

# Starke County Historical Society

## THE PRIDE OF STARKE COUNTY

April 2017

Newsletter

### Starke County Celebrates Indiana Bicentennial



Indiana's 200th Birthday was celebrated in Starke County on a chilly October evening in 2016, as the Bicentennial Torch Relay passed through the county. The torch was transferred from Pulaski County in a traditional hand-off to one of Starke County's twenty torchbearers, Gayle Smith.

After a brief reception for the State Torch Relay Team, the torch was on its way, first to Bass Lake, then North Judson, Toto, and finally Knox, where the celebration concluded in Wythogan Park. Torchbearers chose several modes of transportation, including walking, golf cart, antique cars, farm equipment, train, bicycle, and antique fire truck, and then ending with a boat ride in the Yellow River to the Park.

The torch arrived here in the early evening, so by the time of the celebration in the park, darkness had

settled in. Thanks to the cooperation from the Park Board, City and County Officials, Law Enforcement, Homeland Security, Firefighters and many other volunteers, the park area was lit up and ready for the large crowd. While waiting for the Torch to arrive, guests were treated to a special cake donated by Fingerhut Bakery, and bottled water by IU Starke Hospital. National Honor Society students assisted with the refreshments.

The Knox Middle and High School choirs sang patriotic songs as the boat carrying the final torchbearer, Brad Shilling, docked at the boat ramp. Followed by the five Youth Torchbearers with torches, Brad led those assembled to the stage where the final celebration was held.



During the closing ceremony, the newly designed Starke County Flag was revealed. Chairman, Dave Pearman, thanked the Torchbearers and all of the community supporters who made the event possible. Knox Mayor Dennis Estok closed the festivities with a few final words.

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 The twenty torchbearers included:  
 Gayle Smith (for White Family)  
 Carol Blastic (for Gene Blastic)  
 Susan Schricker (for Gov. Henry and Maude Schricker)  
 Ron Vendl (for Stella Klopot Bonner)  
 Perry Lucas by Pam Stalbaum (for Lucas Family)  
 Jim Kersting  
 Dan Gumz (for Gumz Family)  
 Joe Kingsbury  
 Judge Marvin McLaughlin

George Ono (for Frank Ono)  
 Ray Grossman (for Ed Hasnerl)  
 Jay Weinberg (for Weinberg Family)  
 Nancy Dembowski  
 Ken Dolezal (for Dolezal-Akers Family)  
 Jennifer Wulf (for Ware and Helen Edgar)  
 Shirley Fosler (for Emigh Family)  
 Robin Pflugshaupt (for Jim Hardesty)  
 John Hensler  
 Marcia Hayes (for Ted Hayes)  
 Brad Shilling (for Jim and Melba Shilling)



### A Note from the President

I will keep this brief since we are including a lot of pictures in this Newsletter and since "a picture says a thousand words" (or some old saying of that sort), I would prefer you see those rather than read my chatter.

We anticipate some exhibits and displays to be in place for our July 2, 2017 Ice Cream Social. There is some considerable work to be done to accomplish that goal, but we are checking items off our punch list each week. Another goal we have this year is to pay off the History Center building by the end of the year. That may take a little doing, but we are hopeful that things will

fall into place to allow that to happen.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the writing efforts of the folks who contributed the rest of the articles for this Newsletter. They are: Peg Brettin, Dean Corey, Alice Dolezal, Jerry Jernas and Melba Shilling. Most importantly, I want to thank another of our members, Kathy Carrier, who combined all of the submitted articles and put this Newsletter together to share with all of you!

Until next time . . .

Ron Vendl, President



## Lincoln Funeral Train – Part 2

In last April's Newsletter, we shared an article about the commemoration of the Lincoln Train's brief stop in San Pierre on May 2, 1865. This train was transporting the body of assassinated President Abraham Lincoln to Chicago and, eventually, to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. We also mentioned the rock monument and bronze plaque that would memorialize that historic stop on the grounds of the former Little Company of Mary Hospital which was very near the Monon Railroad Line back then.



A performance by the Culver Military Pipes and Drum Corps and several folks in period dress added to the day's festivities, as seen by the photo in the next column.



