Early Automobile Travel in Monroe County: Mishaps and Growing Pains

By Beth Lau

The early twentieth century witnessed the expansion of automobile ownership in the U.S., but initially no special training or test was required to drive a car (driver’s licenses were first introduced in Indiana in 1929). Numerous articles in Shop Notes, a newsletter put out by employees of the Showers Brothers Furniture Factory (copies of which the History Center owns for the years 1918–1927), document some of the travails of early motoring in Monroe County.

The Shop Notes issue for 15 June 1918 announces that employee Isaac “Ike” Bault bought a new Buick and adds that, although he doesn’t have much experience driving, Ike is “progressing nicely and has killed only one cow and knocked down only one telephone pole so far.”

Cars parked along Morton Street at Showers Bros. Cover illustration for Shop Notes 5, no. 10 (May 21, 1921). From the collection of the Monroe County History Center.

The author of this article is probably making a joke at Ike’s expense, but many accidents of this sort are reported in other issues of the newsletter. On 15 February 1920, “Coony” Stineburg became entangled in a tree as he was backing his Studebaker out of his driveway, and a neighbor had to cut away a few branches to free him. The 15 July 1922 issue of Shop Notes relates a “series of mishaps” that befell Sam Jackson on the first trip outside of Bloomington he took in his new Overland car. Just before he reached Spencer, Sam collided with “three log wagons at the river bridge.” No serious damages were incurred, and the car continued on its way until it reached another bridge on which were standing three calves. Sam kept going, assuming the calves would scatter, but they held their ground and the car plowed into them. One calf was discovered underneath the car with a broken leg. While Sam was “down on his hands and knees trying to extricate the injured animal,” another large car came speeding by, got too close, and crashed into Sam’s Overland. As the article concludes, at that point “the day was utterly ruined.”
These early automobiles often proved unreliable, though one wonders to what extent their owners were to blame for faulty maintenance or driving habits. In June 1918, Earl Wylie ran out of gas while driving his Overland car on a “lonesome road in Brown County” and had to walk back to Nashville for gas. His stranded family was “enraged” as they waited in the car for him to return. Coony Stoneburg, of the Buick-tree collision, had another unhappy experience when his car stalled going up a hill “near Griffy Creek” while he was out for a Sunday drive. His son Tom and two other friends had to come fetch him, and “the tired party arrived home about midnight.” Moses Woods and Dale Hardy set off at 1:00 p.m. on a Saturday in Moses’s new Ford to go fishing in Brown County. They got as far as the trestle on 10th Street, where the car became stuck in the mud. They didn’t make it to Brown County until 8:00 p.m. but nonetheless persisted in their plan to fish. The article doesn’t mention what time they got home that night.6

On 11 July 1920, Frank Coyle was driving with his wife and young son “about two miles on the other side of Clear Creek in his father’s Ford” when the back tire went flat. Mrs. Coyle was worried that a storm was brewing and urged her husband to drive home without fixing the tire, but Frank was determined to repair it. He “managed to insert a new tube and get the tire back on the wheel,” but shortly after he resumed driving, the tire went flat again. As the article notes, “It is surprising to what inconvenience some of us will put ourselves in order to enjoy an automobile ride through the hills of Monroe county.”7 The record for tire troubles was probably set by Fred Fender, who on a trip to Indianapolis suffered “4 blowouts, and 3 punctures, the purchase of 2 new casings and 3 inner tubes,” and then woke up the next morning to find “two tires down.”8

Other accidents caused greater harm to their drivers. In what was perhaps a common experience with early vehicles that used crank starters, John Sulphin broke his arm cranking the Showers Brothers’ Ford truck.9 More seriously, John Hendrix was in the hospital after his Ford “rolled over three or four times” near the Griffy Creek bridge.10 Carl Omer Ferguson died in a collision at Lincoln and Third streets on 25 February 1922, “a victim of one of our many careless automobile driv-

ers in Bloomington.”11 Archie “Jack” Jeffries died when his car was struck by a train while he was driving across the Monon tracks at Harrodsburg, Indiana.12

