

# Starke County Historical Society

## THE PRIDE OF STARKE COUNTY

June 2019

Newsletter



### A Note from the President

This year I would like to summarize the \$45,704 Heritage Support Grant we received from the Indiana Historical Society for the “Governor Schricker Project” back in June, 2017 for repairs to the former Governor’s home at 401 S. Main Street. This project dragged on for two years due to various circumstances which I will not address here due to space limitations.

Last year at this time we had the entire roof repaired and re-shingled (including new fascia) and the open-air back porch re-roofed with new flashing and parapet repairs. We also addressed the sagging front porch ceiling by having a contractor remove the old, then reinforce the roof joists and install new plaster/stucco.

Since then, we have been able to add half-round gutters and downspouts (with gutter guards to keep the pine needles out of them); interior window repairs were completed including their removal, re-glazing, new sash rope/weight repairs and re-installation; painting of the exterior fascia, gutters and downspouts; caulking of all exterior windows (especially where they adjoined brick) and painting; and the installation of high performance heat/sun control window film to nearly all the interior windows in the home (99% UV protection). This process includes the application of a

clear polyurethane satin finish to the inside perimeter of all the windows.

Summer projects still on our “to do” list include: painting the wooden exterior portions of the house to match the trim; repair tuck-pointing gaps in the brickwork and unify the various mortar colors from previous tuck-pointing attempts to the original color when the house was built; repair/seal cracks and broken corners in the concrete steps, both front and back, and on the front porch; repair the back wooden storm door; and do such electrical repairs, as needed, to reconnect the front porch light and front yard lamppost. When these tasks are completed, I believe we will have addressed all of the exterior “protective” work needed for this historic landmark for the foreseeable future.

In closing, I would like to thank the several Board members and other volunteers who have spent numerous hours preparing the History Center displays and exhibits for your viewing pleasure and maintaining their presence to keep this museum open since last November. Without their unceasing time, effort and sacrifice our doors could not remain open. *Until next time . . . Ron Vendl, President*

### Bass Lake Festival Historic Tram Tour

On July 28 and 29, 2018, the Starke County Historical Society continued our tradition of sponsoring six Bass Lake Historic Tram Tours during the Saturday and Sunday morning of the Bass Lake Festival. Once again, mainly through the efforts of Historical Society member Jim Nierman’s many summers spent at

Bass Lake throughout his life that left lasting memories upon which are the basis of his narration for the tour.

Jim served as the tour guide and numerous stories of historic Bass Lake landmarks were shared with the 215 tram riders as they slowly traveled around the lake. The Historical Society again thanks John McGrath for his tremendous support in procuring the trams from the Plymouth Blueberry Festival committee and then allowing Ron Vendl to use his truck to tow them.

We also wish to acknowledge the Bass Lake Festival Committee for allowing us to participate in the selling of raffle tickets to help defray the \$650 rental fees for trams. Every ticket our members were able to sell could be applied toward that expense.

During the tram tours, Historical Society members were manning our display tables in the Property Owners Community Center where some historic landmark photos were on exhibit and some of which were for sale along with some other historic memorabilia and DVDs. Those volunteers included: Jerry Jernas, Evelyn Skronski, Dolores Surfus, Alan Selge and Linda Schwarzlose. In addition, Jim’s wife, Joan Nierman, monitored the tram ticket table selling those tickets to our riders. Our proceeds, compared to last year, were down a little bit, but our net income was just a little over \$1,000.

For the 2019 Tram Tours, we are making two changes. Instead of having the Saturday tours at 9 and 11 AM and 1 and 3 PM, we are

shifting to 10 AM, 12 Noon, 2 and 4 PM. Our very first 2018 9 AM tour had only eleven riders and by moving everything back an hour, we hope to do a better job of filling those limited seats. Our Sunday tour schedule will remain the same as past years at 9 and 11 AM. These seats were always filled to capacity and we must be done with our tours before the Festival Parade begins.

The second change for 2019 will be the offering of a thirty-six page picture booklet of “what used to be” located at the various stops we will be making for this year. This booklet will be available at a separate cost, or as a package along with a tram ticket for a reduced fee. Jim and I are looking at two separate routes going into the future. This year would be Route “A” and next year, Route “B” each of which would offer different landmarks being featured. Next year’s picture booklet would feature pictures and narration NOT discussed on this year’s trip.

