

# Starke County Historical Society

## THE PRIDE OF STARKE COUNTY

Winter 2010

Newsletter

### Membership

In 2009 our membership was well over **700** members from all across the United States. We now have members in 24 states. 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. If you are already a member in 2010, **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**

This Newsletter is also available on our website.

**Bells – Bells** – Two school bells have been donated to the Starke County Historical Society recently.

**Desardee Bell** -- This bell is similar to the bells used at all of the 62 one-room schools in the county, to call the children to school each day. It was returned to Starke County from Wayne, Pennsylvania by Alice TeKolste and her son Kurt TeKolste. Alice's mother, Grace Shilling White, had been a student at the Desardee School (Center Township District No.1 School) in the early 1900's. This school was on the southwest corner of 250 E and 100 S. In 1911, Center Township consolidated all of its one-room schools and built the Center Township School, located west of Knox where White Flyer is today. It was the first consolidated school in the county. A few years later, the little one-room Desardee school was torn down and Grace Shilling saved the



bell. It had been in the family all these years, and Kurt TeKolste said, "It was time to return the bell to its original home."

**Toto Bell** -- We also received another school bell – the Toto School, Jackson Township, District No. 3 bell. This school was located in the Jackson Township part of Toto. Suzie Szynalski donated the bell to the Starke County Historical Society, along with several photographs. Her mother, Jennie Goll, had attended the Toto School when she was a child. Like the Desardee bell, the Toto bell was rescued when the school was torn down.



**12,000 visitors – Wow !!!**  
**(The power of the internet!)**  
If you haven't been on our Starke County web sites recently, you need to check out the latest updates. There are many more photographs, some recordings and newly-found histories of Starke County.

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

The second site lists a few of the interesting items in the museum, plus photos and activities of the Society. You will be amazed how easy it is to "point and click".

Marvin Allen has installed "counters" on the sites and was surprised at how many people have "visited". Here are some of the more interesting facts about visitors to our website: [www.starkehistory.com](http://www.starkehistory.com).

The totals for the most recent 12 months show we have had 12,302 visitors who have looked at 23,337



pages and 50,156 files.

Only 7.3% enter through our home page. These would be the people who know our url: [starkehistory.com](http://starkehistory.com)

The rest have done some kind of search and hit one of the pages within our web site (illustrating the importance of search engines like Google).

The page most often hit is the one about General Stark, for whom our county was named. The 2nd is the Ben Hur page, the 3rd is the Che Mah page, the 4th is Bass Lake and the 5th is our last civil war veteran, William Garner.

More visitors come from Knox Community Schools than any other source.

More of our visitors have used Google's search engine than any other, followed by Yahoo.

The top search string is "starke county historical society"  
2nd is "che mah"  
3rd is "history of starke"  
4th is "starke county museum"  
5th is "bass lake".

48% of our visitors come from non-commercial providers (home and schools).  
39% of our visitors come from commercial providers, meaning they are searching from their workplace.  
5% from the US Government,  
2% from outside the US, with the most from Russia, followed by Germany, Bosnia and Norway. (The rest are unknown).  
The Gateway video is downloaded about 15 times a month.

### Videos --

One new video is about the return of the Desardee school bell. Another is being produced to show how the pioneers used spinning wheels. These and other short videos (2-4 minutes long) will be shown on TV/DVD players, purchased with a grant from the Starke County Community Foundation, Inc.

## Gateway video has grown.

On the [www.starkehistory.com](http://www.starkehistory.com) site, Marvin Allen, County Historian, has installed a "Featured Video" section. Click on it and you will see the 8-minute video that is shown to visitors at the Starke County Visitors Center. It tells a little about Starke County history and the restoration of the Knox Nickel Plate Depot and the watchman's tower. Melba Shilling and Ed Hasnerl narrate. A more extensive Gateway video has been produced (24 minutes) that tells the whole history of Gateway. It has been presented to groups and is available to other organizations as a program, either at the Museum or the group's regular meeting place. Call the Museum for more details (772-5393).

