but two garage sales, a fine art sale (consequently, I am now the proud owner of a signed René Magritte print), a jewelry sale, an annual appeal, a PuzzleFest, and a holiday bonus sale! Our treasurer, Vickie Fry, has been great at helping to oversee that all proceeds are accounted for and in the right line items.

While working in development, Daniel and I have been brainstorming and consulting with the staff and some of our most experienced and creative volunteers about the best ways to expand the newsletter and to better showcase what is happening at the History Center. Our goal is that the newsletter not only fulfills its role as an informative perk to our members, but that it is also as entertaining and as visually appealing as our resources allow it to be. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Penny Mathiesen and to Alexandra Lynch for their wonderful assistance and professional advice in editing, proofreading, and design.

I also have had fun brainstorming innovative and productive methods to retain and increase membership with former membership employee Martha Wainscott and museum practicum student Sarah Schaffer. Martha and Sarah were invaluable in helping with our annual appeal, and in the processing and filing of memberships at a hectic time when the small staff was being pulled in many directions. So, thank you to all of you members, volunteers, students, employees, and supporters—it takes a community, and we cannot do it without you! I look forward to working with all of you in many capacities, and in many ways, as we continue to work together to fulfill the mission of the History Center.
Collections News and Spotlight

By Hilary Fleck

David Allan, the Dr. John Thiel Herald Times Archive Intern, has recently processed into our collection a series of images from the filming of “Breaking Away” (working title “Bambino”) in Bloomington in 1978. These images provide a unique look into how our community was highlighted in and supportive of the movie cast and crew. Enjoy!


“Real big time movie cameraman at the mock Little 500,” 1978, by Phillip Whitlow.
Current and Upcoming Exhibits

COOK GALLERY: Vi and George Taliaferro Permanent Exhibit

Few people have impacted Bloomington and Monroe County like Vi and George Taliaferro. Vi served as the first Black appointed judge in Monroe County and George, a member of the IU football team from 1945-1948, became the first Black player drafted into the NFL in 1949. The greatest impact may have been his role in the desegregation of Bloomington. Their stories will be on display in the Cook Gallery as a permanent exhibit.

RECHTER GALLERY: Preserving History: The Legacy of Gayle and Bill Cook

*February 8 to July 1, 2022*

How a building looks and functions can affect the life of everyone in and around it. As several properties around Bloomington went into disrepair, Gayle and Bill Cook, with Cook Inc., started to preserve the physical structures and set them up to impact the community for years to come. This exhibition explores the history of some of Gayle’s and Bill’s favorite projects and illustrates the transformation each underwent.

HILL GALLERY: Pioneer Quilts from Hoosier Country

A quilt’s patterns and stitches can reveal a lot about a family’s history, and throughout central Indiana they were passed down from one generation to the next. Handcrafted with patience and love, the History Center is fortunate to have these examples in our permanent collection. Some of the heirlooms on display in the Hill Gallery date back to the nineteenth century. Visit us and see some of the most cherished pieces from Monroe County history.

DECKARD EDUCATION ROOM: An Abridged Timeline of Monroe County Environmental History

*On display until June 25, 2022*

For better or for worse, the environment encompassing Monroe County has undergone many man-made and natural changes throughout its more than two hundred year history. Population growth, industrial manufacturing, weather emergencies, and a search for viable water sources have left their mark on Monroe County. This timeline aims to highlight some of the most significant events and raise the question of what kind of impact they had on the community and will have for future generations.

UPCOMING- DECKARD EDUCATION ROOM Community Voices Case: Second Baptist Church celebrates 150th Anniversary

This display highlights the longstanding history of the Second Baptist Church and how the congregation helped shape our community today.

You may know that in the Gayle Cook Gallery we have an exhibit about Cook, Inc. featuring Bill Cook’s desk. BUT did you know that there is a panic button that was installed? Many people walk by and have never noticed it was there. Stop by and check it out. Tell us if you notice any other unique or cleverly hidden features in our galleries and you may be featured in a future edition!

Remembering

Jane Hatchel graduated from University High School in 1949 and was a 1953 graduate of Indiana University where she was a member of Pi Beta Phi sorority. Jane was a volunteer at the Opportunity House, and a member of the IU Alumni Association, Monroe County History Center, and Friends of the Library.

Jon Pinney had a love and knack for animals and plants, serving three meals a day to the birds that flocked to his back porch and tending to the many dozens of flowers on his deck. Against this serene backdrop, he told the most engaging stories and entertained his wildest dreams.

Lois Heiser—As Remembered by Sue Ellen Bowman

My introduction to Lois involved a very aggressive move on my part. During my first two years of volunteering at the Monroe History Center’s Garage Sale, we received many lovely donations of fine pottery and other unusual things. But no one knew the donor. So, when I saw the donor in my third year, I ran to her car and prevented her from leaving. After introducing myself and complimenting her on the wonderful donations she left, I asked if she wanted a tax receipt. She said “no,” and I never asked that question again. We continued to benefit from her contributions year after year.

Luckily for me, I got to see her lovely and unusual home when she had something to donate that would not fit in her car. She was an amazing collector. Touring her home was like touring many museums. Whether it was Native American art, fine art, pottery, or modern art, there was so much to see, and it was all fine quality.

She was a very interesting person with very definite opinions, but she was also a person of sterling character. She told me that she liked to encourage talented artists, and her purchases reflected that. She was a great friend to the Monroe County History Center and would be chagrined by the attention she is receiving. Her philanthropy had nothing to do with recognition, only her desire to make a quiet difference.

We are truly in her debt, and I hope she and all her friends know how much she was appreciated. I only wish I had known her longer and better.
## Calendar of Events

### April

- 9- City of Bloomington Children’s Expo
- 9- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
- 9- 1950 Census Release Event in partnership with MCPL
- 12- Monroe County Civil War Roundtable
- 21- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
- 21- MCHC Annual Meeting
- 25- Memory Walk
- 26- Monroe County History Club @ American Legion
- 30- HiStory Book Club
- 30- Beck’s Mill Bus Trip

### May

- 10- Monroe County Civil War Roundtable
- 14- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
- 19- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
- 23- Memory Walk
- 24- COVID Oral History exhibit opens
- 26- Screening Premiere of Oral History Highlight Reel
- 28- HiStory Book Club
- 30- MCHC Closed for Memorial Day

### June

- 8- Member Preview Day of Annual Garage Sale Fundraiser
- 10- Annual Garage Sale Fundraiser
- 11- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
- 11- Annual Garage Sale Fundraiser
- 13- Half Price Day at Annual Garage Sale Fundraiser
- 14- Monroe County Civil War Roundtable
- 16- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
- 25- HiStory Book Club
- 27- Memory Walk
- 28- Monroe County History Club @ American Legion