### **Prairie Trails Club**

Experience something new this summer! The Prairie Trails Club is placing “You Are Here” signage on the Erie Trail. The first signs will identify Bass Lake, Lena Park and Aldine. Each sign will include photos and a brief history of each site. More signage will be coming in the future. Go for a bike ride, take a hike or ride your horse on the equestrian trail.

Additionally, the Prairie Trails Club applied to the State of Indiana for a grant to extend the Erie Trail southeastward, approximately two miles, from U.S. 35 to County Road 700 E. The grant was recently funded, so now a historic railroad bridge crossing the Bartee Creek will be refurbished on this new section of the trail. The grant was requested from Governor Holcomb’s Next Level Trails fund.

New benches are provided (manufactured from recycled bottle caps) for rest stops along the way so you may pause and enjoy the peace and quiet of nature. So, come out and experience the Erie Trail through historic Starke County!

*Article submitted by Russ Blais*

### **Hardesty Memorial Endowment**

Four years ago, the estate of local Hamlet philanthropist James Hardesty bestowed upon the Starke County Historical Society a unique gift through the Northern Indiana Community Foundation-- \$100,000. This grant, The Hardesty Memorial Endowment, provides us with \$20,000 a year for five years for our “New Building Capital Campaign” (which is the Starke County History Center).

Needless to say, this grant has been a Godsend for our organization and allowed us an opportunity to accomplish some amazing goals. With this past year’s donation we were able to purchase a beautiful 5’ by 8’ double-sided electric sign cabinet with a digital message board for the front yard of the History Center; a new steel back entry door with installation; some exterior electrical repairs for the parking lot lights, air conditioners and soffit lighting; and a large “semi” storage container for our excess storage needs.



The photo accompanying this article shows Jessica Martinovic, Director of Development for the Starke County Community Foundation; Ron Vendl, President of the Starke County Historical Society, accepting the 2019 check for \$20,000 from Joan Hardesty, a Board member of the SCCF; Charles Hardesty, Trustee of the Hardesty Memorial Endowment; and Jay Albright, Executive Director of the NICEF, taken on April 11, 2019.

### **Starke County 4-H Fair**

The SCHS booth at the 4-H Fair during the week of July 8 – 14, 2018 received many visitors interested in the history of Starke County. County maps were presented to those patrons who could answer historical questions about the county. Old pictures on display were admired and commented on by many people who recognized the sites depicted. Additional information about the county was received from some of the visitors. *Article submitted by Mariann Gappa*



### **Display Case Donation**

Jeanne Thompson, the new owner of Silver Leaf Florist & Boutique (formerly Char’s Floral and Gifts) located at 217 E. Culver Road in Knox, made a

wonderful donation of six open bookcases with bases to the Historical Society during the past year. During the renovation of the shop, Jeanne found she had no need for this furniture and offered it to the historical society. We added lockable sliding glass doors to protect the artifacts on display and it makes a terrific addition to our History Center! We sincerely thank her for her kindness and generosity!



In the picture above, you can see Board member Alice Dolezal checking over her work of setting up one of the displays in one of these cases.

### **History Center Prepares Displays**

After three years of patiently waiting, the public was finally able to view displays in progress at the Starke County History Center.

Our first year after purchasing the Fritz Medical Center on Heaton Street in Knox was spent gutting the building, removing most of the interior studs, built-in cabinets, carpeting, ceramic tile, and other items in preparation for an “open concept” museum.

The second year completed the process of removing almost everything down to the outside walls and making plans for

updating the plumbing and electric service, installing new ADA compliant restrooms, drywall and ceilings. Using studs from the upstairs rooms, additional basement storage shelves were built to better organize boxes of artifacts available for display. A furnace “room” was also constructed to house the two furnaces and provide some storage shelving. The basement walls and floor were also painted.

During the third year, the walls and ceiling were painted, carpeting installed, a small kitchenette was added and display/showcases were brought in. It was time for exhibits! Many items had been cataloged and moved from the Schricker house to the basement. These were brought up, cleaned, washed and repaired as necessary. Some of the Board members have spent many hours working on the displays. It is still a work in progress.

In November, 2018, the History Center was officially open to the public three days a week, although there were still some empty showcases yet to be filled. It was decided to limit the open hours during the cold of winter (January, February and most of March) to Saturdays only, with week days used to prepare more displays.

