



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 XXIX**

**JULY 2008**

**NUMBER 3**

★The summer meeting of the Ripley County Historical Society at 2:00 on Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup> in RCHS Archives, Versailles, will feature the African Safari experienced by the family of Gary and Vickie Dudley from Sunman. Everyone invited to attend.

★A large group attended the April meeting and enjoyed an amusing and informative program given by Gene White. Mr. White was the Captian of the Milan 1954 State Champion Basket Ball Team. See our minutes for more details.

★The Cherry Trees planted around the Courthouse Square in Versailles were in full bloom for our April meeting. They were gorgeous. Thank you Versailles Historical Society for all the things you do to make Versailles a more beautiful and historically authentic community.

**ATTENTION.....ATTENTION.....ATTENTION.....ATTENTION.....ATTENTION.....ATTENTION**  
 July 31 is the deadline to send information for our book "**Remembering and Honoring**" Ripley Co. WWII Veterans. We have over 3,000 veterans. The information has been obtained from profiles sent by family or friends, items from newspapers, and some are just names from a list. Unfortunately some veterans have not even been found. We want to include all veterans who have ever lived in Ripley Co. Please be sure you have your veterans included. **Information needed:** Full name and place of residence in Ripley Co.; Birth & death dates; Good copy of picture in uniform that does not have to be returned; Dates of entry in service and discharge; Branch of service ; Highest rank; Medals and awards received; Where served; Names of parents, wife and children; Other noteworthy, service or later achievements. Send to Norris Krall, 4499 N Old Michigan Rd, Osgood, IN 47037

**Save gas.....visit local "Historical" attractions**

The Milan Basketball Museum has acquired the "old Milan Bank" building located at 201 W. Carr Street. It will be remodeled and ready to move into in about a year. The museum currently located in the "old Barber Shop" at 203 W. Carr is opened Wed. thru Sat. from 10 to 4, and Sun. from 1 to 4.

The Osgood Museum, located on Buckeye Street, has an large collection of Osgood Community history displayed in a beautiful setting. It is open Friday & Saturday 2 to 4 and Sunday 1 to 4.

The RCHS Museum on the corner of Water and Main Streets, Versailles, has a large collection of Civil War memorabilia. There is also a log cabin in the yard. Museum is opened during the summer months on Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4.

The Batesville Museum had to vacate their building but they will obtain another site soon.

**THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE:**

*Ripley County History, Volume 1* \$65  
*Brown Twp.. Tales* by Alan Smith 20  
*Tales of Versailles* by Alan Smith 16  
*Vintage Postcards* by Alan Smith 20  
*Brown Township Cemetery Index* 10

*Johnson Township Cemetery Index* \$ 10  
*Versailles, IN School Life 1818-1966* 20  
*Osgood, IN Sesquicentennial 1856-2006* 17  
*Come Visit* by Jean McClellan 25  
*Jackson Township Cemetery Index* 13  
 Shipping charges added for all books 3

Check your label to make certain your dues are paid up-to-date. If not, mail your renewal to RCHS or Beatrice Boyd, Treasurer, P.O. Box 83, Holton, IN 47023. Annual \$10; Life \$100.

## MINUTES OF THE RIPLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY; APRIL 13, 2008

The meeting was called to order at the Archives Building at 2:00 P.M. with 43 members and guests present. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by President Cheryl Welch, followed by introductions by each person in attendance. The minutes of the January 13, 2008 meeting were read by Henry Walker and approved as read. The financial report was given by Bea Boyd and approved as read. The Director Recruitment Committee of Frank Keenan, Mary Nealis, and Jerry Walker reported the following slate of Directors:

Laughery Township - Helen Decker

Otter Creek Township - Bea Boyd

Washington Township - Henry Walker

Nominations from the floor were solicited, but none were offered. The members voted unanimously for the Committee's slate.

President Welch thanked Bea Boyd for yet another interesting Bea's Buzzin' article for the Newsletter.

Norris Krall reported that the "Ripley County's Greatest" project, soliciting data on present, former, and deceased residents of the County who served in World War II was going well. Norris urged anyone willing and able to assist him (and especially JoAn) with compiling the data being submitted.

Mike Stratton reported that the historical marker signs project was also going well, with nine (9) signs to be put up in Center Township, and twenty-six (26) additional signs to be put up in other County locations.

Volunteers for duty at the Archives Building from 1:00 - 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday were solicited due to anticipated upcoming resignations by some of the present volunteers.

