

The Quarterly Bulletin of the
RIPLEY COUNTY, INDIANA, HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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VOLUME XXVI

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NUMBER 1

The first meeting of the year will be held Sunday, January 9, at 2:00 PM at RCHS Archives Library on the west side of the Versailles Courthouse square. The program will be given by Jerry Wilson of Versailles who is fifth grade teacher at South Ripley Elementary School. In his desire to make history interesting for his students, Mr. Wilson developed a presentation about the Lewis & Clark expedition. He dresses in period costume to add drama to his program. Everyone is invited to attend.

Activities at the Archives:

- ▶ Our dear president, Alice McCoy, passed away in September, see memorial inside. Vice President, Betty Roepke has agreed to serve as President.
- ▶ Johnson Township Director, Christopher Meyer, resigned because of his busy work schedule and busy family life. We will miss him.
- ▶ A reminder to everyone seeking research help: Do not send your request by e-mail. We are not staffed sufficiently to handle all the e-mails. You must send your request in regular mail accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped, large envelope and a check for \$3 for each family name requested, you will be billed for the copying cost and any extra postage when material is sent. Also, be sure to send enough information for us to be sure we know the person on whom, you are requesting information.

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE:

Ripley County History, Volume I	\$65
Ripley County History, Volume II	55
Brown Township Tales by Alan F. Smith	20
Tales of Versailles by Alan F. Smith	16
Vintage Postcards of Ripley County by Alan Smith	20
Brown Township Cemetery Index	10
Johnson Township Cemetery Index	10
Flat Rock Cemetery Index	5

Mailing fees added for all books shipped.

Your membership expires on December 31 of the year shown on your mailing label. Check to make certain your dues are paid up-to-date. If not, mail your renewal to RCHS or to Beatrice Boyd, Treasurer, P.O. Box 83, Holton, IN 47023

Dues:

New memberships are \$10.00 for the first year.

Renewals are \$5.00 per year thereafter.

Life memberships are \$100

GOD BLESS AMERICA IN 2005!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

In Memory of Alice McCoy

We lost Alice, our beloved president, on September 30, 2004. Alice became an RCHS Director from Brown Township in 1981. The next year she accepted the job as Secretary and in April, 1997 became President of the Society. Alice did everything very well, and she excelled as President. She was very pleasant and courteous to everyone and had a knack for soothing ruffled feathers and keeping things running smoothly. Alice was willing to give her time and energy to help in any way she was needed especially with genealogy research. She knew so many people in the county and a lot about our history. In her lifetime Alice had many interests. She worked with her husband in their business and other various jobs throughout her career. She was a faithful member of the St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Olean, Indiana. She was a member of the Home Economic Club serving as an officer on local, county and state level. Alice was an accomplished cook and served as judge for many cooking contests.



Alice and her husband, R. C. McCoy, were the parents of two daughters, Pamela Wygant and Peggy Ehlers. They owned and operated the Versailles Implement Company in Olean for several years. R. C. preceded her in death in 1973. Alice's love for her God, family and fellowman was evident all her life. She faced her death with the great strength she had faced her life. Alice was a wonderful example for all of us who had the privilege of knowing and working with her. Alice will always be a precious memory in our hearts.

MINUTES OF THE RIPLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - October 10, 2004

The Ripley County Historical Society Met October 10, 2004 with 25 members and guests present The minutes were read and corrected, There are no civil war veterans in the Smith Dickey Cemetery as reported in minutes.

Norris Krall gave a very good memorial on Alice McCoy. Her knowledge and leadership will be missed very much.

Bea Boyd gave the Treasurers report. \$7537.00 was spent from the Advantage account for the new Furnace. Treasurer's report accepted as read.

The furnace is in; the existing boiler serves two zones, the ground floor front and the ground floor rear which is the addition with the basement stairway. There is a thermostat for each zone.

A question was raised about a book by Minnie Wycoff; Sue was to check with Library.

Helen gave a report on UGRR and the Freedom Trail markers. The Boy Scouts helped with the signs. Osgood is to have Sesquicentennial in 2006. James Cravens, an abolitionist, will also be honored. We may work with Rising Sun for history on Cravens. Boy Scouts also did work on the Masonic marker in Versailles.

Karyl Schmidt presented our program on French architecture and early times in Adams Township. The Indiana Historical Society has list of buildings from the area that are on their files from the area. Also the DNR has maps available. She presented slides of historical places in the area and the ancestral heritage of Jacob Altenberger. He ran a huckster route in the area; also his house was on Morgan's raid route. An interesting program. Books available, Early times in Adams Township, Morgan's Trail through Ripley County, and Looking back by Mildred Boelke.

Next meeting, January the 9th, 2005. Meeting adjourned, refreshments were served by Johnson Township.

