# Starke County Kistorical Society

# THE PRIDE OF STARKE COUNTY

February 2014 Newsletter

# Ron Vendl assumes the leadership of the Society.



Ron and his wife, Linda are Bass Lake residents. Ron is the new president of the Starke County Historical Society. He was elected at

the Society's annual meeting in November. A retired school administrator from the Valparaiso School System, he has been active in the society for the past several years, working as membership chairman, in charge of the ribbons on the memorial tree, and as President. He volunteers weekly at the museum. Ron has attended regional historical meetings, conducted special meetings, and provided programs about the history of Starke County to various groups. He also volunteers as a guide for tours of the Starke County Courthouse.

Since the museum is closed during February, Ron will resume his regular day on Tuesday, March 4.

### **Christmas Memorial Tree**



The Memorial tree grew again this year. Thanks to Ron Vendl for being in charge of the Tree and to Wayne Emigh and Eli Roscka

for helping to install it.

During the Christmas season, for a \$1.00 donation, a ribbon in memory of a loved one is placed on the outside Memorial Christmas Tree, which was donated by Hensler Nursery. This year, more than **528** names and ribbons were placed on the tree, a record number in recent years. Thanks to all who donated.

# Christmas Open house

Ed Hasnerl kicked off the music for the annual open house at the Museum. Ed



always brings his wonderful group of song leaders, Doris Michael, Diana Riddle, Sally Povilaitis and Marilyn McCarty. This year our special guests were the Starke County Choralairs. They included Nancy Ladd, Pat Vanek, Joan Stepien, Mary Madsen, Jamie Schwingel, Susie Szynalski, director, and Nancy Taylor, pianist.

**Library** – From time to time the Henry F. Schricker Library in Knox

asks us to help them with different exhibits which they develop for special events.

We loaned part of our old Valentine collection for their February exhibit,



and loaned a uniform for the Pearl Harbor exhibit during the month of November. Archeological Month

was in September. Rachael Herbert-Vachetto from the Library requested some help with this



exhibit, so Ron Vendl and Eli Roscka provided some materials and information for it. Tamara
Hemmerlein, the
Coordinator of the
Hoosier Heritage



Alliance of the Indiana Historical Society, provided a free inservice for seven members of our Board of Directors and three docent volunteers on May 3, 2013. This was a special all day meeting for the purpose of training and discussion about the care, handling, cleaning and storage of our various collections: environmental controls to consider; on-site and off-site storage issues; building care and maintenance; and a review of collections policies and procedures. It was a full day jampacked with practical and useful information on how to improve and maintain our Museum efforts and it was well-received

Ice Cream Social on July 7<sup>th</sup> was a big success again this year. As in

by all of the participants.

As in past years, we had beautiful classic cars and tractors displayed. Svenja Chesna spun wool on her spinning wheel, while everyone listened to the dulcimer music of Kathy Jerrell on the porch of the Museum. We had more than 20 exhibitors with antique farm tractors, trucks, autos, arrowheads, wood carvings, musical instruments and some historic documents. And the Emigh family served that delicious ice cream. A new exhibitor this past year was Richard Jensen with a fire arms display from his private museum in Hamlet. If



you have a collection of historic nature and want to exhibit it at next year's Ice Cream Social on July 6, 2014, call the museum at 772-5393. Join us this coming July 6 to see many old and really old collections. Some items are over 4000 years old.

### Bass Lake Directories.

Vendl reported that he received 68 years of the Bass Lake Directory from Bill Sonnemaker.

Ron has been scanning every page of the directories and has put several of



Ron

them on our redesigned website.

**Speaking** about our Redesigned website, website with the Starke County Library has been given a facelift. The Board has authorized Rob Pitts to help with this change. He has added new software so that items can be added and changed as needed. The Bass Lake Directories have been added to the website recently.

http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/ And don't forget our other site: http://www.starkehistorv.com

The CHI (Country Home Improvement) Club was formed in 1934. In 1942, the members made a quilt with each member designing a square. The last living charter member of the club, Grace Burch, put the squares together and created the quilt. She later donated the quilt to the Starke County Historical Society. The daughters of some of the CHI members displayed

the quilt at 100<sup>th</sup> the Anniversary οf the Indiana Extension Homemake



rs Assoc. at Purdue University. It was displayed as the Starke County historical item and credit was given for such an outstanding exhibit.