**Presentations** - We have made many presentations in and out of the county during the past year.

A Kankakee River presentation by Marvin Allen at the Henry F. Schricker Library was well attended. This program is an extensive look into the life of the Kankakee River and Marsh area over the years. Marvin talks about the history of the marsh and has many maps showing its vast size. It was one of the largest marshes in the United States and had thousands of hunters coming to the Kankakee Region for commercial and recreational hunting. He tells about the Indian population and the treaties the U.S. Government had with them. He shows photos of the drainage of this region.



If your group would like a program for your meeting, either at the museum or your regular meeting location, let us know. We can do programs of 8 minutes or 80 minutes.

## Tours

The Society was the host for a series of other programs and tours this past year. The Oregon-Davis 7<sup>th</sup> graders visited the Courthouse, Museum and Depot in May, as did the St. Peters Lutheran School students from North Judson. In April, the Museum was host to the Starke County Community Foundation. During the summer, several high school class reunions scheduled a visit to the Museum.

In October, 120 Knox 3<sup>rd</sup> graders visited the Museum. The Knox Cub Scouts enjoyed a tour of the Courthouse and later toured the Museum where they raked the leaves as a community service project. We appreciate their volunteer effort.



**The Ice Cream Social** has become a "destination" each summer. It is held on the first Sunday in July, so mark your calendars for this year - **July 4, 2010, 1 - 3 pm.**

Last year, more than 22 friends of the Museum showed their interesting exhibits. There were arrowhead collections, antique autos, trucks and tractors.

In the photo below, visitors look over the WWII Army Jeep restored by Bud and Beverly Albright.

Kathy Jarrell provided beautiful background music on her dulcimer. Wayne and Joann Emigh were very busy dishing ice cream to an estimated 300-350 people.



If you have a unique collection and would like to exhibit at this year's Ice Cream Social, call Jim Shilling at 772- 4311.

**Remember, if your ancestors moved to Starke County in the 1800's or if you just came here a week ago, you are a part of Starke County History. Anything happening today is history tomorrow. If you have historic photos of family or scenes and events in Starke County that we may copy and put into our collection, call 772-5393 and leave a message.**

**Christmas as time - 2009**



Forty guests gathered together at the Museum to sing Christmas carols and sip hot cider with homemade cookies on the first Sunday in December. Doris Michael, Diana Riddle, Marilyn McCarty, Ed Hasnerl, and Sally Povilaitis led those attending in singing familiar carols.

Here Ed Hasnerl and Justice Griffith sing a familiar Christmas carol together. In the showcase behind them are 30 Christmas Crèches displayed by Don and Sandy Hansen for the Christmas season.



## Annual

## Meeting



this year was held in the Knox Middle School Cafetorium with 120 people enjoying a carry-in dinner. Charles Damron from South

Carolina, an Abraham Lincoln impressionist, was the featured speaker. Several children were in attendance and he spoke to them about Lincoln having empathy for his fellow man - to have "your pain in my heart", he said.

Reports from the long-range planning committee, treasurer, Starke County historian and president were also given. Kathy Jerrell and Linda Hulse provided beautiful dulcimer music for the dinner hour.

## Lincoln is coming back.

Well, not Charles Damron as Lincoln, but the exhibit, "The Faces of Lincoln". The Starke County Historical Society has made special arrangements with the Indiana Historical Society to have this highly-rated exhibit displayed in the Starke County Henry F. Schricker Library in Knox, May 17 to June 21, 2010.

This impressive 600-square-foot exhibit offers three sections - "Developing the Image," "Creating the Image" and "Idealizing the Image."

Photography was invented just shortly before these images were taken and the exhibit is a timeline of photographic advancements showing daguerreotypes,

lithographs, stereographs, carte de visite, cabinet cards, tintypes, ambrotypes and portraits.

