Footprints

A publication of the Howard County Historical Society

A century of service:
St. Joseph Hospital celebrates 100 years
From the executive director

The Past Isn’t Always Pretty

Taking on tough topics is a challenge to donor-supported organizations. The danger of losing money and alienating friends is very real. A misstep can result in more than a black eye. It’s a particular problem for historians and historical organizations, because the past isn’t always pretty.

HCHS accepted one of those challenges when it began the Ryan White oral history project. I believe it was successful, and our special project award from the Indiana Historical Society attests to that, as does this emailed comment I received in January: “I applaud you for taking on a subject that is still contentious, and for doing it with grace.” There will be those who disagree, but the willingness of the trustees, staff and volunteers to take a risk has left future generations with an incomparable historical record.

Another difficult piece of local history involves the KKK. We have yet to address Howard County’s involvement with the Klan, but perhaps the time is near. I’ve heard stories and read articles about the 1923 Kokomo Konklave, but studying the history of St. Joseph Hospital gave me a much better understanding of Klan activities in the area.

It solidified my own belief that we must find ways to talk about how those activities in the 1920s influenced the world as we know it today. We live with the legacy of those years, for better or worse, and we can make better choices for our communities today if we understand that history.

Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

On the cover: In 1928, all the mothers who gave birth at St. Joseph Hospital pose on the front steps with their babies. Up until that time, most women delivered their children at home. Note: In the third row on the right side is Norman Bridwell, who went on to author the “Clifford, the Big Red Dog” book series, with his mother.

Photo courtesy of St. Joseph Hospital archives

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15 Membership
By Dave Broman  
HCHS Executive Director

One of the leading contributors to the financial well-being of the society is James Long, who wrote to us about why he is inspired to support the HCHS:

“When I was a boy growing up on a farm near Middlefork, I spent many happy weekends visiting my aunt, who lived in Kokomo. We would tool around town in her little black Ford, often driving by the Seiberling Mansion, which was then occupied by Indiana University’s Kokomo Campus. Even as a youngster, I remember being fascinated by the mansion’s architecture and its enormous size. Probably, I wished I could live in such a grand house.

In fact, years later, I practically did because I attended IUK in my freshman year. Despite IUK’s use of fluorescent lighting and institutional green paint in almost every room, the mansion’s interior was as impressive as the exterior. Although I haven’t lived in Indiana since graduating from IU, I followed the progress of the mansion from IUK’s leaving until the Historical Society’s occupying the home and adjoining grounds. Occasionally, I have returned for a visit to admire how the home was returned to its former glory.

I am inspired by preservation of significant architecture anywhere, and especially of someplace I know and remember fondly.

Not only is the Seiberling Mansion a landmark for Kokomo, it also preserves the city’s rich history in its collections. I’m proud to help.”

As we measure the past year, the annual fundraising campaign is an important benchmark. It provides resources to support our mission, maintain the mansion, and preserve the museum collections. We finished the campaign with a total of nearly $38,000.

The list of donors to the annual campaign can be seen on page 14.

Another yardstick is membership, which helps us understand how well we serve Howard County.

Our renewal rate for the year was nearly 90 percent, 9 percent of the total membership was new, and our dues payments reached an all-time high in 2012.

Our other accomplishments for the year include the third class of inductees into the Howard County Hall of Legends, a remarkable new Civil War exhibit, and another successful Christmas at the Seiberling celebration.

We accepted two substantial donations into our collections – the Haynes International collection (in honor of their centennial year), and the Haworth High School collection. We received recognition for our Ryan White Oral History Project and began collecting oral histories of the courthouse bombing from people who experienced the explosion and its aftermath.

In addition, we kicked off our new quarterly membership publication, Footprints, and enhanced our online presence with website upgrades and the addition of Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Pinterest pages.

2012 was a year of change and new beginnings for the historical society. Our challenge for 2013 is to keep moving forward.
97 years ago:
A few forgotten artifacts and the historical society is born

By Judy Lausch
HCHS Publications Committee

Nearly 100 years ago — 97 to be exact — the Howard County Historical Society was formed. This was at the same time the whole state of Indiana was celebrating its centennial year.

With the inception of the historical society, the Howard County Museum would be formed. Ever wonder how it all got started?

In conjunction with the Indiana Centennial, T.C. McReynolds and W. H. Arnett of the Kokomo Chamber of Commerce arranged for a local celebration in the form of an exhibition.