Another extremely time-consuming task of recording an inventory of the vast collection of items from the Richard Jensen Museum was successfully completed by Dawn Ferch, Alice Dolezal, Patty Redlin and Melba Shilling. It was also these same

ladies who led the numerous hours creating the many displays you see throughout the History Center. *Article submitted by Melba Shilling*



### **VFW Donation**

This past year the SCHS requested a \$500 donation for a flagpole to place in front of the History Center. You can imagine our surprise when Quartermaster Butch Morgan presented us a check in the amount of \$1,500! With the additional funding we upgraded from one flagpole to two which are going to be placed near our new lighted sign cabinet in the front yard of the History Center. We will soon be able to proudly fly both the American and Indiana flags.

We sincerely thank the Knox Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #748 for their generosity and kindness!

### **Genealogy Room**

The Starke County History Center has a valuable addition. We now have a genealogy room where anyone can come in to use the books and computer to trace their family ancestry. We have a



large collection of the older Starke County newspapers and a microfilm reader to view these valuable resources.

Audrey Kinezian has been the Starke County Genealogist for many years and is available to assist anyone on Saturdays from 10 AM until 2 PM. The only charge is for copies printed that are wanted and they are \$.10 a page. You may be a beginner or you may have started on this journey already; it doesn't matter, help is available. Audrey has over 47 years of experience and can guide you in what you need to do.



The newest tool in the genealogy world is DNA testing. This is opening doors that previously were closed, especially for adopted people. A little later this year, we will be adding the services of Lori Smith, current President of the Starke County Genealogy Society, and an expert on DNA testing.

Some of the resources available for Starke County are births, marriages and deaths, as well as the index to land records from 1850 to 1907. The cemetery books cover all cemeteries in the county as well. The books and CD's cover various places in the U.S. as well as some foreign countries.

Come visit us at the History Center on S. Heaton Street next door to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. You will be able to see many historical artifacts and join the journey of tracing your family.

### History Center Windows

The front windows of the History Center are now clad in past Starke County local images. Since the large three-pane window is on the west side of the building, the afternoon sun would soon fade any exhibits/displays in that area. The Board decided to add an external film to the window to help protect that area from the sun's rays.



Mark Rippy, Board member representing Jackson Township, spear-headed the project, researching available images which could be added to the film. He worked with OTES, a North Judson-based sign and graphics company, to fit the images into the three-pane space and to complete the installation of the film.

We thank the Ober Arbor Gleaners for providing the funding for the project, which was dedicated at the September, 2018 Board Meeting.

*Article submitted by Melba Shilling*



### Ice Cream Social

The annual Starke County Historical Society Ice Cream Social attracted visitors from near and far. In spite of the heat on July 1, people came to view the exhibits inside and enjoy the cool refreshments outside.



Ice cream and cookies were served in the shade on the lawn. In the photo above, Nik Rana waits his turn as Debbie Mix is being served by Historical Society secretary, Evelyn Skronski. In the left background is the antique exhibit by Jim Dolezal of North Judson.



The Knox class of 1958 held an accidental "mini reunion" at the Ice Cream Social, with the following attending: Judy Sinn

from Hamlet; Colleen and Jim Drews from Michigan, and Dennis Beville from Plymouth. See photo above!



Above is a photo of The Kingsbury Ordnance Plant exhibit, part of the Richard Jensen collection of Hamlet, is viewed by Eleanor and Dan Roscka. The Jensen family donated much of the private collection to the Historical Society.

*Submitted by Melba Shilling*

### **2018 Annual Meeting**

The 2018 Annual Meeting was held in the Knox High School cafeteria on November 15. Due to last minute weather conditions, our attendance was down from previous years, but the members and friends who did show up shared another excellent meal featuring chicken to go along with the carry-in side dishes and desserts.

A brief Business Meeting followed the meal and topics covered included an Annual Financial Report by Treasurer Mariann Gappa and a Necrology report listing the deceased members and friends of the society since our last meeting. Starke County Genealogist Audrey Kinezian gave a brief overview of the Genealogy Room

that is now functioning at the History Center and offered to assist anyone interested in exploring their ancestry. Reports on the History Center and ongoing work at the Schricker home were given. Retiring Board members Jerry Jernas, Van Janovic and Cassie Waletzko were recognized.