As more and more employees began driving cars to work, parking problems became a recurring topic in the newsletter. The 1 July 1922 issue of Shop Notes reports that: “Just one year ago the problem of parking cars about the factory premises became acute and a decision was reached to have all cars lined up on north Morton street.” Now, however, so many cars are parking on both sides of Morton Street that traffic can barely pass through, and drivers are “urged to park as closely as possible up against the curb.”13 Six months later, the factory decided to convert its playground space into a parking lot that would “add convenience to the drivers and safeguard those driving over Morton street.”14 By 1925, however, this lot was inadequate for the ever-increasing number of vehicles; an article on 4 April 1925 reports 190 cars parked “near and around our various plants.” New parking spaces were created by laying down cinders in vacant lots on Morton Street owned by the Showers estate, and employees are “asked and urged” to use these and “to stop parking on the east side of Morton street in the future.”15

As this article’s headline declares, however, these parking problems “Tell [a] Story of Prosperity” as more and more workers could afford to purchase a car.16 Despite the accidents and other inconveniences involved in early automobile travel, people desired the freedom and mobility they offered. A Shop Notes article from 1918 gives an account of a motor trip Charles Duncan took with his son and brother to the eastern U.S., visiting Washington, D.C., Alexandria, Virginia, and other locations. Although they had difficulty getting up the mountains in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, Charles thoroughly enjoyed his excursion and offered this testimonial: “We want . . . to say that we are all for Henry Ford. He made a grand little auto, and she sure will take you there and bring you back.”17 Others in Monroe County and throughout the country clearly agreed with him, and automobiles became a defining feature of life in the twentieth century.

Notes

1. “‘Ike’ Buys a Buick,” Shop Notes 2, no. 11 (June 15, 1918): 3.
4. “Earl Wylie Walks to Town for Gas,” Shop Notes 2, no. 12 (June 29, 1918): 10.
9. Shop Notes 8, no. 6 (March 22, 1924): 11. This and the next quotation come from brief notices without titles.
10. Shop Notes 6, no. 16 (August 12, 1922): 10.
11. “Careless Driving Brings Grief to Community: Tragic End of Fellow Workman is Mourned by All,” Shop Notes 6, no. 5 (March 11, 1922): 5.
16. Ibid., 8.
Time Zones and Daylight Savings Time

By Lee Ehman

Setting time zones and adopting daylight savings time has long been controversial in Monroe County, Indiana, and the nation as a whole. The first national official time zones were set in 1883, to standardize railroad schedules. During World War I, in 1918, the U.S. briefly adopted daylight savings time, but dropped it after the end of the war. It had been unpopular, and states were left to determine their own policies, until, in 1942, daylight savings was re-imposed during World War II. As the war ended in 1945, daylight savings again lapsed, reverting to state decisions. The Uniform Time Act of 1966 established daylight savings time throughout the U.S., but with the provision that individual states could opt out.

In 1949, the Indiana legislature put the entire state on Central Standard Time and outlawed daylight savings time. But this law was not enforced, and much of Indiana remained on Eastern Time. Monroe County remained on Central Time. Many localities chose their own policies. For example, in 1951 the Bloomington City Hall clocks remained on Central Time all year round, while in the city itself residents moved their clocks back and forth according to daylight savings time.

In the 1952 and 1956 general elections, Indiana conducted a non-binding referendum vote concerning its official time. (Unfortunately, results from 1952 were not recorded in the election book.) Four options were offered, shown below with the 1956 vote tallies for Monroe County:

1. Do you favor the retention of central standard time as the official time for the State of Indiana? Yes 10,660 No 4,802
2. If you favor the retention of central standard time as the official time for the State of Indiana, do you favor legalizing the adoption of daylight savings time for certain periods of the year by the various political subdivisions of the state? Yes 4,587 No 7,943
3. Do you favor the adoption of eastern standard time as the official time for the State of Indiana? Yes 7,632 No 5,775
4. If you favor eastern standard time as the official time for the State of Indiana, do you favor legalizing the adoption of daylight savings time for certain periods of the year by the various political subdivisions of the state? Yes 1,706 No 9,138

Voters in Monroe County favored Central Time, but voted against daylight savings. Voters state-wide agreed with this result. 1957 saw the state legislature adopt Central Time, with the local option to use daylight savings. The lawmakers rescinded this provision in 1961, with no clarity on time zones.

