

The Quarterly Bulletin
RIPLEY COUNTY, INDIANA, HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
Library – 125 Washington Street
Museum – Corner of Main and Water Streets
Versailles, Indiana 47042

www.rchslib.org

e-mail: staff@rchslib.org

July 2020

Number 3

▲ **July Quarterly Meeting Canceled**

The Historical Society meeting for July 12, 2020 has been canceled. Our next meeting will be held October 18, 2020. Our program for the meeting "Until All Know" presented by Della Menchhofer.

▲ **Library Hours Have Changed Until Further Notice**

New hours for the RCHS Archives Library are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 1 – 4 pm, except holidays, Pumpkin Show week September 21-25, 2020, also the week before and between Christmas and New Year December 23, 2019-January 3, 2020. The Library will also be closed during inclement weather.

NOTICE: The Museum will be open by appointment only and on Pumpkin Show Saturday Sep. 26, 2020, 8:30 am - 10:30 am. To schedule an appointment call the Ripley County Historical Society 812-689-3031, Cheryl Welch, President 812-621-0418, Duane Drockelman, Vice President 812-852-1313 or Barbara Eades, Director at Large 812-701-9238.

We will be CLOSED December 21, 2020 thru January 1, 2021. We will open for the new year on January 4, 2021.

▲ **Annual Dues**

Remember to renew your membership for another year. 2020 Yearly Dues are due in January. Mail your renewal for 2020 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, Wednesday and Friday from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. If you live in Delaware Township, please consider volunteering to be a director from your township. Contact Cheryl Welch if you are interested in filling any of these positions.

▲ **Books**

See our list of books available listed on the last page of this newsletter. The WWII War Veterans Book, titled *LEST WE FORGET* by Joan and Norris Karl 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 (3) 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). Checks should be made payable to Ripley County Historical Society. Books may be shipped for a \$7.50 shipping and handling fee.

Celebrating Napoleon Indiana's Bicentennial

"Napoleon Founded in 1820, is the Only Town in Jackson Township"

By Ethel R Smith Stute

[Written circa 1936]

Copied from Toph Peoples History of Ripley County Indiana

Napoleon, the only town in Jackson Township, is located in the east central part of the township, in the northwest quarter of section twenty-nine north, range eleven east. It was founded in 1820, the same year as the city of Chicago. William Watson, who had entered 160 acres of land from the United States Government, platted a portion of his farm for the town and granted the ground, on which the public schools are located, for the town commons. No deed was ever made for this lot which is public property.

Early buildings in the town were crude log structures, built hurriedly of round logs with ends notched to hold them in position. The first hewn log house was built in 1823 by William Wilson, who founded the town. This building was built for a public house. It is thought to be the old house that was occupied by Perry Showers during the later eighties and stood east of State Road 29, across from the mill, where the home of Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Behlmer is now located. This old log house was torn down about twenty-five years ago.

The first store in the town was built in 1832 by Elias Conwell, a square north of the commons, on the lot that was later known as the Schleuter property. Before this, people traveled by trails to Versailles or Greensburg to do their trading. A tavern was built on this lot by Jacob Barickman some years later. It was a large two story brick building and is now the home of Charles R Roberts.

Two of the main thoroughfares of the state ran through the town. The Michigan Road from Madison to Michigan City and the Lawrenceburg Road. About a mile east of Napoleon this road branched, and the southern arm went to Aurora. This was a great advantage to the town although roads then were scarcely more than trails and followed creek beds to a large extent. Farmers drove their stock to market and when the streams were swollen it was impossible for "the drovers" to continue on their way with their stock. They would put up at one of the town's taverns until the streams could be traversed. Napoleon came to be a regular stopping place for these drovers and taverns flourished.