Lincoln's legend continues to grow, even 145 years after his death. His life has come to illustrate the American dream of rising from humble beginnings to the highest public office.

**Thanks** to the dozens and dozens of volunteers who have helped this past year, including the board members, exhibitors at the Ice Cream Social and those who helped at the Christmas open house. Almost 100 volunteers help the Society each year. We are especially indebted to those who keep the Museum open Tuesday through Friday, 12 – 4, Ann Shearin, Peg Brettin, June Golding, Lee Palmer, Mariann Gappa and Glendon Wilke.

Other volunteers are tour guides for the groups of students (over 300) who come to the Museum, Courthouse and Depot each year.

Thanks to Pioneer Floral and Gifts in Knox for the beautiful flowers for the tables at the Annual meeting.

The Ober Arbor Gleaners have met at the Museum several times. Thank you, Gleaners, for your generous gifts.

**While** we are giving thanks, we thank the County Commissioners, the County Council, Knox Community Schools and the City of Knox for their financial support of the Historical Society over the years. We also thank all of our members, not only for supporting the Society with their dues and volunteering, but also their generous contributions each year. We need these funds for the maintenance of the Museum, paying the utilities and developing programs. Again, thanks for your support. We really appreciate it.

Thanks to Hensler's Nursery for the beautiful Christmas tree holding the memorial ribbons each year. Toni Snearly made the ribbons and placed them on the tree. Wayne Emigh and Jim Shilling installed the lights and maintained the tree during the season.

Thanks also to the Town and Country Extension Homemakers Club and to First Stage Greenhouse for the summer flowers on the porch of the Museum.

## BASS LAKE – ROUND'N ABOUT IN THE PAST

This is a new book published this past summer about the history of Bass Lake. It was written by Pat Thomas, a resident of



**Bass Lake. There are more than 40 photos and a center-fold with a map of the lake locating many of the historic sites she has described in the book. It is a great book to use for a self-guided tour around Bass Lake. The books are \$15 and available at the Starke County Museum.**

## Courthouse Tours

Each year during Knox Harvest Days, held the last weekend in August, the Historical Society conducts tours of this century-old building. Students from the county schools are trained as tour guides. This year's students were Nathan Hankins, Graham Folkers, Brittne Rannells, John Strejc, and Alyssa Smrt. Over the past several years, about 4700 people have climbed the 157 steps to the top of this grand building to see the clock and bell and to view the county



landscape. We also offer tours of the Courthouse at other times of the year.

Our guests on one tour last summer were John Newman, Indiana Supreme Court Director of Information Management, and Tom Jones, Indiana Supreme Court Archivist. They were looking for local judicial photos for the State's archives. When they heard we had a large painting of Judge George Beeman in our museum, they arranged to drive from Indianapolis to take a picture of it. Former Starke County Judge Marvin McLaughlin was kind enough to loan his collection of judicial photos, from which our visitors made several copies. While they were here, they climbed all the way up to the clock room in the courthouse, to photograph that area. Both men have a keen interest in Indiana courthouses and were impressed with our Starke County Courthouse.

**Planning** --- Two years ago, the Starke County Historical Society Board of Directors appointed five of its members to a **Long Range Planning Committee**. Their mission was to

explore the future of the Historical Society and Museum. Just what will be expected of the Society and Museum in 5 years, or 25 – 50 years from now?

The Society's **Accessions Committee** evaluates donations of historic items offered to the Museum, and makes recommendations to the board. Many times decisions about accepting an item may be a tough call. Is the item truly historic to Starke County, and do we have room to store or display the item? Does it help to tell a story about Starke County?

If the answer is yes, where can we put the item? Decisions about photographs are usually easy – is the photograph about Starke County or the people of Starke County? Also, photographs do not take up much room and can easily be scanned into the computer. However, some items require a large area for storage or display. Example – farm machinery. Since Starke County has roots in agriculture, shouldn't we be telling the story of our agricultural heritage?