C.V. Haworth was named chairman of the Department for Historical Exhibits, and a local committee was formed with the following township representatives assisting Haworth:

- Jackson: Clark Cates
- Union: Joshua Freeman
- Taylor: Bert Langley
- Harrison: Howard Ramseyer
- Honey Creek: Earl Woods
- Howard: Albert F. Hudson
- Ervin: William Byrum
- Clay: Delos Spraker
- Center: Ellis M. Mulder
- Monroe: T. A. Hanson
- Liberty: Charles Hamer

You might say that this committee was the impetus that led to the formation of the historical society. This group called for a gathering of historical artifacts from all over the county that formed the exhibition. It is recorded that hundreds of people viewed the exhibit, many more than one time.

When the event was over, organizers called people to retrieve their artifacts, but many were not picked up. Articles remaining were then stored in the basement of Carnegie Library.

In time, these artifacts would be the foundation of the Howard County Museum.

Are any of the people mentioned above ancestors of yours? Do you have information about any of the people highlighted in this article? We would be interested in information you can provide, particularly if it pertains to the exhibition or to their involvement in the founding of the historical society. If you have information, please contact the museum office at 452-4314.

HCHS and King Tut? Syndicate Sales rescues museum cases

Last summer, the HCHS trustees learned of an opportunity to acquire a set of used, yet high-quality, museum cases.

The cases were originally used for a major King Tut traveling exhibit. Tut was sent home last year, and the company that managed the exhibit decided to liquidate its case inventory.

We learned of the sale while we were preparing the Civil War exhibit. We also discovered that many of our old cases are in very poor condition.

The chance to update our capabilities and provide for the future was too great to pass up.

We were able to negotiate a good price, and purchased four exhibit cases.

Moving the cases turned into an interesting problem, though, because of their size and weight.

Enter HCHS member and friend Del Demaree, owner of Syndicate Sales. He asked shipping and handling expert Mike Williams to work with us, and a Syndicate Sales truck picked up the cases and hauled them to Kokomo at no charge to HCHS.

The museum curatorial and building team is now planning the set-up and use of the display cases. One place you’re likely see them is a planned exhibit highlighting the Gas Boom era in Howard County.

In meantime, we owe a debt of gratitude to the HCHS trustees for their foresight and to Syndicate Sales for expertise and effort.

You can read more about the Gas Boom project on page 5 in this issue of Footprints.
A 20-county region is coming together to spark a multi-year investment in the development of Indiana’s Gas Boom heritage sites and communities. Those counties are Adams, Blackford, Boone, Decatur, Delaware, Grant, Hamilton, Hancock, Howard, Huntington, Jay, Jennings, Madison, Miami, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Tipton, Wabash, and Wells (pilot counties of 2012 in italics).

The natural gas boom in Indiana is one of the great stories of entrepreneurship and the boom-and-bust cycles in late nineteenth century America. The 2,500-square mile Trenton gas field in Indiana was the largest such belt in the world at that time, and the scale of explosive growth in industrial development, town and city expansion, and population increase was on a par with any other such natural resource boom of the time.

Industries produced items to meet the needs of house and home: glass jars, window glass, art glass, bricks, steel, strawboard for boxes and tinplate for food canning.

Legacies of the Gas Boom can be found in the main streets, Queen Anne houses of the factory managers and merchants, neighborhoods of workers’ cottages, churches, opera houses, and fraternal buildings that have survived in Gas Boom towns and cities.

Through the years since, many organizations have methodically collected artifacts and oral histories. Some individuals also have sizeable personal collections of all things Indiana Gas Boom.

In late 2011, the Indiana Office of Tourism Development held a series of meetings was held to promote the idea of regional tourism collaboration. There was sufficient interest to begin planning in earnest.

A team was formed, comprised of two convention and visitors bureaus and the Ball State departments of Historic Preservation, Telecommunications and the Fellows Program. Muncie PBS station WIPB produced and aired a documentary. A fledgling website, http://indianagasboom.org, continues to add images and content, as well as maps to sites and exhibits.

A part-time coordinator organized public gatherings in the pilot counties, inviting community foundations, convention and visitors bureaus, museums, libraries, historical societies, historic businesses and others.

To have in-depth impact, it was determined that a number of permanent exhibits throughout the district would be sustainable, affordable and able to be installed in all kinds of settings, including walls, lamp posts and exhibit cases.

The Indiana Office of Tourism Development has earmarked money to develop an exhibit catalog, which will be available in late 2013. Once installed, the exhibits become touchpoints for programming, tourism and education programs.