### The funeral train is coming.

The Starke County Historical Society has not made any large plans yet, but we need to start thinking about the year 2015. That will be the year of celebration for the sesquicentennial of Lincoln's Funeral Train going from Washington DC to Springfield, Illinois. Dave Kloke, a Lincoln historian, has already constructed a working replica of an 1860s steam locomotive, Leviathan 63. "I really wanted to build the train for educational purposes. Lincoln's funeral was the highest attended funeral in our country's history, and I'd love for people today to



have an opportunity to experience even a little bit of what people 150 years ago witnessed," Kloke said. Since Lincoln's train traveled through San Pierre in 1865 on its way to Springfield, II, it would be fitting if we were a part of that celebration. If you have any ideas and want to help on this historic event, call Ed Hasnerl at 574-772-3972 or Alice Dolezal at 219-828-5484.

Looking Ahead -- The Indiana State Bicentennial will be celebrated in 2016. Check out the website at http://www.indiana2016.org/map/

Annual Meeting this year was held in the Knox High School Cafeteria with approximately 140 people enjoying a carry-in dinner. During the business meeting, reports nominating the treasurer, committee and president were given.

Bruce Johnson, from the La Porte Historical Society, presented the interesting story of Belle Gunness. Belle bought a farm just north of La Porte, Indiana in 1901 after her first husband died. She married again, but this husband died shortly afterward. His name was Peter Gunness. His teenage daughter, then living with Belle, went to California for schooling, according to Belle. The girl was later found buried in the hog lot along with several of Belle's suitors over the years that followed. There were perhaps more than 25 victims and Belle was never caught. We have the video of this La Porte county mystery, if anyone is interested.



# Membership

The purpose of the Starke County Historical Society is to foster an interest in local history and the preservation of items of historical interest for future We generations. have members from all over the United States. If you are already a member in 2014, thank you! If you are not a member of the Starke County

Historical Society, you may join today and help us tell the story of our county and its people. Membership in the Society is open to anyone wishing to further the mission of the Society.

Starke County Historical Society dues:

Individual ...... \$ 10.00 Husband & Wife..... \$ 15.00

# **Everglades of the North**

Following the huge success of the several viewings of the PBS video Everglades of the North on both Lakeshore and WNIT this past year, the Starke County Historical Society decided to purchase copies of the video from Lakeshore Public Television and offer them for sale to our members. This was also a very successful venture for SCHS as we needed to replenish our inventory twice, purchasing sixty videos in all and selling fifty-six of them to date. We have four left to sell for \$24.95 each and, if mailed, an additional \$3.00 for shipping and handling.

The Grand Kankakee Marsh was one of the largest wetlands in North America. This millionacre marsh covered much of present day Northern Indiana, including much of Starke County, and was home to some of the highest concentrations of wildlife on the planet. For centuries the marsh gave and man took. Everglades of the North explores the diverse ecology, unveils the history, astonishing illustrates the controversial saga of the Grand Kankakee Marsh and brings to life the story of how people have used and perceived

the GKM from early Native Americans to modern day industrialists, while educating viewers about the vital role wetlands and prairies play in our ecosystem. Ron Vendl has been in charge of this project and if you are interested in getting one of the remaining videos, he may be reached at (574) 772-2580 or vendlr@yahoo.com.



The Starke County Historical Society Endowment Fund in the Starke County Community Foundation has grown to over \$32,349. The fund distributes a percentage of the annual earnings back to the Society for the Museum operation. Thanks to all who continue to make financial gifts to this long-term fund. If you would like to donate to the Starke County Historical Society's fund, go the foundation's website http://www.nicf.org/donate/reoccu rringdonation.html or call Sarah Origer at the Starke County Community Foundation at 574-772-3665.

# **Planned Giving**

Another way to support the



Society is to make a planned gift to include the Starke County Historical

Society in your will or revocable living trust. If you have already drafted a will, your attorney may add the Society as a beneficiary through a simple amendment called a codicil. Similarly, a gift provision for the Society may be added to a revocable trust agreement. Bequests can be designated for a specific purpose or for a particular use within the Historical Society that you would

like to support. Such gifts are an excellent way to create a lasting legacy at the Historical Society.