The membership was asked to vote on the Society's President, Museum Curator, and the Society's Secretary positions. Cheryl Welch put her name forward for President and Museum Curator, and Frank Keenan put his name forward for Secretary. They were unopposed and were unanimously elected to the above-noted positions.

Gene White gave the program focusing on the 1954 State Championship Milan, Indians championship season. Gene played center. Some highlights from his presentation include his account as to how local sports events were such a large component of everybody's entertainment back then, with only the County Fair and the annual Pumpkin Show presenting any serious competition.

Gene noted that despite the fierce rivalry between Pierceville's and Milan's athletes, they forgot their differences, and with great coaching, both from Coach Grinstead and later from Coach Wood, the Indians became the team to beat. He humbly told us that they were not necessarily the best players, but rather, they were the best "team," noting, for example, that the players never asked for, and the coaches never gave the players a game's "stats."

Gene emphasized as to how the strongest rivalries and toughest games were with geographically near teams, a point he punctuated by acknowledging that Aurora was the best team Milan played in the 1954 season.

One of the most interesting vignettes Gene related was the fact that during the Rushville Regional game Milan was down nine (9) points when someone kicked the time clock's plug out of the socket and naturally the clock stopped running. At first nobody noticed that the clock was not running. After the clock was plugged back in, Milan went on to win the game in sudden death overtime.

One of the more humorous remembrances Gene shared was how Chris Voltz always loaned cars for the team's ride into town and for victory laps. At first Chris furnished Buicks. However, for the State Championship win, he graduated the team to Cadillacs! (Some 30,000 people turned out to welcome the victors back to Milan.)

Our thanks to Roselyn McKittrick for making us aware at the Society's January meeting that certain members of the 54 Indians, such as Gene, were willing to share with groups such as ours, their 1954 experiences.

And our sincerest thanks to Gene White for such a fascinating program.

Following a question and answer period with Gene, it was announced that Brown Township will bring refreshments for the next meeting to be held July 13, 2008. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Cheryl Welch, President

Frank Keenan, Secretary



## *Bea's Buzzin' by Bea Boyd*

Since I was in my teens-even with all the excitement of the Pumpkin Show, I found my way to Water and Main Street to visit the Ripley County Historical Museum. Today, I still get enjoyment in browsing through it, always learning more about Ripley County History. The school children from other areas of Indiana used to come every year in a school bus to visit the museum.

Perhaps with the price of gas people will look for things closer to home to enjoy. Many folks come a great distance to attend the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Shoot at Friendship. This year is their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Holton High School senior trip in 1939 was to Indianapolis (a first for many) where we had a tour of the city. At the State House our chaperone (teacher) checked to see if the Governor would talk to us. "He was too busy," they said, but we could walk through his office and see him, which we did, all 19 of us. He was at his desk with a couple of people, never looked up, was unaware that there were 18 pair of eyes looking at him. Only 18? One didn't want to look at him since he was a Democrat. We searched the World War Memorial over looking for name of our relatives, at the Scottish Rite Cathedral someone played "America" for us on the organ. Up to the top of the monument circle for an eagle view of the city. We ate lunch at Ayres Tea Room. Coming home our bus driver and we all had hamburgers at a drive in. Hamburgers are more filling. 2009 will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the class, who is part of what Tom Brokaw calls "The Greatest Generation".

Hooray! The restoration of the historical Damm Theatre on Buckeye Street in Osgood had the finishing touches when the marquee was put in place on June 10, 2008. So nice to see the bright lights. The entire project was funded by the Gilmore and Golda Reynolds Foundation. Future plans are to have movies and live shows. I remember seeing silent movies there before I could read. It was no problem because there was always plenty who would read aloud.

The month of June is so busy. School Alumni, Ham and Chicken Dinners, last month it was Fish and Spaghetti. It is no wonder we are all out of shape, but what a fun way to get there! The Midwest's favorite past time!!

### Some tid-bits from a 1895 Versailles Republican:

Poston, Sept 2. Richard Downey met with a serious accident while at work in Wagner's quarry, last Wednesday. The bank caved in on him breaking his leg and other injuries. He is getting along nicely under the care of Dr. Cox of Holton. Speaking of doctors.. In 1895 there were 4 in Cross Plains, Drs. Miller, Fuller, Swency and Bradley.

Flat Rock, Oct. 16. Oliver Hull's sorghum factory has been running full blast the past 4 weeks. He does good work and farmers for miles around patronize him.