But where do we put a 1937 Allis-Chalmers threshing machine, or a 1924 corn binder?



The **Long Range Planning Committee** continues to study the challenges facing the Historical Society and its Museum, as the board attempts to answer the question, "How is the best way to preserve this great history of Starke County?"

## 3 Long-time Board Members Retire:

Thanks to the board members who have recently retired and have given of their time over the years: **Ruby Torok, Jim Hardesty, and Helen McCarty**. Ruby represented **North Bend Twp.**, Jim represented **Davis Twp.** and Helen was a representative of **Washington Township since the start of the Society in 1974.**

## 8 x 8 ROAD

We often complain about the condition of our county roads.

The early Starke County Commissioners' records tell about an "8 by 8 road". An 8 by 8 road specification was having



two 2x8-inch upright boards 8 feet apart to make a "form". Gravel was shoveled between the boards, leveled off, then horses would pull the form forward for the next load. As the form was pulled forward, the gravel would flow outward some and you would end up with about a 10- to 12-foot path (higher in the middle, of course). This gravel road was a lot better than the previous mud road where you picked a rut and stayed in it. This photo is from a movie - the car is not stuck, but moving quite well in "its rut".

## The Coal Furnace

Jerry Benz grew up in North Judson and later his family moved to Wanatah. He has written several articles of "recollections". The following is a portion of a "recollection" of his home heating system. ----

"Another aspect of a coal furnace was the handling of coal. Our coal was purchased from 'The Elevator'. They sold coal in two forms - that with primarily large chunks of coal (for conventional coal furnaces) and coal that was composed of uniform small chunks about 1-2 inches (for stoker furnace systems). Each also came with its own share of dust, and more dust formed each time it was moved. Coal was delivered to residences via a delivery truck equipped with a hoist so that the bed could be lifted and hence the coal (chunks as well as dust) could easily be dropped onto a small conveyer powered by a gasoline engine. The other end of the conveyer was placed through an opened basement window and the coal then dropped to the bottom of the "coal bin." In doing so, the dust permeated the entire basement."

"In our house there was a large floor register directly above the furnace. Other large diameter, and uninsulated, pipes carried heated air to other rooms on the main floor. There were also two ducts in

the main floor ceiling, which allowed warm air to pass through into each of the upstairs bedrooms. Also, the staircase leading to second floor had a door at the landing about half way up that was kept closed during the winter to maintain an adequate temperature on the main floor. The result was that the bedrooms for my sister and me were rather brisk during winter. On especially cold nights I recall going to bed by changing clothes downstairs, then rushing upstairs and diving completely under the covers. I would huddle up and not emerge until my body and breath had warmed up the bed sufficiently such that I was willing to stick my head out. In the morning, I would grab my clothes and run down the stairs to stand on the heat register where I dressed."

(Is this a memory for any of you?)

## Mark Your Calendars

**July 4, 2010**

**Ice Cream Social at the Museum**

**November 18, 2010**

**Starke County Historical Society Annual Meeting**

**December 5, 2010**

**Christmas Open House at the Museum**

## Starke County Historical Society Board of Directors:

Marvin Allen, Mary Ann Awald, Peg Brettin, Marvin McLaughlin, Alice Dolezal, Wayne Emigh, Marilyn Folkers, Ed Hasnerl, Erl Henry, Joe Kingsbury, Eli Roscka, Alan Selge, Jim Shilling, Donna Toth, Paul Sellers, Dolores Surfus, Clarabelle Troike, and Ken Whiles (shown below with Charles Damron at the annual meeting).



## Tidbits of Starke County History

**If you are not on our e-mail list (to receive special announcements and tidbits of Starke County history) and would like to be, call Jim Shilling 574-772-4311. All e-mails are sent Bcc (blind copy) so that**

**your e-mail address is not shown to others.**

**This newsletter has been sponsored by:**

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**Starke County Museum  
401 S. Main  
Knox, Indiana 46534**

574-772-5393