

The Quarterly Bulletin of the  
Ripley County, Indiana, Historical Society, Inc.  
Library – 125 Washington Street  
Museum – Corner of Main and Water Streets  
Versailles, Indiana 47042

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VOLUME XXXII

July 2011

NUMBER 3

▲ The Ripley Co. Historical Society will meet Sunday July 10, at 2:00 Ice Cream Social at the Versailles Courthouse lawn. Brown Twp. is providing cookies and directors are providing the ice cream.

▲ Research \$5.00 for non-members, and \$.50 per page copied.

▲ The WWII War Veterans book, titled LEST WE FORGET, is still available. It can be obtained for \$35 at (1) Batesville Historical Society which is located on George Street next to the Post Office (during its open hours), (2) the Osgood Museum on South Buckeye Street (on Friday or Saturday afternoons) or in Versailles at the Ripley County Historical Society Library on the west side of the Courthouse Square (open every weekday afternoon from 1 to 4). Also, LEST WE FORGET can be ordered for shipment by mail for \$40. Checks should be made payable to Ripley County Historical Society. We give our heartfelt thanks to Joan and Norris Krall.

▲ Members that are willing to receive the newsletter via email instead of postal mailing can do so by emailing RCHS with your request along with your email address. The email for sending your request is printed above.

Windows have been replaced in the RCHS Library. If you wish to donate \$250.00 for a window in your name, a memorial, or in honor of a loved one, send your donation and request to RCHS on the address below. A plaque will be made with the honored names inscribed. The windows have been installed. The difference in utilities cost are already showing. There is still time for donations.

The RCHS Archives Library is open for public research weekdays 1 – 4 pm, except holidays, Pumpkin Show week, also the week before and between Christmas and New Year. The Library will also be closed during inclement weather. The Museum will be closed for the winter months.

Questions call 812-689-3031

Mail your renewal for 2011 to RCHS at P.O. Box 525, Versailles, IN 47042

Dues: Annual \$15; Life \$150.

**THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE:**

<i>Ripley County History, Volume 1</i>	\$65	<i>Versailles, IN School Life 1818-1966</i>	\$ 20
<i>Brown Twp. Tales</i> by Alan Smith	20	<i>Osgood, IN Sesquicentennial 1856-2006</i>	17
<i>Tales of Versailles</i> by Alan Smith	16	<i>Come Visit</i> by Jean McClellan	25
<i>Vintage Postcards</i> by Alan Smith	20	<i>Jackson Township Cemetery Index</i>	13
<i>Brown Township Cemetery Index</i>	10	<i>Johnson Township Cemetery Index</i>	10
<i>Milan, Indiana, A Storied Past</i>	16	<i>Lest We Forget WWII</i>	35
<i>Broken Wings</i> , By Robert Kelly	20	<i>Assorted Jefferson Proving Ground Books</i>	
Shipping Charges added for all books	5		

# RIPLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINUTES

April 10, 2011

The spring quarterly meeting was called to order by President Cheryl Welch at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, April 10, 2011. Cheryl led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance, after which the attendees identified themselves by name and township of residence. Secretary Frank Keenan read the minutes of the winter quarterly meeting, which were approved as read. President Welch noted that Treasurer Owen Menchhofer was out for town, but had reported to her that all bills incurred by RCHSL since the winter quarterly meeting had been timely paid.

Cheryl reported with great sadness that Franklin Township Director Esther Edmondson had passed away. In addition to her recent service as a Director, Esther had made many other valuable contributions to the Society's work over the years. A donation in her memory was made by the Society to St. Paul's Cemetery.

President Welch's update on the status of the Commemorative Archive's Building Window Replacement Program noted that donations of \$250.00 for thirteen (13) of the thirty-two (32) windows have been received. Cheryl reminded us that a donor can designate anyone they choose to be memorialized in a Plaque to be on permanent display at the Archives Building.