Indiana is on the western edge of the Eastern Time Zone. Until 1966, counties on the eastern side of Indiana often opted to observe Eastern Time, while those in the west used Central Time. Even today, counties in the northwest and southwest corners of the state still observe Central Time.

In 1968, a compromise solution had most of Indiana on Eastern Time year-round, while the Gary and Evansville areas would remain on Central Time and follow daylight time in the summer. In 1972 the U.S. Congress ratified this exception to the 1966 Uniform Time Act. Finally, in 2005, the state legislature put all of Indiana on daylight savings time.

Notes
News from the Library
library@monroehistory.org
Compiled by Megan MacDonald and Penelope Mathiesen

New in the Library

The online *Monroe County IN Birth Index* and *Monroe County IN Death Index* have both been updated with major additions to the previous versions. They now include all Monroe County Health Department records for 1882–2021, with the exception that the birth index is missing the years 1955–1958. As the Health Department adds these records, we will update the online index. We thank Lee Ehman for his work on this project.

Recent Acquisitions


* Cicala, John Allan. *Fowler-Reid-Worley House in Elwren, Indiana*. N.d. Includes history and description of the house, floor plans, maps, drawings, and photographs of the house, the barn, and the community of Elwren in Van Buren Township.


* The Old Stone House*. N.d. Photograph album of The Old Stone House on Maple Grove Road, built by Daniel Stout in 1828 and restored by Carol and Hubert Brown. Includes photos of the home before and after restoration as well as a history of the house and the families who lived there. Gift from anonymous donor.

Volunteer Appreciation Lunch

Dedicated volunteers Mark Case, Marlyn Naylor, David Lemon, and Phil Stafford attend our Volunteer Appreciation Lunch. The History Center could not exist without the hard work and support of our loyal volunteers—Thank you so much for everything you do!
Hello, everyone! We are so glad you are members of the History Center! As you already know, we always have a lot going on, and there’s always something new happening, as well.

A number of exciting things have taken place here, including two new staff members. Our staff has been working very hard after being down a staff member for many months, so these two recent additions are most welcome. This summer, we added a bookkeeper, Toby Foster, into the fold. Toby has a lot of accounting experience, including running his own restaurant, and his background is a huge help to us. We are so excited that he is here to work with us. The second staff member is stepping into a new position at the institution: Assistant Curator. We have merged our Collections and Exhibits departments into a single department that is supervised by Hilary Fleck. The new position will enable us to run things simultaneously to keep our collections front and center for our exhibits. Our new Assistant Curator will be Gabby Kriebel, who came to us with great experience and full of enthusiasm. There were quite a few applicants, and narrowing those down for interviews was a very difficult job. All things considered, we believe this will be a great combination, and we look forward to many excellent exhibits coming from the newly merged department.

The June Garage Sale was a huge success! Thank you to all of the people that attended and brought their friends and family to the event. We were excited to receive many new visitors and memberships through the Garage Sale, and it is a great feeling to see our hard work pay off in big ways to get the community involved. During the four days of the sale we sold over $110,000 in merchandise. The Garage Sale Ladies were very excited and proud that so many donated items sold at this event. Beginning on July 6th, they are accepting new donations for the November sale. If you know one of the Garage Sale Ladies, please let them know what a great job they did and how much you appreciated it. Those ladies put a lot of time, energy, and effort into making this such a successful fundraiser for our institution.

And July marks one year of being at the History Center for me. It has been so much fun, and I have met a number of amazing people. The History Center not only represents a rich history for Monroe County, but has incredible people associated with it. There are volunteers who are more than happy to give their time and energy to make everything come together. Others are willing to help pay for expenses that we might not be able to afford. And others just stop by with a smile and kind words for everyone. There is an incredible community supporting the Monroe County History Center. Without these fantastic volunteers, all of the services we offer wouldn’t be possible. If you are a volunteer, please give yourself a pat on the back, and if you know a volunteer, let them know how much you appreciate their hard work.