The large brick building on the east side of State Road 29 and the last house in town going north was built for a tavern to cater to the drover trade and is one of the town's oldest buildings. The stock was kept overnight in a large lot northeast of the tavern. At one time a very large barn, and numerous stock pens, built for accommodating the drovers' stock stood

one square north of the commons and the same distance east of the Michigan Road. This was owned in later years by the late Rudolph Hertenstein and was torn down many years ago. One of the main taverns in earlier days was the Voschell place which was located just east of town on the Batesville Road. It was torn down fifteen years or more ago. Another of the popular taverns was the Durant Inn which stood a mile or more north of the town on the west side of what is now State Highway 29. There is no one living in the town who remembers this inn but some few remember having heard their elders speak of it. It is possibly seventy-five years or more since this building was standing. The two-story brick building across the street to the north of the school building was erected for a rooming house and was known as the Central House. It is one of the older buildings now standing in the town.



*The Napoleon Central House was built in 1836 by George Craig.
This has been used as a Post Office, Tavern, Stage Coach Stop and restaurant.*

A post office was established in Napoleon soon after its founding. Miles Mendenhall, who served as postmaster in the later eighties and who is remembered by many older citizens, was first appointed in 1831 according to a newspaper clipping in a scrapbook kept by Mrs. Mendenhall. He did not hold this office continuously. According to the clipping, there were brief periods during that time that someone else had charge of the office. The 1831 date is the earliest record found of a post office in operation there and that makes it at least one hundred and five years old. The Ballstown post office which was organized in 1846 was a branch of the Napoleon office. Mail was first carried on foot between the two places and later by oxen. From "Some of My Early Observations and Experiences" written by Rudolph Hertenstein in 1930 we learn that when he came to Napoleon with his parents in 1854 there were the following places of business in the town: "Tanyard owned by Louis Bachman, located in the

southern part of Napoleon, on lots not owned by Bredemier and Straber. A woolen mill located south of the public school building. A saw mill, owned by Dr. Alex Mullen and Co. located just east of the Lutheran Cemetery. A blacksmith and wagon maker shop owned by Perry Showers and Sons. Jacob Keen owned a general store. A gun shop was owned was owned and operated by a Mr. Anthony on a lot now owned by Robert Lutes. Taverns were owned and operated by the following: A Mr. Johnson, in the property across the street east of the present bank building; Jacob Barickman in the Roland Roberts residence; Bill Love in the second building north of the bank building. Saloons and grocery stores in connection were operated by Blossie Gigos Sr., N.D. Johnson and Elias Conwell." A few years later a pottery for making stoneware was located where the Roberts service station now stands. "In 1865 a large brewery was built, owned and operated by Nicholas Morbach. This was located south of the public school house.



The Napoleon Flour Mill, a large brick structure now standing, was built in the late seventies or early eighties by William Meyer. It is the third mill built on this site. The one preceding it was frame and was destroyed by fire. It is said there were 10,000 bushels of wheat stored in the mill when it burned. The first mill on this site was built about the close of the Civil War. It was destroyed by a fire or a storm.

Many of the buildings in the town are of brick which were burned at a kiln north of town by John Stille Sr., at the time he was making the brick for the mill. There was a mill in the southern part of town for a number of years, known as the Laughlin Mill This was purchased and combined with the Napoleon Mill by John F Heimsath more than fifty years ago.

In 1867, eleven lots were added to Napoleon by Johnson Meyer on the north side of town. This was known as the Meyer's addition.

The Napoleon Baptist Church was organized in 1835 and held their meetings in a small log house erected for that purpose. This stood one square south of the school building. In 1872 a Baptist church was built in the southeast part of town and used by the congregation until they purchased their present building on the west side of Road 29 in the southern part of town. The former building has been rebuilt and is now the residence of Gus Marquart. An earlier Baptist church thought to be a predecessor of the 1835 organization stood west of town where the Baptist cemetery is located and was erected as early as 1820.

The St. Maurice Catholic congregation was organized in 1848. Two lots were donated by Dr. McMullen, an Irish physician of the town. Their first building was frame and was built mostly by Mrs. Mary Gigos, whose husband was one of the founders of the town. In 1869 a new brick church, the present building, was erected south of the old one which was then taken for a school building. It was later torn down and two-story brick school building erected. This congregation is now attended by Fr. Eisenman who resided in the parish house just south of the church.

The St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1870 with Prof. Baen as pastor, and with sixteen charter members. In 1924 they built their present house of worship, a beautiful \$60,000 brick structure. Rev. A. H. Miller is pastor and the active membership now numbers more than 300. The Sunday School has an enrollment of 380, The Ladies Aid a membership of 50, the Women's Missionary Society a membership of 35 and the Luther League about 60 members.