Indiana Humanities and the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State co-sponsored an all-pilot-county meeting in Gas City on Nov. 2. Keynote speaker Dr. Bob Billington spoke about his work to convert a dying but historic textile region in Rhode Island into a thriving industrial heritage area.

Community foundations and visitor bureaus are being asked to provide some financial support toward exhibit purchase and installation, to be matched by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Community Foundation of Howard County graciously awarded a grant to further the development of these exhibits throughout the county. More information on that process will be available in late 2013 as work continues to coordinate the parts and partners involved in making this regional initiative function and thrive.

If you would like more information, or to become involved at any level, please contact the project coordinator, Tiffany Hatfield, at tiffany@tchatfield.com or 317-691-0262.
History is about connections. In Howard County, our connections follow a trail of bread-crumbs from the economic explosion of the gas boom beginning in the 1880s all the way up to the present. Those boom years brought about the birth of the local glass industry, the beginnings of the auto industry, and the construction of the Seiberling Mansion. The county went from cornfield to industrial powerhouse so quickly that it took years for social structures — like healthcare — to catch up.

The Sisters of St. Joseph came to Kokomo from Tipton in 1912, intending to establish a hospital to care for the ill and injured of Howard County. At the time, the only local hospitalization available was in a doctor’s small private clinic. They began by canvassing the community door-to-door for donations to build a hospital. After the first day, they had collected exactly 10 cents, according to History of the Sister’s Congregation, Hospitals and Healthcare by S.M. Thecla.

The Sisters were known for their ability to cope with hardship, and their perseverance paid off. They purchased the old Bates homestead on East Vaile Avenue as a temporary home for the new Good Samaritan Hospital. The doors opened 100 years ago, on Feb. 6, 1913, with 12 beds — with the first surgery three days later. Conditions were difficult at best in the old building, and things were further complicated by the Great Flood of 1913. A levee across the street failed and flooded the surrounding area.
neighborhoods. Bridges at Washington, Main and Union streets were submerged, and the Ohio Street bridge was destroyed. Lights, water, fuel and communications were out for days. The Sisters struggled on.

Almost as soon as the tiny temporary hospital opened, the need for a larger facility became apparent and a campaign to raise $50,000 began in earnest. By November 1914, the new Good Samaritan Hospital at Vaile and Apperson was ready. The three-story brick building was able to accommodate 60 patients. The first birth took place at daybreak on the day it was to open, followed that day by the first death and 12 surgeries. A 1916 hospital bulletin listed the price of a bed in the wards, including meals and nursing services, as $8 per week, according to Oral Accounts of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tipton, Indiana, by S.D. Garst. It also advised patients that it was “forbidden to smoke in the wards, use matches, or spit on the floors, porches, or out the windows.”

As the population of Howard County continued to grow, so too did the need for medical services. The Sisters started a school of nursing in 1916 to help supply the hospital with sufficient skilled nurses to keep up with the demand. The school was accredited in time to graduate its first nurses in 1918 — the year of the great worldwide flu pandemic. It is estimated that 675,000 people died in America and 50 million worldwide. In Howard County, medical services were pushed past their limits, with the new hospital completely full and people dying in their beds at home.

The 1920s brought a different challenge to the hospital and the Sisters. The Ku Klux Klan was flourishing and spreading bigotry. Among its targets were Catholics and their institutions, including hospitals. During the 1923 Konklave in Kokomo, more than 200,000 Klan members descended on the city. The Klan targeted Good Samaritan Hospital for a demonstration. In Garst’s oral history collection, the hospital’s administrator, Mother Gerard, related this story: “The day passed, the night came, and the parade marched as scheduled down Union Street and on Vaile Avenue. All were dressed in the full regalia of the KKK. And as they neared the hospital, strangely enough, one of the leaders fell from his horse with an attack of appendicitis. He was rushed into the hospital, robes and all. The Sisters were in the operating room dressed for the surgery. As they uncovered the victim, Sister Louise said to him in a surprised voice: ‘John, what in the world are you doing in that robe, dressed...
like that!' They operated. He recovered and went out of the hospital one of the best friends the Sisters ever had."

Generally, though, the Klansmen didn’t want to be treated at a hospital run by Catholic Sisters. They began promoting and fund-raising for the establishment of a second hospital. They reportedly collected more than $50,000, which they turned over to the Howard County Hospital Association for the purchase of a 17-acre farm on West Sycamore Street. Construction on the “County” hospital began in 1924.