Betty Roepke, President

Henry Walker, Secretary

QUILT STORIES

My grandmother made quilts. Since she was born in 1855, I suppose most every pioneer girl was taught to quilt and save every last scrap of material. She told me that Grandpa had come from the store and had a bundle of yardgoods for her. He was tired of seeing her working with such little pieces. She said the material was stiff and not good for quilting--but it was the thought that counted.

In our home, my sister quilted for her hope chest. One was "Field of Diamond" and a Sunflower applique in Yellow, brown and green. This was in late 1930's. She was married in Sept , 1939.

Our church had a missionary Society meeting all day, once a month. They would quilt for people. I believe they would receive $1\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ a yard. One lady, Jessie McClure was in charge of getting the quilts in the frame. She was the most beautiful quilter I have ever seen. She had done this for many years and decided it was time to resign. Another member, Minnie Gross said she would if someone would help her. I volunteered with the condition that she would teach me since I was willing to learn.. So she taught me how to put the quilt in the frames.

I bought a set of frames at an auction for \$2.50 and was able to do quilting for myself. First, I did a Dresden Plate but my favorite was the Flower Garden. I pieced it all by hand while traveling with my husband who was on construction. I have blocks in it from all over. It took 2 years to complete and won a blue ribbon at the Versailles Pumpkin Show.

I had a Double Wedding Ring that my Sister -in-law quilted. We were visiting my Father-in-law and he was sending the top to GoodWill. He said "It's just a rag". This quilt I gave to my granddaughter.

Thinking on quilts, a page would not cover all the stories but I do want to mention that I have the quilt made by my husband's mother, Julie Boyd. She died in the Flu epidemic of 1919. He was just 2 years old.

BY Bea Boyd

JEFFERSON PROVING GROUND - 2004 UPDATE

In the late 1930's, Hitler's army was ravishing Europe and it became clear that he intended to rule the world. In order to preserve Freedom, the United States began to amass a well equipped army. A place was needed for the army to test the munitions used by the weapons of war. An area in southern Indiana was selected. It included 55,264 acres of land from three counties, Ripley, Jennings, and Jefferson. In this area were several schools: Kingwood, Whitehall, Bethel, Perkin, Marble Corner, Antioch, Schwartz, Marble Valley, Big Creek, Woods, Baxter, Liberty; churches: Bethel Baptist, Big Creek Methodist, Liberty Christian, Marble Corner Methodist, Marble Corner Pilgrim Holiness, Monroe Presbyterian, Otter Creek Baptist, Marble Valley Methodist, St. Magdalene Catholic and several cemeteries, the graves were moved to different locations in the three involved counties. This list is probably not complete. Over 400 families had to move from their homes. Also included in the proving ground was the Old Timbers Lodge, a week-end resort of Alexander Thompson, a businessman from Cincinnati. The Lodge has been preserved over all these years. The Jefferson Proving Ground under the Army's Test and Evaluation Command was completed in 1941 and planes, flares and noise became part of the lives of the people living in the surrounding communities.

Jefferson Proving Ground served our country and community well. More than 21 million rounds of ammunition were tested there and the operation provided work for hundreds of local people. No doubt it played a big part in helping to win WWII and preserve our Freedom. As the passing of time brought advancement in aircraft and weapons the government decided, in the 1980's, the Jefferson Proving Ground was no longer needed for testing. The Dept. of Army retained ownership of most of the land, with development and management put under

the control of the Dept. of Interior. Striving to serve our country and community, the land has been put into the following uses: Part of the land is considered contaminated with explosives and has been permanently closed to the public; About 2000 acres of land suitable for farming in the southern section, is in the process of being transferred to private ownership; A small Jefferson County Park has been developed at Krueger Lake; An area of 400 acres in the SW section has been set aside for a Forest Reserve; The Indiana National Guard has a training ground called Jefferson Range consisting of over 1000 acres in the center section; The Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge consisting of 50,000 acres of land was developed. This refuge sponsors controlled deer hunting in a section of the Northeastern part of the proving ground and allows fishing in Old Timbers Lake. The refuge is also opened for visitors and guided tours.

Article from Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge & Big Oaks Conservation Society newsletter by Ken Knouf.

Stone Arch Bridges at Big Oaks

Visitors to Big Oaks are initially exposed to the stone-arch bridges as they view the safety video, but most are caught off guard by the splendor of these wonderfully crafted limestone structures when they first cross them. Having traveled over miles of simple, narrow, and sometimes rough gravel roads, typically the first reaction people might have are those of wonder and disbelief.