Delaware Township Director Lois Workman replaced Esther Edmondson as Chair of the Nominating Committee. Lois reported the Committee's slate as follows: for a three (3) year term as a Director—Laughery Township—Helen Decker; Otter Creek Township—Michael Stratton; Shelby Township—Cheryl Welch; and Washington Township—Henry Walker. The slate's candidates expressed their willingness to serve. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed to accept the Nominating Committee's slate.

Mike Stratton reported that two of the Society-sponsored historic markers have been vandalized and need replacement, and suggested that the Board seek a grant from, for example, RCCF, to cover all or part of the replacement costs. Mike suggested that a reward for the arrest and conviction of the vandals be considered, along with publicity to the effect that historic markers contain no metal, and are not redeemable for cash.

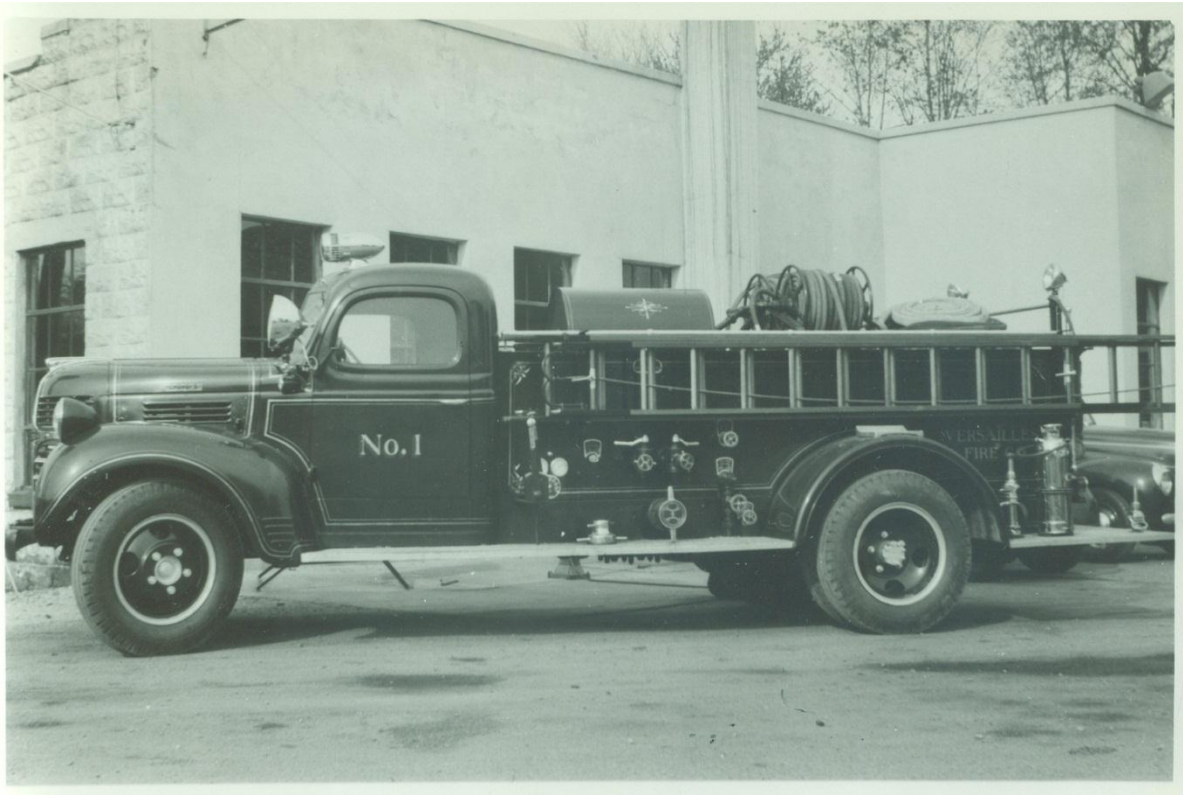
Cheryl reported that Mike Moore with Jefferson Proving Ground has offered the Society copies of its books for sale at the Archives Building for a 40% commission or \$12.00/book. On behalf of the Society, Cheryl accepted Mike's offer.