Mother Gerard later told this story:

“One Sunday afternoon early in 1924, some of the Sisters took a drive by the ground where the Howard County Hospital was going to be built. They drove up and stopped by the edge of the grounds on Sycamore Road. Sister Louise got out and buried a St. Joseph medal in the corner of that ground.”

The 50-bed hospital opened in 1925. Ultimately, it was a financial failure and was forced to close in 1930. The building sat empty for five years, while Good Samaritan continued to grow and prosper under the Sisters of St. Joseph.

In 1935, three things happened that drastically changed the course of healthcare in the county. Good Samaritan Hospital was again challenged to keep pace with the needs of county residents. A long-time county resident passed away and left his entire estate to the hospital. And the abandoned Howard County Hospital was put up for auction.

Henry Fisse was the gentleman who bequeathed his entire estate to Good Samaritan. It’s been reported that he went to the Klan-supported HCHA hospital for treatment in 1930, when its financial troubles were peaking, and was turned away because he couldn’t (or wouldn’t) pay up front. He went instead to Good Samaritan where there was no discussion of payment during his one-month hospitalization. After his release, Fisse changed his will and left his estate to Good Samaritan instead of HCHA. His gift provided the resources for the Sisters’ successful bid of $20,000 for the building, land and equipment abandoned by the defunct Howard County Hospital Association. It was a major step forward toward the hospital we know today.

St. Joseph Memorial Hospital was dedicated in May 1936 after renovation and modernization of the building. Three years later, a new west wing added 42 beds to St. Joseph, all medical services were consolidated there and the Good Samaritan building became a home for nurses. The nursing school moved to a new wing at St. Joseph, but was closed in the 1950s, and the Good Samaritan building was razed and replaced by Terrace Towers in 1970.

Beginning in 1941, Howard County mobilized for World War II. Kingston Products, Haynes Stellite and GM were some of the local businesses heavily involved in war production. As part of the national security effort, St. Joseph Hospital was chosen to institute a training program for a Nurse Aide Corps.
The Corps was intended to provide enough patient assistance that nurses could be released for the armed services. St. Joseph also became a National Defense Training Facility, providing additional wartime training for nurses.

After the wartime rationing ended, the hospital resumed its growth trend to meet the needs of the community — and construction picked up where it had left off. As a result, the St. Joseph building changed dramatically. Wings were added and removed. Entrances were changed. The number of beds grew dramatically, and facilities were modified for new technology. Telephones were installed in the patient rooms in the early 1960s, and computers made their first appearance in the 1970s.

Today, you’d have a hard time finding physical traces of the original hospital. The Bates home and Good Samaritan building are long gone. The original Howard County Hospital building is gone, replaced by new wings and new buildings. The Sisters of St. Joseph transferred sponsorship of the hospital to the Daughters of Charity in 1994.

While the original bricks and mortar may be gone, vibrant connections remain. Their roots are deeply embedded in the history and people of Howard County.

Years ago, the term, “the rabbit died” served as the way many women announced their pregnancies. Above, an archival photo from the hospital shows how the test was performed.
Seven years ago, public demonstrations of art and handwork were pretty much limited to the county fair. So thought Beth Notaro as she looked around the community for ways of sharing her interests with the public.

Not only were the options limited by location, but by age as well.

“There was almost an unspoken rule that this was just for those 12 and under and 65 and older,” she said.

So Beth began to look around for a place that would give people a chance to share with the public their interest in using fabrics, woolens, yarn and threads to make beautiful things.

A convention center, a gym or a school wouldn’t do, Beth said.

“We wanted an environment that would mesh with what we are doing,” she said. And so began the Winter Woolens Workshop, first only at the Elliott House, and now expanded onto three floors of the Seiberling Mansion as well.

“I love the Elliott House and the Seiberling Mansion,” Notaro said, describing how it is the perfect atmosphere for the event. “It has an Antiques in Action kind of feel.”

The seventh annual Winter Woolens Workshop will take place on Saturday, Feb. 23 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 24 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Seiberling Mansion and the Elliott House.

Sponsored by Beth's Main Street Folkart, proceeds from admission will benefit the Howard County Historical Society.

Winter is the ideal time for the workshop, Notaro said.

“It’s the perfect time to put your hands on wool.”

Participants may enjoy the all-day workshops and demonstrations in early samplers, colonial painting, punch needle embroidery, rug hooking, spinning and weaving, hand quilting, tatting, rug punch, needle felting and knitting and crocheting.

“There are so many things to try, like learning to hand quilt,” Notaro said.