Hope to see you soon,

Daniel
Volunteer Spotlight

By Andrea Hadsell

The Monroe County History Center would not be the same without the annual Garage Sale Fundraiser Extravaganza. The second weekend of June is always an exciting time! Unbeknownst to the public, a dedicated group of volunteers works year-round to ensure all of the donations are clean, priced, and expertly merchandised. Over the sale’s four days, volunteers contributed over 1,000 hours. We are so grateful to have such a talented group of volunteers that support our mission of sharing Monroe County’s history with our community.

Interested in volunteering with us? We have some opportunities available!

If you are a person that enjoys providing customer service and engaging with visitors, there are several opportunities to become a greeter at our Welcome Desk. Volunteers at the Welcome Desk assist guests as they enter the building to visit the museum, make purchases in the Dunn Museum Store, and donate items. If this seems like something you would like to do, email Andrea at volunteers@monroehistory.org to get started!

From the Educator’s Desk

By Andrea Hadsell

I would like to thank all of our members who responded to a recent survey about our public programming and exhibit receptions. Your comments are incredibly helpful as we introduce a new programming style to the museum. On August 6, our very first Family Day at the History Center has a little something for everyone! Members of the public are welcome to drop in at any time during the program to see Order Up! and to have some fun with our restaurant-related activities.

We greatly appreciate everyone’s support and participation in our recent programming with the Monroe County Civil War Roundtable. Thanks to the generous support from the Abraham Lincoln Association and CFC Properties, the program was an absolute success!

We are also celebrating the Bloomington Speedway centennial with two days of programming. On August 31, join us for special presentations by Pat Sullivan and Brad Dickinson on the Speedway’s history and impact on local racing. Then return on September 1 for a chance to see historic cars up close! This summer and fall bring more opportunities and events where we can interact with our community! If you are attending PrideFest or Lotus in the Park this fall, stop by and visit our booth. We would love to say hello!

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

By Daniel Schlegel

One of the exciting things you may have read about earlier in the newsletter is the new Collections and Exhibits Department headed by our newly minted Curator, Hilary Fleck, and new staff member Gabby Kriebel. With the extended exhibit schedule they are creating, we are able to plan our store offerings around the exhibits and offer more tie-in products for the visitors. Thanks to their efforts, we will be bringing in some wonderful and interesting items that relate to the new and upcoming exhibit Order Up! about restaurants in Monroe County.

In addition to the long-range planning for the exhibits, our Education Manager, Andrea Hadsell, has been working on extending the range of programming for our family audiences. The store will be stocking a great many items that will coincide with Andrea’s programming. For instance, the Abraham Lincoln bus trip, supported by the Abraham Lincoln Association, inspired us to highlight Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War at the front table.

The Garage Sale Ladies have had a bit of a rest from the June Garage Sale and are restocking Sue Sue’s Boutique. These ladies work so hard on picking just the right items for the boutique and making the space here so attractive. If you need something unique or special, chances are you will find it here! Stop by and see what they have on display!

Finally, anyone that misses a monthly Monroe County History Club presentation can still stop by the Museum Store to pick up books relating to the History Club topic, and you can check out videos of the presentation on YouTube. We have a great relationship with the History Club, and we are very grateful for their collaboration.

Operations News

By Justin Robertson

During the end of May and the beginning of June, I was able to take my first long vacation since joining the History Center over a year ago. For this vacation, I took a family pilgrimage trip to our ancestral village of Oban, Scotland and visited the family home, Heatherfield House, which is now a hotel. It was an amazing and emotional experience to be in Grannie Jessie’s and Grandpa Duncan’s footsteps, and I felt right at home. Later, we headed down to London to take in the Platinum Jubilee to celebrate Queen Elizabeth’s seventy years on the throne.