One of the oldest churches in the town was the Christian Church. It was discontinued many years ago. The old building still stands in the southeastern part of town and is now used for a barn.

The Methodist congregation organized in February 1894 with eleven members. Their first minister was William Smith. Meetings were held in the old Christian church building until 1898 when they erected their present church, a frame building of one room and basement. The membership now totals about sixty. Rev William Dehart is the newly appointed pastor. Prof. Rudolph Archer now head of the Educational Department at Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute and Charles H Hertenstein, Auditor of State School Relief, are both formerly of Napoleon and both served Ripley County as Superintendent of Schools.

Napoleon is halfway between Indianapolis and Cincinnati and has a population of about 400 according to the last census. They have a volunteer fire department that is striving to make its services proficient and is now raising funds for a new engine. A new fire house was built in 1932 on a lot donated by Mrs. Salome Myer, now 92 years of age and the town's oldest resident. It is the second building east of State Road 29 on the south side of State Road 229. The old firehouse was located on the northeast corner of the public square of "commons" and had a very large cistern to supply water for the engine. The building was razed several years ago, and the cistern is now used as a supply tank for the public school water supply.

The town is supplied with three-phase electric current. A power line was built from Osgood to Napoleon in 1924 and 1925. This was the result of the efforts of the citizens who organized a stock company to finance and manage this improvement. The current was turned on in 1925. In 1929 the stock company sold out to the Hoosier Public Utility Company.

The Napoleon State Bank was incorporated in 1903. Milton Boerner was its first Cashier and Dr. Lafayette T. Cox its first president. Charles Steuri, one of the first directors, is the present president. F.M. McClanahan is cashier which position he has held for seventeen years. Miss Marie Fehringer is assistant cashier. The bank is a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. It has no capital stock debentures, no preferred stock and has a \$5,000 surplus. The Napoleon Creamery is now owned by Mrs. G Herman of Osgood who manages the business. Duff McNew operates the plant for Mrs. Herman. The creamery was organized by a stock company of farmers about twenty-five years ago. Since then Mrs. Herman has continued the creamery. Mr. McNew has been employed at the creamery for more than four years.

The Napoleon Feed Mill, formerly the Napoleon Flour Mill, now does feed grinding. Earl T Behlmer, the proprietor, is also a dealer in Tuxedo feeds, grain, flour and coal. He took over the business four years ago.

Meyer's Garage is owned and operated by Leonard Meyer. He does general repair work and operates a Shell Service Station and conducted business for six years. Cecil Little conducts a lunchroom in a building which was formerly a tavern. The Merchant's Cream Station has been conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Ned Nowlin for more than a year.

Joe Youngman conducts a Gulf Service Station and general repair shop where a blacksmith shop flourished in "horse and buggy days". He has been in business ten years. Edward Bredemeier is proprietor of a restaurant in what was the Johnson tavern in earlier days. He is assisted by his son Melvin.

F.A. Chance, dealer in meats and groceries, has been in this business for seventeen years. He is assisted by Mrs. Chance.

George C. Taylor is the town's only funeral director. Mrs. Taylor is his assistant. John F. Stevenson owns one of the town's hardware stores and runs a barber shop in connection. He has been in business in his present location for twenty years. The Napoleon Telephone Company, formerly the Napoleon Millhousen Company, gives telephone service to the town and community. Fred Seibert has had charge of the exchange for seven years. He is assisted by his daughter Delcie. There has been a telephone exchange in the town thirty years or more.

Mrs. Mary J. Herenstein, 85 years of age, assisted by her daughter Miss Flora, conducts the general store formerly owned by her husband, the late Rudolph Herenstein and started about 1863 by his father John G. Hertenstein who was a tailor by trade and conducted the town's first tailor shop before he went into the mercantile business. This store had been operated continuously in the same building. Philip Eisert has opened a lunchroom in the old Central House in recent weeks and is catering to the school trade.

Russell grinder conducts a Clover Farm store, dealing in groceries and meats. He has been in this business the last three years and employs William Hart as clerk.

