

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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▲ **Quarterly Meeting**

The Ripley Co. Historical Society will meet **Sunday, April 14th, at 2:00 pm** at the Archive Library on the West side of Versailles Courthouse Square. The program will be given by Cheryl Welch on Stephen Harding Home.

▲ **Library Hours**

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 on Sunday Afternoons 2-4 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day & on Pumpkin Show Saturday Sep. 29th. Questions call 812-689-3031.

NOTICE: 2019 Yearly Dues are due in January 2019. Mail your renewal for 2019 to RCHS at P.O. Box 525, Versailles, IN 47042 Dues: Annual \$15; Life \$150.

▲ **Research**

Research is free to all members and \$7.00 for non-members. Copies/scans are \$1.00 per page for everyone and can be sent via email or in paper form. To take pictures of copies a \$2.00 charge will be taken. Please make your research requests via email or regular mail.

▲ **Volunteers Needed**

We need volunteers to donate 3 hours of their time one day a week, Monday – Friday from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. If you live in Delaware or Franklin Township, please consider volunteering to be a director from your county. Contact Cheryl Welch if you are interested in filling any of these positions.

▲ **Books**

The WWII War Veterans Book, titled LEST WE FORGET, is still available. It can be obtained for \$25 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 weekday afternoon from 1 to 4). Also, LEST WE FORGET can be ordered for shipment by mail for \$30. Checks should be made payable to Ripley County Historical Society. We give our heartfelt thanks to Joan and Norris Krall. We are now printing the Ripley County History Book Vol. II

▲ **Ripley County – 200 Years**

A book is being put together for the Ripley County Bi-Centennial covering 1818 – 2018. We are looking for information from each township such as: old communities no longer in existence, schools, churches, cemeteries, etc. Interesting old stories or historical events that occurred would be great as well as more recent information. Please send your stories to the Ripley County Historical Society Archives by email, staff@rchslib.org, or mail, P O Box 525, Versailles, IN.

RIPLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINUTES

No
January
Meeting

Spring Party Cake

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup short	3 c. flour
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sug	4 tsp B.P
4 egg whits	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla	1 C milk

**Cream short, add sug, add egg one at a time,
Add vanilla. Sift and add dry ing alternately with milk.**

**This is typed as it was written
Found in an old cookbook
Cheryl**

STEPHEN SELWYN HARDING HOME

Copied in part from *People's History of Ripley County, Indiana*, pages 489-502 "*That Old Historic Shrine, Governor Harding Mansion at Old Milan, Indiana*" by Mrs. Noah T Rogers, circa 1925 and combined with other writings by unknown authors.



The Stephen S. Harding home, located on the hilltop of North Milan, Indiana, was built in the late 1830's. The homestead is of colonial architecture with weatherboarding painted white and has many small paned windows flanked by green shutters. The home is two story in the center with wings of one and a half story on either side. The sills are of hewn logs and the lumber was sawed in Mr. Harding's sawmill. The old historic shrine was opened to the public August 17, 1924.

On a bright afternoon in early May we found ourselves at the front door of the mansion. An old fashioned knocker pulls a wire which reaches to the rear of the mansion and ends with a silver bell that rings with a clear musical sound. We are ushered into the colonial hall of the old mansion by a gracious woman of aristocratic bearing. She proved to be Mrs. Ella Row, the owner and granddaughter of Stephen and Avoline Harding.

The first object that greeted our eyes on entering was the broad colonial stairway ascending to the upper floor. The steps were of easy rise and ivory white with balusters and a top rail of black. An old fashioned figured carpet somewhat faded but perfectly whole, and confined with brass rods covering the treads. Our attention was called to the wall paper, a creative background with a soft blue

geometrical figure. It had been there almost a hundred years and yet the blue was not faded but the color was bright and pleasing. The walls were as smooth and firm as if placed there yesterday.

Two rooms opened into the hall, the parlor on the left and the sitting room on the right. The sitting room was of medium size with a ceiling of moderate height, lighted by two large windows of many paned glass over which were dainty lace edge curtains held back with brass fixtured molded in the form of leaves. A large red brick open fireplace with a high mantel was at one end. There was a large, old fashioned cupboard reaching from floor to ceiling, flanking one side of the fireplace. The floor was of hard wood as all over the house, unmarred by the hand of time, but smooth and mellowed by age, while the woodwork was of birdseye maple in perfect preservation. A small cherry table with two drawers occupied the space between the windows which with an accordeon, candlesticks, and chairs completed the furnishings where informal company was entertained.

Opening into this room and also in line with the front of the house is the family room containing the intimate things of the Harding family life. The center of attraction here is the four poster bed of mahogany, without scratch or blemish, dressed in an old time hand made quilt of wonderful and intricate workmanship. A quaint black walnut cradle stands nearby, that rocked the nine Harding children. Between the outside door and window in this room is an old Wheeler & Wilson sewing machine upon which Avoline Harding made clothes for the runaway slaves. In the far corner stands an old chest of drawers in cherry upon which reposes the old family Bible, printed in 1835. There is also a wide fireplace here, topped with a high mantel. A closed private stairway ascending to the half-storied rooms above occupying the space between it and the wall.