It was quite a historic celebration and we were thrilled to be there, so I owe a great debt to our volunteers and fellow staff members for holding down the fort here, where they had to work especially hard so I could make this trip. I am incredibly indebted to our membership volunteer Sarah Schaefer for keeping memberships running efficiently during our busiest time of the year. Sarah always does a wonderful job, and I appreciate her creativity and tenacity in doing a very big job on her own while I was out of the country. I am also extremely thankful to Andrea Hadsell, who painted and moved our offices in my absence. She moved into my old space, and I moved into hers, so now I am in the front office next to Daniel. Andrea did a wonderful job, and we are settling in just fine. Stop by and say Hi anytime!
As you read this, the exhibit *Order Up! Restaurants of Monroe County* is open and available for you to visit, but as I am writing, we are in the final stages of development and installation. I’d like to share two of my favorite artifacts in the exhibit. The first is a photograph of The Jordan Grill in 1936, donated to the History Center by the IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 1988. The Jordan Grill sat at the southeast corner of Third Street and Highland Avenue, just across the street from IU’s campus. The photograph was taken looking toward the southeast and gives a great view of the signage on the west side of the building. The Jordan Grill offers “sizzling steaks, chicken dinners, our own pastries, sandwiches and drinks.” Above the west entrance is a neon sign for Johnson’s Ice Cream, which I’m sure was a student favorite. I just love the graphic design of the neon “The Jordan Grill” sign against the brick and terra cotta of the building. It’s definitely a place I’d love to have a sandwich and shake!

Another of my favorites - though there are many in this exhibit - is the Ladyman’s Cafe neon sign. We have pictures of the sign when it was lit up and operational, hanging in the café’s front window. We can tell from these pictures that the sign was a combination of red, white, and blue neon and welcomed customers to the cafe for years. Ladyman’s was an institution in Bloomington that opened in 1957 at 122 E. Kirkwood Ave by Tom Ladyman. Ladyman’s Cafe served hearty, traditional food - but Operations Manager Justin will tell you the best thing on the menu was the pie. “The peanut butter pie was my favorite menu item as a child. The crust of all Ladyman’s pie was always perfect - and made by cook Jack for almost fifty years at 5:00 in the morning. All the cream pies had a meringue topping that was fluffy, airy, swirled perfection with the peaks on top just barely toasted.”

In other news, we’ve added a new member to our team at the History Center - Gabby Krieble, Assistant Curator! Gabby is a wonderful addition and I am so thankful to have her to help out. Gabby is actually a past student intern of mine so I’m glad to see her want to return as a professional and continue to contribute to the History Center. I will have Gabby officially introduce herself to you in our next newsletter, so keep an eye out for that. In the meantime, we hope you stop by and visit the new exhibits, and if you see Gabby, you can say hi!
Current and Upcoming Exhibits

COOK GALLERY: Summer Travel: Suitcases from the Collection
If you’re traveling to or from Bloomington, the warmer weather brings with it the season of trips. One thing we cannot travel without is our suitcase. Over the years, suitcases have changed shape and purpose. They can be at times very specialized to hold specific items, such as the case which converts into a desk used while traveling with military personnel. Others can be large enough to hold entire wardrobes. We hope you enjoy this temporary exhibit highlighting some unique artifacts from our collection.

RECHTER GALLERY: Order Up! Restaurants of Monroe County
August 2 to November 5, 2022
Monroe County has a long history of beloved restaurants that have come and gone, and some that remain today. Order Up! uses our collection of memorabilia and additional loans to tell the stories of institutions such as Trojan Horse and bygone classics like Pancho’s Villa. We encourage you to stop by and have a seat at the Ladyman’s diner counter or order dinner from the Nick’s English Hut booth. We’ll have menus from many Monroe County establishments for you to browse through, so stop by and let us know what is your favorite place to eat!

HILL GALLERY: Zines
June 28 to October 29, 2022
A zine, short for magazine, is a self-published, small circulation work of original and appropriated text and images, usually distributed amongst friends or sold locally. Zines provide a community for socially isolated and marginalized groups through the ability to share common ideas. Therefore, zines become a tangible trace of these often less documented marginal communities. The History Center received two donations of zine collections, and we are excited to share these unique perspectives on life in our community with our visitors. Opening June 28th, the exhibit will focus on the zines created by Monroe County residents which are at times deeply personal reflections on life in our community.

