With either method you use be sure to clean the stone before you leave. It's a good idea to carry a couple gallons of water in the car with you to have on hand for this purpose. Be sure to pick up any trash you may have dropped and leave the cemetery is as good a shape as you found it if not better.

Remember, searching old cemeteries can be fun with the proper precautions and equipment. It can also be a valuable source of information not found anywhere else.

Face Lifting Won't Hide Mass Lynching

By RALPH KRAMER Staff Reporter 1970

VERSAILLES, Ind. — They're redoing the old Ripley County Courthouse here, tearing out the innards, sandblasting the brick and painting the clock tower.

But face lifting or not, the building that echoed to the hoofbeats of Morgan's Raiders more than 100 years ago and later reflected the sights and sounds of this town's most horrifying night still will haunt folks hereabouts.

The county is spending almost \$400,000 to remodel the austere structure it built in 1860 for \$16,250. While county business is carried on in an office a block away and Judge William D. Schroder holds circuit court in the American Legion hall, local folks still wonder what the old walls would say if they could talk about the night of Sept. 15, 1897.

That's when five men were hanged from the branches of a nearby elm tree.

Boldest Ever

It was the biggest, boldest mass vigilante execution in Indiana history, and months later, after several investigations, one of the dead men got the blame.

While the courthouse stood silent that night, its tall windows gleaming, dozens of men converged on the jail a block away, beat and shot five prisoners, dragged them 200 yards to the tree and strung them up.

Does anybody still talk about the lynching?

"Not much," said Judge Schroder.

Nobody ever admitted to being part of the mob. And after 74 years, nobody is expected to pop up now.

Families of some of the victims still live here, however, and if the wounds have healed, the scars are still there.

What may rankle most is the report to Gov. James A. Mount by then state Atty. Gen. William A. Ketchem, who personally investigated the lynching, which placed the blame on one Lyle

stolen a revolver from a pawn shop, returned, broke back into jail and shot and killed Henry Schuter and William Jenkins.

All this while five armed guards slept.

The official report says Levi then must have dragged the men to the tree, hanged them, returned to jail for James B. Andrews and Clifford Gordon, took them out and strung them up.

"And then, in order that suspicion might be directed against innocent men, he finally hung himself," the report said.

"His nefarious conduct in attempting to distract attention from himself and divert suspicion to the good citizens of Osgood, Napoleon, Milan and Versailles . . . is the more reprehensible as apparently nothing in his life so became him as the leaving of it."

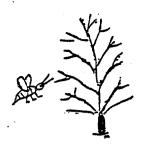
Four of the victims were charged with burglarizing a general store southwest of Versailles.

The fifth was accused of breaking into an Osgood harber shop.

The old jail and the hanging tree are both gone, and now they're putting a new face on the courthouse.

Historical markers noting that Morgan's Raiders looted the county treasury and a Masonic hall on the second floor of the courthouse the afternoon of July 12, 1863, will remain on the sleepy square here, but there's nothing to remind folks of the lynching.

"Some things you'd just as soon forget," said Judge Schroder.



I was fortunate to be oncof the County Historians This has been a busy quarter. who received a scholarship to attend the Cornelius O'Brien Conference on Historic Preservation by Indiana University Conference Bureau Sept. 30 and Octl, 1994 at Madison, In. The Registration and First Session was held at Clifty Inn at Clifty Falls State Park. The weather had also been ordered and it was perfect. We were given a map so the location of events could be easily located. I attended the sessions at Windle \hbar Auditorium. (The last time I had been there it was a Christian Church.) Sessions were* "Main Street Past, Present and Future", " River Communities", REburial of Human remains and artifacts from Archaeological Sites" Historic Landscape Preservation at Brown Auditorium and a Tour of the town and also to Eleutherian College at Lancaster which is being restored. There was a 2 hour cruise on the Bonnie Belle, but after 2 days of intense meetings I was ready to head for home. Madison is a charming town and has preserved much of its past. I can remember, as a child, going to Madison and as we were coming down the hill Mother said "There is the ferry" I looked all around and never did see the fairy. Everyone else acted like they saw so I didn't say anything. Then they built the bridgeover the river it was to be paid for with a toll fee. Even after the bridge was paid for they still charged toll. I guess someone decided it had been taxed enough and it became a free bridge. Much like taxes, once they are on it is difficult to get rid of them. *I only listed ones I attended.

On Sat 6th November, I attended the County Historian Breakfast at the IHS conference at Indianapolis. I attended the Family History sessions, both morning and afternoon. They were by Robert Horton, State Archives and John Frederick DormanIII from Fredericksburg, Va. "The Business climate_in_Indiana" was given by kkeynote speaker, Morton J. Marcus, director of Indiana Research Center. Certificates were awarded to owners of business recently included in IHS Business Register. These are Businesses being in existence over 100 years. At the present time the list is over 135.

The Museum and archives have been very busy this summer and fall. And the Mail!

Lately we have received so many letters with our old box # that we havent used for 10 years I wonder where it is coming from? They really stand out for the PO slaps a yellow tag on each letter.

This should have been done, but theelectric was off for 2 hours and it is a cloudy day. They had to use a flashlight at the Postoffice. They had gone modern and closed up all the windows.

A note to folks interested in Jefferson Proving Ground. They have fired their last round of fire. The planes still fly over and will indefinitely.

Elsie Menan sent some comments in a letter to me that she thought may be of interest. I am passing one article on to you.

Stephen W. Bruce s/o Stephen and Lucinda McIntire Bruce, served in Co F., In INfantry 09041862 to 06011865. Union pension certificate 421-992. He married Amanda Skinner. Their children 1854 Amor m Mary/Mollie Ruby

1856 Elizabeth m William Salyers

1858 Mary Jane m. Alfred Salvers

1866 Ida M. Ezra Rayner later William Fuller

1875 Nora died young.

Stephen Bruce had a farm near Poston-Dabney. Ottercreek Twp , R, C

Send your queries to Mrs. Don Boyd PO Box 83, HOlton, In 47023