A number of clubs, groups and guilds, some with
names as colorful as their handiwork, will provide demonstrations and vendors will sell their wares.

The groups include:
The Kokomo Piecemakers
Twisters, Sisters & Misters
Granny Bees
Kokomo Sewing Guild
Knit Wits
Embroidery Guild of America
Tatting by Tammy
Kokomo Art Association
Rug Matters
Puckinhuddlers
White River Ruggers
Heartland Stringers
Crochet Council

"It is a wonderful way for them to get new members and also show off what they do," Notaro said of the clubs and guilds.

More than 30 vendors will sell items relating to these arts, such as quilting material and punch-needle embroidery, inside the Elliott House.

The event will include make-it-and-take-it projects and demonstrations. Those attending may bring a project from home to work on, or try something new at the workshop. Participants will also have the opportunity to sign up for classes with the clubs and guilds.

The third floor of the Seiberling Mansion will be for show-and-tell, Notaro said. "Every nook and cranny of the mansion will be filled."

Although the workshop brought in people from 11 states last year, it is not yet well known in Kokomo, she said. This year she has advertised in several publications and has mailed 2,500 postcards to promote it.

"This is such a wonderful event," she said. "I look so forward to it, to be surrounded by people who are so very creative."

Cost for a two-day admission is $10. Notaro said she hopes people plan to come both days.

"One day is just not enough to see and try everything."

For more information, contact Notaro at 765-236-1000 or go to BethsMnStFolkart@aol.com or visit www.picturetrail.com/bethsmainstreetfolkart.
The Kokomo Watchman’s Tower

Magic in the air

By John W. Morr
Howard County Historian

O

ne of the main objectives of the preservation of history is to bring the past into the present to help those living in the present understand how they became who they are today.

History gives us foundation, definition, substance and value. So anytime a community can help revive a historical landmark, they build upon those gifts of purpose.

In Kokomo, a little-noticed local landmark is beginning to come back to life — the little tower on the sidewalk in the 200 block of North Buckeye Street.

We believe this railroad signal — or “watchman’s tower” — is another Kokomo icon.

Information gathered from numerous Indiana records and historians cause us to believe this to be the only tower of its kind still standing in its original, functional location in our state.

For years, this well-preserved and one-of-a-kind building provided shelter for railroad watchmen above Buckeye Street and housed the controls for various safety signals at the crossings on east-west thoroughfares such as Sycamore, Walnut and Mulberry streets.

This single, elevated house replaced older street-level shanties that previously stood beside each grade crossing. With one small, elevated house,

Onlookers watch as a crane helps to install the railroad watchman’s tower on Buckeye Street in downtown Kokomo. Historians believe it was built some time during the 1930s.
one man could now do the work of many.

Traffic along West Superior, Walnut, Mulberry and Taylor streets would slow to a halt whenever a train rum- bled through town, according to the walking tour booklet of the Kokomo Department of Development.

The signal tower was renovated in 1994 and then again in 2004 with the help and dedication of several downtown organizations and local labor.

No one knows exactly how old the tower is, but photographs of the structure with a diesel Nickel Plate Railroad crane have indicated to historians it may have been built in the 1930s.

The rail line itself is a rare structure to encounter within a courthouse square area. Its presence helps define the character of the downtown area, and is an important part of Kokomo’s history, as the tour booklet states.

So, what’s being done to “bring it back to life”?

The plan is under wraps for the moment. Those involved in the project are certain that not only will it get noticed, it will be fun and it will add some old nostalgic feeling back to the historic downtown area.

So, as you visit downtown Kokomo, look up at the watchman’s tower now and then. Before long you will see something new. The idea of the project is to bring the past back into the present and help us appreciate where we are and from where we came.

Watch out for trains! I always had to when I was growing up in this, in our, downtown Kokomo.

Over the years, the watchman’s tower fell into disrepair. However, renovations were made in 1994 and 2004 that helped to maintain the structure in downtown Kokomo.

howardcountymuseum.org
facebook.com/hchistory
Thanks to everyone who donated to the 2012 HCHS annual campaign

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Friedemann Arnold
Ron & Pam Barsh
Milton Beach
Marilynda Bennett
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Morris Boyce
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Cylkowski
Ed & Judy Brown
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Kokomo Animal Hospital
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Karen Williamson
Donald & Marilyn Wooldridge
Paul & Shelly Wyman
Charlotte Young
Dr. Don & Deborah Zent
## Membership

Thanks to all who joined the Howard County Historical Society or renewed their memberships in November through January.

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