The parlor of the mansion is to the left of the colonial hall. It is a spacious room that was set apart as it were by itself with many windows of rather large dimensions and furnished handsomely with mahogany, cherry and black walnut. Two outside doors furnished an exit from it, one to the yard in front and the other to the back to the immense piazza running the entire length of the house.

This parlor contains many antiques. An old fashioned square piano of solid mahogany with its immense carved legs, gorgeous with inlaid mother-of-pearl, occupies the distinguished place of honor. The Lighte, Newton & Bradburys, New York piano was purchased in 1854 as a gift to their fourteen year old daughter, Musidore Harding. In one corner of the room is a large antique mahogany high-boy. In the center is an immense mahogany round table with a massive pedistal base. In front of the window is smaller oval pedistal mahogany table holding a brass candelabra. A six foot mahogany divan covered with hair-cloth is in the corner near the large fireplace. Above the high mantel is a gilded mirror and small oval framed prints of Mr. and Mrs. Harding. In the recesses on the chimney are large oil portraits of Setphen and Avoline Harding, painted in their more youthful days. This room also contains a hand carved black walnut parlor suite consisting of a divan and chair covered with black mohair.

A closet opening from the rear of the hall on the second floor was used to hide the slaves. A trap door forming the top, opening to the garret above being the means of hiding many a slave he or she was given food and shelter until transported under the cover of darkness to the next station on the underground railroad.

On the walls of the guest chamber upstairs, are two state documents that are of untold value. One is the official paper announcing Harding's appointment as governor of Utah, signed by the hand of Abraham Lincoln. The other is the notification of his commission as Chief Justice of Colorado, with the signature of Seward, Secretary of State in Lincoln's cabinet, affixed. Both are framed under glass, and the ink is clear as if it had been executed but yesterday. Nearby is a facsimile of the original letter of acceptance of the office of territorial governor of Utah written in blue ink on old fashioned lines white note paper.

Harding's study was a small square room, situated at the end of the upper hall and contained a library of one hundred eighty-five volumes. These are arranged on high shelves and consume much of the all space. The chair in which he sat is still by the side of the antique desk. Nearby, in a corner, is the cane used to guide his faltering footsteps about the house, for Stephen S. Harding was blind for ten years before his death.

The Stephen S Harding property was sold _____ and is no longer open to the public. Some of the contents were donated to the Ripely County Historical Society and are on display at the museums in Versailles and Osgood.



Above left: Stephen and Avoline Harding purchased this Lighte, Newton & Bradburys rosewood square piano with mother-of-pearl inlay in 1854 as a gift to their fourteen year old daughter, Musidore Harding. The piano was gifted to the Ripely County Historical Society by the family of Dr. and Mrs. Perrie (Ella) Row and is on display at the Osgood Historical Museum.

Above right: Pocket watch presented to Stephen S Harding by Abraham Lincoln when Lincoln appointed him Governor of Utah in 1862. Gifted by Sam Row and on display at the Osgood Historical Museum.

BOOKS FOR SALE

A Century of Schools	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
Adams Township Cemetery Directory		\$10.00
Broken Wings	by Robert Kelly	\$20.00
Brown Township Cemetery Records		\$10.00
Brown Township Tales	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
Historic Travel Guide to Ripley County	by Paul R Wunning	\$23.00
History of Adams Township 1950	by Harold Freeland	\$20.00
Jackson Township Cemetery Records		\$13.00
Johnson Township Cemetery Records		\$10.00
Lest We Forget WWII	by RCHS	\$25.00
Milan, Indiana: A Storied Past 1854-2004		\$16.00
Napoleon & Vicinity Sesquicentennial 1820-1970		\$12.00
Old Timbers	by Chilton Thompson	\$23.00
Osgood Indiana Sesquicentennial 1856-2006		\$17.00
Passing Point	by Don Morrison	\$8.00
Revolutionary War Soldiers and Patriots with Ties to Ripley County Indiana		
	by Marlene Jan McDermert	\$34.00
Ripley Country, In Vintage Post Cards	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
Ripley County History, Volume I		\$65.00
Ripley County History, Volume II	(Paperback)	\$25.00
Passing Point	by Don Morrison	\$8.00
Story of the Bradt Fund, the F. Hale Bradt Family and their Versailles, Indiana Farm 1906-2001		n/c
Sugar Branch	by Don Morrison	\$16.00
Take The River	DVD PBS Presentation	\$25.00
Tales of Versailles	by Alan Smith	\$16.00
The Dark Line	by Don Morrison	\$20.00
Those First Bright Days of Elvis	by Josephine Rascoe Keenan	\$14.00
In Those Dazzling Days of Elvis	by Josephine Rascoe Keenan	\$14.00
Versailles, Indiana School Life 1818-1966	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
Wilbur's War (Abridged)	by Hale Bradt	\$15.00

Ripley County, Indiana, Historical



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