Clyde E. Grow has a Texaco Filling Station which he started recently. He runs a shoe repair shop in connection.

Frank Fehringer is owner and operator of a soft drink and confectionery with poolroom in connection. He has been in this business three years.

Charles R. Roberts is proprietor of the Standard Super Service station. He had been in this business for seventeen years.

Milton C. Straber owns and operates a machine shop and filling station which business he has conducted for fourteen years. James Rork is employed as machinist.

Robert Lutes does general blacksmithing and has the only blacksmith shop in operation in the town now.

William Hertenstein took over the Farm Bureau gas station two years ago and runs a radio repair shop in connection.

The Schlosser Cream Station and Route is run by Mr. and Mrs. Monford Alexander how have been in charge for five years.

E.O. Waters who has a general store has been in business for seventeen years in his present location. A barber shop in the Waters building is conducted by Clarence Weber.

Emerson Behlmer has been in the hardware business for twenty-eight years. He is also postmaster and has the office in his hardware store. Mr. Behlmer has been postmaster for twenty-two years. He employs William Dodson and is assisted by his children Robert and Marjorie.

E.H. Dean of Dean Brothers Stone Company, owns and operates a large quarry about one half mile east of Napoleon which he has been running for twelve years. He employs twenty men and furnishes stone for highways and agricultural limestone. He has been in the vicinity for 24 years.



NOTICE NEW HOURS: New hours for the Museum located at the corner of Main and Water Street in Versailles, IN will be by appolintment only and on Pumpkin Show Saturday Sep. 26, 2020, 8:30 am - 10:30 am. To schedule an appointment call the Ripley County Historical Society 812-689-3031, Cheryl Welch, President 812-621-0418, Duane Drockelman, Vice President 812-852-1313 or Barbara Eades, Director at Large 812-701-9238.

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 Reocrds		\$10.00
Brown Township Tales	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
History of Adams Township	by Harold Freeland	\$20.00
Historic Travel Guide To Ripley County	by Paul R Wonning	\$20.00
In Thse First Bright Days of Elvis Book I	by Josephine Rascoe Keenan	\$16.00
In Those Dazzling Days of Elvis Book II	by Josephine Rascoe Keenan	\$16.00
In Those Glory Days of Elvis Book III	by Josephine Rascoe Keenan	\$16.00
Jackson Township Cemetery Records		\$13.00
Johnson Township Cemetery Reocrds		\$10.00
Lest We Forget A Tribute ro the World War II Veterans of Ripley County		
	by Norris & Joan Krall	\$25.00
Milan, Indiana: A Storied Past 1854-2004		\$16.00
Napoleon & Vinicity Sescuicentennial 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 McDerment	\$34.00
Ripley County, 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 #1	by Don Morrison	\$16.00
The Dark Line #2	by Don Morrison	\$20.00
Come Safe Home #3	by Don Morrison	\$20.00
Tales of Versailles	by Alan Smith	\$16.00
Versailles, Indiana School Life 1818 -1966	by Alan Smith	\$20.00
Wilbur's War (Abridged)	by Hale Bradt	\$15.00

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

Adams Twp. - Mr. Duane Drockelman, 10238 N. Adams Church Rd, Batesville, IN 47006	Vice President
Brown Twp. - Mr. Frank Keenan, 3241 E State Rd 62, Cross Plains, IN 47017	Secretary
Center Twp. - Mr. Charles Hughes, P.O. Box 195, Osgood, IN 47037	
Delaware Twp. -	
Franklin Twp. – Mr. Fred Glover, 5611 E Co Rd 300 N, Milan, IN 47031	
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. Diane Arnold 601 Washington St. 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. – Mrs. Jeri Walker, 1721 N. Co. Rd. 575 E Milan, Indiana 47042	
Director at Large – Mrs. Barbara Eades 3953 E. Olean Rd. Versailles, Indiana 47042	
Honorary Director – Mrs. Sandra Meisberger 4662 W. Co. Rd. 450 S. Versailles, Indiana 47042	
Lori Hoffman, 5565 E. Lower Dry Fork Rd. Madison, IN 47250	Web Master
Barbara Eades & Cheryl Welch	Newsletter Committee