

YESTERDAY & TODAY

“Life holds more meaning when the past ties into the Present--When this happens one gains assurance that the Present will also tie into the Future--Author Unknown

Parke County Historical Society Organized May 12, 1894
Spring 2008

2008 Annual Meeting

The Parke County Historical Society will host our annual meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at Saint Joseph's Holy Family Hall in Rockville at 6:30 p.m. Dinner will be \$12.00 per person payable at the door. Please make reservations by calling the Rockville Public Library 765-569-5544 by April 18th.

The program for the evening will be Ron Branson from the Indiana Covered Bridge Society. Come and enjoy the evening!

Local Lore, Back Roads, and Random Thoughts

by
Gary Cowan

When one looks at the tiny hamlets of our county, it often is not realized that each town was a thriving metropolis of much greater size and influence. What causes a town to originate, to grow, to flourish, and to eventually devolve into a shadow of its former self? Is it politics? Climate? Shifting attitudes? Economics?

The former glory of our towns is evident as we read old accounts of earlier time. Mecca had its clay tile plant that employed 160 men and was the second largest plant of its type east of the Mississippi. Diamond had its black gold that fueled numerous churches and also 19 saloons. Bloomingdale had its merchants, railroad access, and the Academy. Montezuma had its healing spa waters and river trade. Bridgeton had the mill. All were vibrant communities. Now they are sedate

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enclaves no longer filled with daily bustling throngs.

Maybe it is true that all things must pass; that every dog has its day. As for myself, I remember these towns fondly and try to image what it must have been like back in the day. Back when people in the countryside looked forward to visiting these towns much as we today anticipate a trip to Indianapolis or Terre Haute.

Answers to last newsletter's

Did You Know?

1. John Dillinger was a frequent visitor to a restaurant in Lyford. He flirted good naturedly with a married waitress despite her being married. When she rejected his blandishments, he continued to treat her very respectfully and often visited the establishment and tipped generously.
2. Tom Thumb of P.T. Barnum's Circus once had a short layover at the depot.

Come and See:

1. The ball and chain used in a famous Rockville hanging.
2. What 1913 Mansfield and Bridgeton looked like.

Did You Know?

What Parke Countian attended the U.S. Naval Academy in 1949?

Bits from Bill Swern

For years, the Rockville third grade students have toured the Parke County Museum each fall with the good help of our volunteers, Alan Ader and Alberta Butler. The last two years students have also made a trip to the Crowder Log Cabin on High Street. History teacher, Michael Phillips, has been there to explain life as it was in the mid 1800's. He told the students that often children did not attend school. The students thought that sounded great, until they found out all the work children were expected to do instead of going to school. School did not sound so bad after all.

On July 17, 1841, a trial was venued from Vigo County. Noah Beacham was found guilty of killing a man in Vigo County. He was hanged on December 20, 1842. He asked to attend his own funeral. The funeral sermon was delivered in the courthouse, and he rode on his coffin from the courtroom to the place of execution on the hillside just east of the old Rockville Cemetery.

Message from the President

Hi, all! Spring is nearly upon us, and I suspect we are all ready for that. We have peonies poking through the ground, and the sugar water is all but finished running for another year. The cardinals have returned to the feeders, and the geese have returned to the ponds. All seems to be in its place, and life moves on.

I met with some folks from the Master Gardeners organization the other day. They have offered to do some planning and planting at the log cabin for us. I think it's a great thing that groups like this are willing to step up and help other groups. It is a nice world we live in, and it's full of nice people. You really don't even need to look for the good stuff, because it's always there. You just have to look beyond the bad stuff. I suppose it's not nearly as much fun to talk about the good things people do as it is to talk about the other., but I've sure found that life is a whole lot more pleasant. Maybe your mom was right..."If you can't say something nice then don't say anything." If you find yourself trying to figure out just how you're going to be mean to someone today, then just stop it. Life is really not complicated, and it sure is more fun being nice. I've always thought that you should try to make it so that people will be happier to see you coming than they are to see you going. Maybe we'll never achieve that, but it seems a worthy goal.

We have a nominating committee working on finding those who would like to serve as an officer or a trustee, but we still need anyone who might be interested. Even if you don't want to be "official," there are plenty of ways to get involved with the Society, and there are all kinds of levels of activity...mental as well as physical. We want the Society to be "your" Society, and while not requiring anything from anyone, we want to make sure that everyone understands that they are welcome to get involved in anything at anytime.

Enjoy the blessings of new life this spring...enjoy every day. See you at the Annual Meeting—Jim Meece