**Tours** Every year the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes from the Starke County schools come to the Museum for a tour. We have a little class first and teach them about one-room schools, the Grand Kankakee Marsh, and

some uses of old tools. Then we take them a tour on through the Museum. Most all of them remember the 2-headed calf. the huge doll house and Che Mah. We quite often measure the height of individual students and



compare that to Che Mah's height of 28 inches. Pictured are Joyce Lovejoy, McKenna Everage, and Haley Belcher

### Interesting Inquiries

Ed Hasnerl, County Historian, and Jim Shilling have received many inquiries from our websites this past year. One was, "What happened to the old



WW I cannon that was by city hall and the water works in North Judson?"

LaVelle Hansen from North Judson told the following, "During WW II, the US was in the fight of its life with a war going on both in Europe and the Pacific. We needed all of the scrap iron that we could get for the war effort. The North Judson town council decided to donate the WW I cannon." They told LaVelle's father, a scrap iron dealer in town, to cut up the cannon. However, Lavelle's father could see the historic value in the old cannon and hid it under a hay stack. Later, it was found and LaVelle, as a young lad, had to use the cutting torch and cut the cannon into pieces.

# **Dr. Henderson** – The Starke County Connection.

Dr. Alexander Henderson was the youngest of thirteen children born in a log cabin near Lafayette, Indiana. Working on the small farm, he decided to become a doctor. He succeeded in begging money enough from his eldest



brother, who was his guardian, to attend school one term. The Civil War broke out in 1862, and he enlisted in Company C, Seventy-second Indiana Volunteer

Infantry for three years. After the Civil War, he taught school, and continued the study of medicine until 1868, when he passed the examination and opened up an office at Monee, Illinois, selling his only feather bed to pay the government license.

He conducted a successful practice at this point until soon after the great Chicago fire in 1871, when he moved to Knox, Starke County, Indiana. Here he rode almost day and night through the swamps, marshes, and over the sand hills, administering to the wants of the sick and receiving but very little compensation for his services. He was elected as a county superintendent of schools for Starke County. Henderson was county auditor, state representative, and postmaster of Knox. In 1889, he was appointed the United States examining surgeon. He also conducted a successful banking and drug business in the town of Knox, which he started in 1880.

A lost flag Jerry Rhody brought into the Museum a few weeks ago a Boy Scout Troop 45 It says, "Troop 45 Washington Twp. Indiana." found that there are 46 counties in Indiana that have Washington Townships. Was it belonging to Starke County? To our rescue came Phil White, a historian of Scouting in Northern Indiana. He provided documents with names of leaders and members of Troop 45 dating back to 1946. Yes, it is our Washington Twp. Troop! It was sponsored by the Knox American Legion until 1961, at which time the Washington PTA became the Township sponsor, and the troop met at the Eagle Creek School.



# Starke County Historical Society Board of Directors for 2014:

Peg Brettin, Alice Dolezal, Marilyn Folkers, Mariann Gappa, Ed Hasnerl, Erl Henry, Van Janovic, Marvin McLaughlin, Debbie Mix, Eli Roscka, Alan Selge, Jim Shilling, Paul Sellers, Dolores Surfus, Donna Toth, Clarabelle Troike, Ron Vendl and Ken Whiles.

> Starke County Museum 401 S. Main Knox, Indiana 46534 574-772-5393

The Society's websites: <a href="http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/">http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/</a>
<a href="http://www.starkehistory.com">http://www.starkehistory.com</a>

# This newsletter has been sponsored by: Starke County Farm Bureau Co-op

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http://starkecountycoop.com/

# Mark Your Calendars

July 6, 2014

Ice Cream Social at the Museum

November 20, 2014

Starke County Historical Society Annual Meeting

December7, 2014

Christmas Open House

### Museum

Some of the Historical Society's artifacts are on display in the



old Knox Depot. Come in sometime and visit Debbie Mix at the Visitors Center, 400 N. Heaton, Knox.