Dolores Surfus, Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, presented the 2019 slate of Officers and Directors: President, Ron Vendl; Vice President, Linda Schwarzlose; Secretary, Evelyn Skronski; Treasurer, Mariann Gappa; Jaigan Allport, Russ Blais, Peg Brettin, Alice Dolezal, Dawn Ferch, Carl Goodrich, Patty Redlin, Doug Ricks, Mark Rippy, Alan Selge, Melba Shilling, Dolores Surfus, and Dean Wells. The slate was unanimously approved.

The program for the evening was Charlie Adams, long time northern Indiana broadcaster and motivational speaker, and current weekday morning show host for radio station WKVI. Charlie enlightened and entertained the SCHS members and guests with "Some Stories about Starke County History." His presentation was very well received by everyone in attendance.

Due to the weather conditions which hampered the attendance at this meeting, the Board has elected to try an earlier Annual Meeting date for 2019. Please see the article about the 2019 Annual Meeting Change elsewhere in this newsletter.

### **Become a Member of the Starke County Historical Society**

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 generations. Members live in many states, from California to New York. If you are already a member in 2019, 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

### **Grow Our Endowment Fund!**

The Starke County Historical Society Endowment Fund in the Starke County Community Foundation has grown to more than \$36,000. 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 to the foundation's website:

<http://www.nicf.org/donate/reoccurringdonation.html> or call Jessica Martinovic at the Starke County Community Foundation at 574-772-3665.



## Mark Your Calendars

Starke County Historical Society  
Upcoming Events:

North Judson Mint Festival June 14  
-16

Ice Cream Social July 7 from 1 - 3  
PM Starke County History Center

Starke County 4-H Fair July 14 - 20  
(Booth in the Commercial Building)  
Starke County Fairgrounds

Bass Lake Festival July 27 & 28  
Historic Tram Tours on July 27 (10  
AM, Noon, 2 PM & 4 PM) and July  
28 (9 & 11 AM only)

Yellowstone Trail Festival August  
17 (Ham and Bean Soup/Cornbread)  
Starke County Fairgrounds

SCHS Annual Meeting Saturday,  
October 12 Knox High School

## 2018 Memory Tree

For one final year, Historical Society member John Hensler, proprietor of the Hensler Nursery, donated our Fraser fir Memory Tree, which stood in front of the Main Street former home of Governor and Mrs. Henry F. Schricker in Knox. Our 2018 Memory Tree was adorned with 463 red ribbons.

For one dollar, our members and friends have been able to memorialize their deceased relatives and friends with a red ribbon—a tradition that has pretty much grown over the years, paying tribute to the many people who have made a difference in the lives of historical society members and their relatives. We thank everyone who participated in this event at Christmas.



For 2019, we have purchased a larger artificially lighted tree which will be set up in the front lobby of the History Center in an effort to better display the many anticipated memorial ribbons. As can be seen from the 2018 picture, the ribbons had to be pretty well bunched together for all of them to fit, which makes it hard when someone is trying to locate/identify “their” special person’s ribbon.

## 2019 Annual Meeting Change Notice

As many of you know, for many years we have had our Annual Meeting on the Thursday before Thanksgiving. This past year, we had a major weather issue that caused our attendance to fall far short of what we had been used to for many of the previous years.

For 2019, we thought we would try something a little different and move the Annual Meeting to a Saturday

afternoon in October. This has two advantages right from the start—it is BEFORE the time change and it is held during the daylight hours which might make it easier for some of us older folks who don’t particularly care to drive at night.

Therefore, our 2019 Annual Meeting is scheduled to be held at the Knox High School cafeteria on Saturday, October 12 starting at Noon and going until about 2:30 or so. Our program speaker will be Shirley Willard, the Fulton County Historian. Shirley will share the video “Like Birds in a Wind Storm” which tells the story of the 1838 Potawatomi Trail of Death from Indiana to Kansas, part of which occurred right near us in Marshall County on Indiana Route 17 going into Plymouth (from Culver).

## Contact Information:

Starke County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 52  
Knox, IN 46534

Our New Phone Number:  
(574) 772-2111

Website:  
<http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical>

## History Center Hours

Thursday  
10 AM – 4 PM

Friday  
10 AM – 4 PM

Saturday  
10 AM – 2 PM  
(Genealogist is usually available  
on Saturday)

(Closed on holidays falling  
on the days above)