The Society will sponsor an ice cream social at the July 10<sup>th</sup> summer meeting. Brown Township will be responsible for additional refreshments.

Sandy Meisberger stated that due to concerns about theft, vandalism, and the personal safety of volunteer workers, two people are needed to be on duty at the Archive's Building when it is open to the public.

Following the business meeting, Mrs. Hartman from Adams Township shared with us her passion for professional doll making, explaining the many time-consuming steps and skills involved, such as mold preparation, kiln firing, face painting, and dressmaking, among others. Recently Ms. Hartman received two best-of-show awards at a Tri-State doll show. Following her presentation the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Frank Keenan, Secretary



WALTER SMITH DEALER  
VERSAILLES FIRE TRUCK



1886 Osgood Rumsey Pumper

## FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN RIPLEY COUNTY BY TOM KRUMM

The first organized fire department in the United States (The Union Fire Company in Philadelphia, PA.) was started by Benjamin Franklin in 1736. George Washington was a volunteer fireman in Alexandria, Virginia as a member of the "Friendship Veterans Fire I Company. Today, there are 585 fire departments in the state of Indiana; 428 of these departments are volunteer departments. In addition, 99 more volunteer departments have at least one paid fireman and there are only 58 fully paid fire departments.

In Ripley County, Indiana, there are currently 10 departments (Batesville, Delaware, Friendship, Holton, Milan, Morris, Napoleon, New Marion, Osgood, Sunman, and Versailles. There is a very little history recorded about these life and property saving organizations. Except for the fire chief at Batesville and an arrangement in that department that allows firemen be paid when called, the departments in our county are maintained by volunteers with no pay. WOW! The state of Indiana requires at least 70 hours of training before you can be called a fireman. Each department can encourage their members to spend even more training time. Versailles requires their firemen to complete at least 120 hours in training.

The average number of active firemen at a post in our county is around 20 which means up to 400 of your neighbors have volunteered to help you out when needed. When was the last time you thanked a volunteer fireman? If you don't remember, now is the time for you to go out of your way to do this. The one thing the local departments don't worry about is taking the time to record their valuable contributions of time and energy.

In 1853, Cincinnati, Ohio became the first paid fire department in the USA. One hundred fifty eight years later, some of your neighbors are giving you their protection for free! Can you think of another group of people who do this?

My intention is to write a comprehensive history of the Ripley County fire departments. It didn't take me long to find out volunteer firemen are doers and do not focus on recording a history of their fine work. After giving this some thought, I decided it would be better to give you a partial history of our fire departments than none at all. This is truly a record of the neighbors helping their neighbor. I would appreciate receiving additional history that you may have so we can support this very valuable asset ([thkrumm@hotmail.com](mailto:thkrumm@hotmail.com)) 4585 E. County Road 650 S. Versailles, Indiana.

In 1860, Holton had a major fire that destroyed 3 houses, 2 stores, 2 saloons, a drug store, and a warehouse. Versailles had a meeting to discuss a fire department in 1868. In 1871, they purchased a chemical fire cart with a 55 gallon tank for \$500. Before that they were limited to using the bucket brigade method using leather buckets. Today Versailles has 26 active firemen. They receive financial support primarily from grants. During the day they also cover the Holton area because the firemen in Holton have jobs in other locations. Versailles has 400 calls per year. They are looking for more volunteers, especially people who are working in the Versailles Area.

In 1885, the Union Furniture Company and a few houses in Batesville were destroyed. On April 6, 1887, they purchased a two handled pump that took 16 men to operate. The Batesville fire chief is a full time paid employee and is the only full time paid fire department employee.

