

The Quarterly Bulletin
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 XXXIII

October 2012

Number 4

▲ The Ripley Co. Historical Society will meet Sunday, October 14, at 2:00 at the Archive Library on the west side of Versailles Courthouse Square. The program for our next meeting will be given by Tom Krumm on The Underground Railroad. Refreshments will be provided by Johnson Twp. members.

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

▲ 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, (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 week-day 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 has been made with the honored names inscribed and is on display at RCHSL. There is still time for donations and room for more honored names on the plaque.

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. **NOTICE:** The Museum will be open Sunday Afternoons 2-4 p.m. starting June 3rd through Pumpkin Show Saturday Sep 29th. Questions call 812-689-3031.

NOTICE: 2012 Yearly Dues are due in January 2012.

Mail your renewal for 2012 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>Vintage Postcards</i> by Alan Smith	20
<i>Jackson Township Cemetery Index</i>	13	<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
SECRETARY MINUTES
July 8 2012

The summer quarterly meeting was held at the Society's Archive Building, 125 Washington Street, Versailles, on July 8, 2012, and was called to order by President Cheryl Welch at 2:00 p.m. Cheryl commenced the meeting by leading those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the quarterly spring meeting were read by Secretary Frank Keenan, and were approved as read. Treasurer Owen Menchofer distributed a monthly Income and Expenses Report through June 2012, and highlighted some of the entries, which Report was passed out to attendees and approved by them as written.

Cheryl reported that the dehumidifier in the Archives Building basement, vital to the maintenance and preservation of the books and documents stored there, had to be replaced. We anticipate receiving a rebate toward the cost of the replacement dehumidifier. Following up on Tom Krumm's suggestion for stirring up sentiment for taking better care of the County's heritage cemeteries, attendees were informed that the Trustees of each Township are allocated monies for cemetery maintenance. Sandy Meisberger, Owen Menchofer, and Tom Krumm each reported that various efforts have recently been made with respect to better maintenance and record keeping for cemeteries in New Marion, Osgood, and Versailles. For example, a stone worker contractor has recently been hired to repair a half-dozen or so early settlers' tombstones in St. Magdalene's Cemetery.

Cheryl reminded all that volunteers at the Archive Building are still needed, and that the WWII Memorial Book is still available for sale. President Welch also advised that eighteen (18) memorial windows for the Archives have been donated to date.

Following the business meeting, Betty Roepke presented an interesting program on the American tradition of quilt making. Betty displayed a "Butterfly" quilt she had made. It was especially beautiful, revealing exceptional sewing and quilt making skills and her keen eye for beauty. Josephine Keenan displayed two quilts given to her by her grandmother, one a colorful "Star of Bethlehem" quilt, and the other a "Sunbonnet Sue" quilt. At the spring meeting, Cheryl Welch displayed a great "Crazy Quilt" passed down to her, which was a favorite pattern of our ancestors, one which doubtless arose from their underlying ethic of "waste not, want not", and which included every scrap of good cloth.

Following the program everyone stuck around for the pitch-in homemade ice cream social, and Jackson Township's accompanying goodies. Umm, umm, good! Johnson Township will be responsible for refreshments following the fall meeting on October 14, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Keenan, Secretary

THE HARDING HOME

Taken from Ripley County
In Vintage Postcards
By Alan F. Smith



HARDING HOMESTEAD. The Harding homestead was located in Old, or possibly North Milan. Stephen Harding lived here in his youthful years. The homestead was Station #7 in the Underground Railway system. A red front door designated that it was a stop for runaway slaves. Harding gave an abolition speech at the Ripley County Courthouse, which at the time was so unpopular that a crowd of men intended to hang him. Had it not been for the women of the town, Harding would have met a bad end. Harding later became the first governor of the state of Utah. This home survives to this day. (Photograph by unknown photographer.)

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN RIPLEY COUNTY

By Tom Krumm

A few weeks ago, I noticed the Underground Railroad display board in the front room of our Historical Library. I noticed one of the routes in our county went from the Ohio River to Laughery Creek to Raccoon Creek west of Friendship, and I thought I had better learn more about this route since we are one of many caretakers of the route. There were several other routes in our county as well. One

route went to Raccoon Creek up to the Steyer (Stier) safe house near Olean, Indiana. My wife and I own property on Raccoon Creek west of Friendship, and I thought I had better learn more about this route since we are one of many caretakers of this route. Our whole country is in the process of remembering the Civil War which started 151 years ago. There is a lot of Civil War history in our county.

There were at least seventeen underground routes in our county between 1830 and 1864. One went from Rising Sun to Old Milan. Another route went from Madison to Otter Creek on the border of Jennings County. On May 15, 2004, historical plaques were placed in honor of these two routes by a group of historians including our Helen Einhaus. This group also produced three poster board presentations of the Underground Railroad activity in our county. These boards are in our library at 125 Washington Street in Versailles. The Ripley county Tourism Bureau also has a brochure showing five motor tours of the Underground Railroad routes in our county.

I discovered a book published by the Dept. of Natural Resources, a division of the National Park Service ("Southeastern Indiana's Underground Railroad Routes and Operation"). Page 84 shows the Raccoon Creek to Olean route and it mentions there was a black church on Raccoon Creek and a free black community!

There was an Evangelical Lutheran Church west of our place which burnt down in 1870. There is also the related Ellerman Cemetery along the creek as well. The 1883 Atlas map of Brown Township in our library shows there was a "Cl'rd Baptist Church" just west of the Ellerman Cemetery. There is no record of a black Raccoon Creek cemetery in our library cemetery book for Brown Township. The local people I contacted had never heard of this church.

The deeper I dug the more I realized how little I know on this subject. The first black slaves arrived in this country in 1619! They were called indentured servants until Massachusetts made a law in 1641 and classified them as slaves. By 1755 all 13 colonies adopted this law! The indentured servants that were originally imported also included whites. Provisions were made to allow the white indentured servants to join society as equals on a regular basis. Black slaves were considered property similar to cows or pigs. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had slaves to help them maintain their households. Slaves were not allowed to go to school as their future purpose was to do manual labor on farms or in houses.

George Washington had over 100 black slaves and Thomas Jefferson had over 200 black slaves! They kept them to help maintain their large Virginia estates until they died. There were approximately 5,000 black slaves who fought in our War for Independence. Many were classified as "Free Blacks" in return for their service to our country. After the war, they settled in both the north and the south.

In 1810 there were 393 free blacks and 237 black slaves inside the Indiana territory. At least two and as many as five free black families ultimately made it to the Raccoon Creek valley! Henry Green and Moses Green were given their freedom by their owner William Thompson. They helped established a colored Baptist Church on Raccoon Creek, but its history has disappeared as well as the black families on the creek. Over 100,000 blacks came north on the Underground Railroad routes, and many of them continued going north until they reached Canada. Slaves were always illegal in Canada and this is why they went into Canada. It took the Civil War to make them illegal in the U.S.

As you know, our country was split on the subject of slavery until well after the end of the Civil War. The 2010 U.S. Census showed there were 609,477 blacks in Indiana out of 6,483,802 people in our state. Most of them are located in or near Indianapolis or Gary.

A large part of the Underground Railroad involved the Ohio River. In the winter time the river was covered with ice and it was the easiest time for the slaves to crossover to the North. Roads were scarce in the 1830's and 1840' so they would travel up creek beds at night and stay hidden in a safe house or barn during the day. Dogs would also lose their trail when they walked in creek water as well. Please share what you know with me. My phone number is: 812-668-4736

County, Indiana, Historical

Ripley



Society

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