DECKARD EDUCATION ROOM: We Answer the Call: Our Neighbors’ Stories from the COVID-19 Community Oral History Project
May 24 to December 31, 2022
The exhibit, opening on May 24, features portions of the captured oral histories of Monroe County residents, business owners, and organizations. Health administrators and business owners share how they helped or were helped by our neighbors in the midst of the global pandemic. Hilary Fleck, Curator, together with Megan MacDonald, Research Librarian, began collecting oral histories in April 2021. We Answer the Call and the Community Oral History Project is made possible through the support of IU Health Bloomington Hospital, Indiana Humanities, the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association, the City of Bloomington Arts Commission, and members of the History Center.

DECKARD EDUCATION ROOM: Community Voices Case: Barn Finds from the Hinkle-Garton Farmstead
June 1 to July 30, 2022
Last fall, Megan and Hilary helped our fellow history enthusiasts at the Hinkle-Garton Farmstead clean out one of their barn outbuildings, identify objects to keep to help interpret the story of the Farmstead, and decide what needed to go. The last resident of the farm, Daisy Garton, kept a lot of glass jars and odds and ends that perhaps she was planning to fix at some point. Daisy was very resourceful! However, the volunteers at the Farmstead wanted to take a hard look at the items and identify what really should be kept. Through the end of July, the Community Voices Case will have on display some of the fascinating finds from the Farmstead.
Found at the MCHC

Anyone recognize this critter that lives at the museum? If not, come in and see if you can find her!

Seen at the MCHC

Vi and George Taliaferro permanent exhibit in the Cook Gallery. 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.
Remembering

Richard Henry Becher was an avid builder of model ships and Conestoga wagons. His Conestoga wagons have been displayed in Valley Forge and Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Monroe County, Indiana, and the Indiana State Museum.

Richard Wells was a member of the United States Army and a member of the American Legion. He worked in the steel mills in Gary, was a teacher in the Gary school district most of his life teaching Government, and also served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction for two terms.

Thank You

The Monroe County History Center would like to thank Fresh Thyme grocery store in Bloomington for generously donating 600 paper bags to our June Garage Sale Fundraiser Extravaganza.

6th Bloomington Blues & Boogie Woogie Piano Festival in August; Concert Tickets on Sale Now

Are you ready for the 6th Bloomington Boogies Festival? On August 13—15, 2022, enjoy the Bloomington Boogies: The Bloomington Blues & Boogie Woogie Piano Festival!

The festival begins Saturday, Aug. 13. Performances begin at the Bloomington Community Farmers’ Market at 9 a.m. and continue at WFHB’s “Saturday’s Child” at the Monroe County History Center at 11 a.m., both are free.

On Saturday afternoon two Master Classes take place: Judy Carmichael’s “Stride Piano” class begins at 2 p.m. at the Monroe County History Center; and the Pedro Alderighi-Stephanie Trick Duo’s class, “How We Approach Jazz Piano” at 4 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Preregistration is required for participants and observers for classes and workshops, and the number of participants and observers is limited. Information and registration are at https://bloomingtonboogies.com/education.
Calendar of Events

August

2- Order Up! Restaurants of Monroe County opens
6- Order Up! Family Day at the Monroe County History Center
12- Members’ Exclusive Reception of Order Up!
13- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
13- Bloomington Boogies Festival Master Class
18- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
22- Memory Walk
27- HiStory Book Club
27- Bloomington PrideFest
30- Monroe County History Club @ American Legion
31- Bloomington Speedway Centennial Guest Speakers

September

1- Bloomington Speedway Centennial Celebration
5- MCHC Closed for Labor Day
10- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
13- Monroe County Civil War Roundtable
15- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
24- Lotus in the Park (part of Lotus World Music Festival)
24- HiStory Book Club
26- Memory Walk
27- Monroe County History Club @ American Legion

October

8- WFHB’s Saturday’s Child
11- Monroe County Civil War Roundtable
15- Dearly Departed Cemetery Tours of Rose Hill (register with City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation)
20- MCHC Board of Trustees meeting
24- Memory Walk
25- Monroe County History Club @ American Legion
29- HiStory Book Club