On September 19, 1885, the Napoleon Fire Company was started. Initiation was \$1.00 each and there was a 10 cent fine if you missed a meeting without a good excuse. A used 4,000 pound

pumper truck was purchased for \$40.25. On March 28, 1892, a 20 ft. by 12 ft. cistern was built for \$6.00. In March of 1899, the first firehouse was built for \$84.14, including labor.

On May 20, 1885, Osgood's town board met and approved a purchase of ten ladders for \$25.00. On May 20, 1886, the town approved purchasing a hand powered Rumsey Company engine for \$800. The pumper was moved to the fire by horse or man power.

The Sunman Rural Fire Association was formed in 1886 and the first firehouse was built in 1902. Milan started in 1908 with buckets and a chemical tank mounted on a hand drawn cart. Friendship opened their fire department in 1914. Delaware opened up in 1978.

New Marion Fire Department formed on May 23, 1972. They borrowed \$500. from Frances Welch to have enough to pay for a fire truck. This Loan was repaid on June 1, 1972. A land lot was donated by Ben Webb and construction on the new firehouse began on October 7, 1972. The New Marion Fire Dept. was started after a large 2 story store building burned in April 1972 and it almost took 3 homes with it. Charles Meisberger, age 16, went to all residents in New Marion and got enough donations to buy their first fire truck. On October 10, 1972 at 10:25, New Marion Fire Dept. received their first fire alarm. A large pile of tires were stacked in the street next to the home of Mollie Fox and was set on fire by vandals. On December 22, 1972, the home of Sherman Allen caught fire and the New Marion Fire Dept. was able to contain the fire until Versailles Fire Dept. arrived to assist in putting out the fire. Fire damage was minor but the smoke damage was extensive.

The Friendship Volunteer Fire Department was formally organized in 1914. From 1868 to 1914, local men had informal group activities that sponsored manual methods of fire protection. On December 23, 1982, Robert Kerman was killed while performing his duties as a volunteer fireman. As far as we know, he is the only fatality in the Ripley County volunteer fire departments. The Sieverding family has had seven members in the family do volunteer fireman work. The Jeffries family, also have four family members volunteered in the Friendship Fire Department.

Versailles Fire Department, (District 9) is the training center for volunteer firemen for twelve Indiana counties. Ripley County is obviously above average in the volunteer fire department field. Volunteer firemen in our county donate thousands of hours each year to their neighbors. We need to support them by guiding our children to be volunteers. We also need to support these organizations by attending their fund raising activities.

# County, Indiana, Historical

Ripley



Society

## OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

Adams Twp. – Mrs. Betty Roepke; 9644 E Co Rd 1300 N, Sunman, IN 47041	Vice President
Brown Twp. - Mr. Frank Keenan, 3241 E State Rd 62, Cross Plains, IN 47017	Secretary
Center Twp. - Mr. Charles Wm. Gloyd, P.O. Box 195, Osgood, IN 47037	
Delaware Twp. - Mrs. Lois Workman; 4823 N Co Rd 350 E, Osgood, IN 47037	
Franklin Twp. -	
Jackson Twp. - Mr. Delbert Abplanalp; 4543 W Co Rd 800 N, Osgood, IN 47037	
Johnson Twp. - Mr. Owen Menchhofer, 1970 N Co Rd 300 W, Holton, IN 47023	Treasurer
Laughery Twp. - Mrs. Helen Decker; 314 Crestview Lane, Batesville, IN 47006	
Otter Creek Twp. – Mr. Michael Stratton, 4300 W. U.S. 50, Holton, IN 47023	
Shelby Twp. - Mrs. Cheryl Welch; 6453 S Co Rd 225 W, Versailles, IN 47042	President
Washington Twp. - Mr. Henry Walker; 1721 N Co Rd 575 E, Milan, IN 47031	
Director at Large - Mrs. Sandra Meisberger, 4662 W. Co. Rd. 450 S. Versailles, IN 47042	
Lori Hoffman; 5565 E. Lower Dry Fork Rd. Madison, IN 47250	Web Master
Sandra Meisberger & Cheryl Welch	Newsletter Committee

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