### Back to 2008..

The Bel-Air Drive-In Theatre on 421 closed, severe storms caused a power surge. I think at alumni time I get a little sentimental. I was going through my 1937 autograph book. The writings were sincere, solemn, funny and silly. That's life! Have a good summer and laugh a lot.



### CCC 1933 - 1942

The Civilian Conservation Corps was established by President Roosevelt and Congress, during the depression, for young men, ages 17 to 23 ½, not married, not in school, and in need of employment. War veterans were accepted. Statistics for Indiana taken in January 1940: men employed 54,750, estimated sum sent home by the enrollees was \$11,390,000. In Indiana the CCC workers advanced a state-wide soil erosion control programs, aided in development and protection of new forest resources by collecting and planting 1,670,000 pounds of tree seeds, improved drainage by building 415,900 dams, and developed new recreational facilities. The vast amount of land in parks, farms, and forest was a laboratory for the young men to learn practical experiences and training. All campsites were utilized to instill in each youth sound habits of work, pride in accomplishment, and the importance of regular habits, orderliness, neatness and clean living. About 91% of enrollees attended camp educational and training programs. Applications were obtained at Welfare Department. In 1942 the CCC program discontinued, the young men were needed in the military. Currently, the Versailles State Park is still using 24 stone buildings erected by CCC.

### WWII Veteran

RGHS is busy compiling information for a book on "Remembering and Honoring" Ripley Co. WWII veterans. Many have very interesting stories to tell, however few are as tame and peaceful as this one. Howard "Dutch" Baas from Sunman proudly served the army in Alaska from Jan. 1944 thru Oct. 1945, as a winch operator. One day a big, hungry, one-eyed, black, bear stumbled into camp. The soldiers put some food on the winch. The bear ate it and often returned for more. Dutch soon taught her to eat from his hand. It was not long before she brought her cub to camp for food. The snow was often over their heads. This summer-time picture shows Dutch sharing his sandwich with "Blackie". The other guys called him a "Crazy Dutchman" for getting so close to the bear.



## MOVING FROM THE JEFFERSON PROVING GROUND

When searching county papers from 1939 through 1946, for information, about our WWII veterans, we found some interesting items about the proving ground.

The government needed a place to test ammunition and weapons necessary to protect our nation. They selected a 55,254-acre area from Ripley, Jefferson, and Jennings Counties. It had rolling hills covered with trees, several creeks meandering through the valleys, a couple nice lakes, good farmland with homes dotted around in the most beautiful, peaceful setting in this part of the country. There were several small communities with churches, schools and stores etc.. Over 400 residents were given two months to relocate. Of course the residents of the graveyard also had to be relocated.

On Memorial Day, 1941, flowers were laid on the graves in Otter Creek Church Cemetery for the last time. The church moved to Nebraska, a little town a few miles away. It did not miss a service and even gained nine members in the transition. The cemetery was moved a few miles north in Jennings County. A recent excursion to the abandoned site revealed the empty graves that were never filled in. The Easter Lillies still thrive in the abandoned cemetery giving the entire site an eerie beauty among all the evidences of the quick exit of the previous residents. Open wells are the only identifier of once home sites of the local residents. This was over 65 years from the time the church site was vacated.

Other cemeteries moved were St. Magdalene Catholic Church, Old Marble Valley Church, Big Creek Union Church, Monroe Presbyterian Church, Baxter, Marble Corner Methodist Church, New Bethel, Bayless, and Smart. The removal was conducted by agreement between representatives of the War Department and the cemeteries. The Jefferson County Reinterment Association, moved most of

the cemeteries. In numerous instances veterans graves dating back to the Revolutionary War period and veterans of wars, since were moved to new resting places.



St. Magdalene Church

The Official final Service at St. Magdalene was on February 16, 1941, the solemn high mass of Thanksgiving was offered. The sermon was given by Bishop Ritter. Soon the fixtures were dismantled and the church transferred to New Marion. The cemetery was divided, some bodies were moved to North Madison and some to Versailles. A few more services were held before the church was finally abandoned and turned over to the war department.

**Hermit Found in Proving Ground.** All the people had moved from the proving ground for a time when the engineers had a new problem. They found an 80 year old hermit wandering around on the grounds. He told the engineers that he knew nothing about the government buying the land. He said he read no newspapers, had no radio and had no communications with the outside world except for occasional visits with a distant neighbor. The hermit wanted to know where the family in the farmhouse had gone. He had been getting kerosene for his lamps at that house, but could find no one at home. The hermit declared he had no intentions of moving because he had just completed planting his summer garden!! Wonder where he went.



**OFFICERS and DIRECTORS**

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