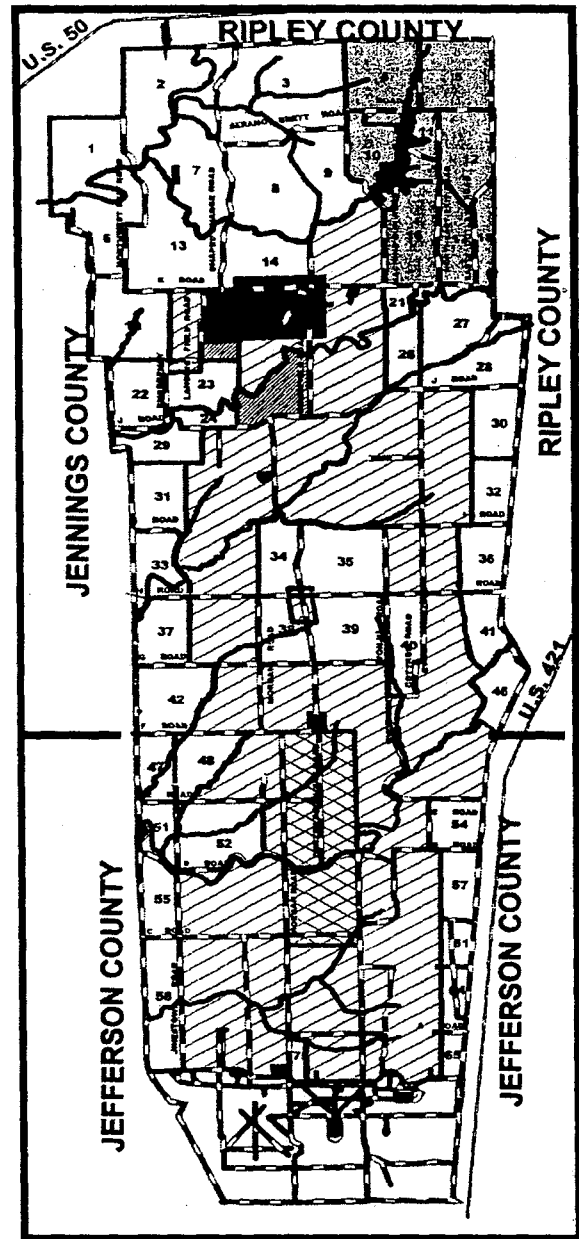
Four stone-arch bridges are found on the refuge, and all are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The most familiar is the double-arch Collin's Ford Bridge that crosses Big Graham Creek, on the way to Old Timbers Lake. This structure was constructed in 1907 for \$2,775. It was originally intended to carry traffic between New Marion and Butlerville.

Marble Creek Bridge, located on G Rd. 1 1/4 miles east of West Perimeter, is a single arch limestone bridge constructed in 1905, designed to provide easy access over Marble Creek in Shelby Township as residents travel to and from Marble Corner, but little is known about its construction.

The most impressive bridges are the two triple-archers, the Benville Bridge over Graham Creek on J Road and the Edward's Ford Bridge over Otter Creek on Northwest Exit Road. After local resident Ulmer Smith petitioned the county for a crossing over Graham Creek, Charles W. Miller engineered the Benville Bridge. As with all of the stone-arch bridges, local materials were to be used. Construction of the bridge was contracted to Thomas Brolley, who submitted a bid of \$5,194.35. The bridge took less than a year to construct and was completed December 24, 1908. What a spectacular Christmas present it must have been to the residents of Bethel and the surrounding area.

Last, but certainly not least, is the 194 feet long Edward's Ford Bridge. It was also designed by Mr. Charles W. Miller. Construction of this three-arched structure was contracted to Harry Harmon, who worked on it from 1909 through 1911 for \$6,664.50. Rumor has it that some of the stone came directly out of Otter Creek. Visitors can still see evidence of the quarrying along the stream.

These bridges exist in dramatic contrast to the simple roads developed throughout the region. It was certainly fortunate to the US Army that they did. As you cross any of the bridges, take note of the load limit signs. Who would have ever thought that these wonderful and aesthetic masterpieces designed to carry wagons and Model T's would someday carry 60-ton tanks when Jefferson Proving Ground was in operation, with absolutely no problem. Today they serve as locations of solitude and beauty, and with a little maintenance, these bridges should be around for hundreds of years.



Big Oaks Wildlife Refuge
 1661 West JPG Niblo Road,
 Madison, IN 47250
 phone: 812-273-0780 –
 E-mail: bigoaks@fws.gov
 Public use of refuge is limited to Mondays,
 Fridays and the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of
 each month from mid-April through
 November from 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM.
 Guided tours by special arrangement.
 Sources: Dr. Joseph Robb, Refuge
 Manger, Big Oaks website & newsletter,
 Bea Boyd who submitted Ken Knouf's
 article, and the Kralls from RCHS records.



Versailles, IN 47042

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