One additional tidbit of this story was the adventure of fifteen year old John Tierney, according to former Starke County Historian, Marvin Allen, and shared in the *Pulaski Post* in March, 2015. "When John heard the train would be coming, he was determined to attend Mr. Lincoln's funeral in Springfield. He managed to hop the train as it was leaving, unnoticed by the train personnel, but found shortly after he was on the train. Even though John thought the train was headed directly to Springfield, it was destined for Chicago for exhibition, along with many other short stops along the way. It would be several days before the train would reach Springfield. John Tierney, after explaining his sincere wish to pay his respects to the much admired Lincoln, and the fact that he was the only individual up to that point that had successfully boarded the train, was allowed to continue the ride."



One brief final chapter to this story is the fact that when John Tierney was 90 (in the early 1940's), he was living at the Hospital where the nuns were caring for him **since he donated the land for the Little Company of Mary complex.**

## Bass Lake Festival Historic Tram Tour

On July 30 & 31, 2016, the Starke County Historical Society once again sponsored the Historic Bass Lake Tram Tours during the Bass Lake Festival. The project was accomplished mainly through the efforts of Historical Society member Jim Nierman. Having lived at Bass

Lake for about sixty years, Jim's experiences during that time have left many historic memories that he is eager to share with the public.

For this past year's tour, with Jim serving as the tour guide, more than thirty stories of historic areas were highlighted as the tram slowly traveled around the lake. As in recent years past, we also wish to acknowledge John McGrath who allowed Ron Vendl to use his truck to tow the trams. We shared Bass Lake history with 230 people who took the tram tour, enabling us to earn \$1,150.

This year the Festival Committee allowed us to participate in selling raffle tickets to help us defray the \$650 cost of the tram rental. Each ticket we sold was applied toward that expense.

While the trams were making their six trips around the lake over the two days, Historical Society members manned tables of historic Bass Lake pictures and artifacts at the Bass Lake Property Owners Community Center, some of which were for sale. When it was all said and done, we made a profit of \$1,073.50!

Since the tram tours are so popular with the Festival patrons, the 2017 Festival Committee assured us they would try to find sponsors to help underwrite the tram fees.

## 2016 Annual Meeting

The 2016 Annual Meeting was held in the Knox High School Cafeteria with approximately 110 people enjoying another delicious carry-in dinner. In the business portion of the meeting, the following reports were presented: Treasurer; a Necrology report (Ken Whiles); Gun Raffle (Mark Rippey); Heritage Support Grant (Rodger Smith); Bicentennial Torch Relay (Gayle Smith); and event updates from 2016,

membership (590 members last year), and History Center update by Ron Vendl. Under New Business, Jerry Jernas presented the slate for nominations for election and the Officers and Directors elected are found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Our program for the evening was presented by local historian, David Altman, entitled "The Grand Kankakee Marsh and Its Importance to Early and Today's Indiana." He provided information about Starke County when the Americans first settled here and how similar their settlement locations were to those of the Native Americans. David's presentation used old maps and a questionnaire and provided an early history of Starke County which helped the audience visualize the land and lifestyle.

### **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 generations. Members live in many states, from California to New York. If you are already a member in 2017, **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 **\$35,000.** 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 Sarah Origer at the Starke County Community Foundation at 574-772-3665.

### **Schricker House is Now an Indiana Historic Landmark**

In the spring of 2016, through the efforts of several Historical Society members, the former home of Governor and Mrs. Schricker was nominated to be added to the Indiana State Register. The paperwork was completed by Peg Brettin and Rodger Smith and photographs taken by Fred Tressler accompanied the application to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

We were notified in late April that the nomination was successful and the "Governor Henry F. and Maude Brown Schricker House" has been listed in the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures. The Indiana State Register is the state's official list of properties with national, state, or local significance in the development of Indiana's cultural heritage. A nicely framed certificate will be proudly displayed in the Schricker home in the very near future.

### **Announcing the Birth of Starke County's First Official Flag**

Starke County's very first official flag is now flying proudly at the courthouse and other buildings in the county after being raised for the first time during a ceremony on October 10, 2016.

The Starke County Bicentennial Committee explored the idea of a county flag as part of Indiana's Bicentennial Celebration during

2016. Erl Henry, with input from Brenda Krom and Kaylee Krom, designed the special flag, which was made official by the Starke County Commissioners, Kathy Norem, Don Binkley, and Kent Danford.

The colors red, white and blue were taken from the American Flag. The gold color recognizes the gold in the Indiana Flag. The nine stars inside the outline of Starke County represent the current nine townships in the county. The three stars outside of the boundary of Starke County represent the three "lost townships", west of the Kankakee River, which are now part of LaPorte County.

The original shape of Starke County was a rectangle, but in 1842, the Indiana Legislature gave that area to LaPorte County, leaving Starke County "boot shaped". Apparently the landowners in that area could not get to Knox to pay their taxes because there was no bridge across the Kankakee River.

During the October 7th Torch Relay and Bicentennial Celebration, Melba Shilling presented flags to the Commissioners in memory of her late husband, Jim. The flag raising ceremony at the courthouse followed on October 10.

### **Flag Presentation to Oregon-Davis School Board**

On February 20, 2017, Historical Society board members Van Janovic (Oregon Township) and Carl Goodrich (Davis Township) presented the recently adopted Starke County flag to the Oregon-Davis School Corporation Board of Directors. Mr. Janovic and Mr. Goodrich purchased and donated the flag as part of the Historical Society's efforts to develop a sense of pride and knowledge of the history of our wonderful county for future generations.



Rear: Dr. Donald Harman, Carl Goodrich, Van Janovic, Annette Ferch Front: Christopher Lawrence, Andrea McIntosh, Kurt Hayes, Shirley Budka

As part of the presentation, Dean Corey provided the board with a brief explanation of the symbols depicted on the flag and of the history of the early years of Starke County's development.

Starke County flags are available for sale from the Starke County Historical Society. Nylon flags 3'x5', suitable for outside or inside display, are \$50. Miniature desk flags are \$5 each.

### Starke County Accessions— Collections

The SCHS Directors have recently approved a newly updated Collection Procedure & Policy that they Accessions Committee, which will be able to function. In the document are written guidelines of how accessions to the SCHS are handled from the time they come to the Schricker House museum and until they are cataloged into our collections listing. We have a challenge for the committee due to the fact part of our museum collections have been moved to the new History Center site at 1520 S. Heaton St. Knox. The remaining portion of our collections is still at the original museum until they are officially moved to the History Center as well.

Any new museum donations are still being collected at 401 S. Main St. If

you are interested in donating any items you can call Peg Brettin at 574-772-3343 for an appointment. We are not taking loans at this time, but we do ask you to consider if you have a Starke County family heirloom or an item pertaining to Starke County, contact us. We would love to discuss and receive your donation to be available in our permanent History Center collection.

Members of the Starke County Historical Society Accessions Committee are: Peg Brettin, Chairperson, Diane Blais, Dawn Ferch, Alice Dolezal, and Marilyn Folkers.

### Mark Your Calendars

Starke County Historical Society Upcoming Events:

North Judson Mint Festival  
June 16, 17 & 18

Ice Cream Social  
July 2  
Starke County History Center

Starke County 4-H Fair  
July 10 – 15  
Starke County Fairgrounds

Bass Lake Festival  
July 28, 29 & 30  
Historic Tram Tours on July 29 & 30 (AM only)

Yellowstone Trail Festival  
August 19 & 20  
Starke County Fairgrounds

SCHS Annual Meeting  
November 16  
Knox High School

This Newsletter has been sponsored by:  
**Starke County Farm Bureau Co-op**  
Hamlet - Brems  
Serving Starke County  
Since 1928



### 2016 Memorial Christmas Tree

Another beautiful Fraser Fir Christmas Tree was donated by the Hensler Nursery and Historical Society member, John Hensler, for our Memorial Tree this past December. Ron Vendl and Purdue University Northwest student volunteer, Coren Meister, generated the 486 red ribbons that memorialized friends and loved ones to be remembered that were sent in by our membership family. We thank everyone who participated in this event at Christmas!

### Starke County Historical Society Board of Directors for 2017:

Russ Blais, Peg Brettin, Dean Corey, Alice Dolezal, Dawn Ferch, Mariann Gappa, Carl Goodrich, Van Janovic, Jerry Jernas, Kenneth Kemble, Mark Rippy, Alan Selge, Paul Sellers, Melba Shilling, Evelyn Skronski, Dolores Surfus, Ron Vendl and Ken Whiles.

President Ron Vendl  
Vice President Dean Corey  
Secretary Evelyn Skronski  
Treasurer Peg Brettin

**Starke County History Center/  
Governor Henry F. & Maude  
Schricker House  
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