

# Footprints

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## Howard County Legends

*A publication of the Howard County Historical Society*

From the executive director

# Look to our past for perspective on current events

**A**ldo Leopold, the great ecologist and author, wrote, “Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of the wolf.” He was writing about conservation, but the analogy is just as valid when applied to history. It’s about perspective and the understanding we gain when we’ve put a few years between ourselves and that which we seek to understand.

The things we watch now with dismay, like the howling of wolves on social media, won’t be truly understood for many years. It’s worth continually reminding ourselves that we’re too close now and too emotionally involved to be

objective.

Only now are we beginning to understand how our country and community came to be what they are. Only now have we begun to achieve enough distance and perspective to recognize our past successes, failures, good and bad luck, and the unintended consequences of choices made generations ago.

As we face the always uncertain future, let’s keep looking over our shoulders at where we’ve been. At museums like the Seiberling Mansion, that perspective of time and the lessons of history can light the way.

**Dave Broman**

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# Fiber and Artisan Market set for Aug. 19

**A**rtisans and vendors from around Indiana and the Midwest will gather on the museum grounds at 1200 W. Sycamore St. on Aug. 19 for the Howard County Historical Society's first summer Fiber and Artisan Market at the Mansion.

The event, open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., will include all kinds of fiber arts, with demonstrations, make-it-take-it classes and vendors. Visitors can learn more about spinning and weaving, knitting, rug hooking, punch needle designs, cross-stitch, quilting and more. Artisans will exhibit their creations and vendors will have supplies for purchase.

The mansion grounds will be alive with work in pottery, photography, soaps, baskets, jewel-

ry, rope art, leather, barn quilts, willow furniture, garden art, mosaic art, vintage clothing, painted signs and windows, grapevine trees and wreaths, furniture, watercolor paintings and more.

Event organizer Penny Elkins invites people to make a day of it.

"The Fiber and Artisan Market builds and expands on the legacy of the Winter Woolen Workshop organized for many years by the late Beth Nataro," Elkins said. "We hope people will come to learn, shop, relax, and enjoy all the music and refreshments we have planned."

Admission is \$5 for the day and all proceeds benefit the Howard County Historical Society.

# 'From the Dark Pages' Masquerade Ball & Murder Mystery Tour set for Sept. 30

**A** new event will haunt the mansion this year. The Howard County Historical Society is planning a mystery tour and masquerade ball for those older than 21 on Saturday, Sept. 30, from 5:30 to 11 p.m.

The event, sponsored by Thermodyn Inc. kicks off the Halloween season and is meant to honor the authors of the very creatures that haunt our nightmares.

The evening includes the mystery tour and ball with food, entertainment and a costume contest. Prizes will be awarded throughout the evening. The grand prize will go to the guest judged to be wearing the best costume.

Participants will take a trip back in time with tours of the Seiberling Mansion led by "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" and "Sherlock Holmes" that will feature "visits" with such authors as Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker and Robert Louis Stevenson and their "monsters." The evening will draw

from a project that began more than 25 years ago by a group of writers that included the father of HCHS curator Stewart Lauterbach. His father, Edward Stewart Lauterbach, helped co-author a script that was used by Indiana Landmarks for many years in an event presented during the Halloween season at the Morris-Butler House in Indianapolis.

The elder Lauterbach, who passed away in 2009, was a long-time professor of English at Purdue University whose specialty was Victorian literature and who was known for his love of the work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He was a member of two clubs devoted to the memory of Sherlock Holmes – The Baker Street Irregulars and The Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis – and that interest is inspiration for the script. HCHS has been given permission by Indiana Landmarks to use this script for the Sept. 30 event.



See 'Dark Pages' on page 8

# Roofing contractor takes a historical perspective on Seiberling slate project

By Linda Ferries  
HCHS Publication Committee Chair

In 1890, Gas Boom industrialist Monroe Seiberling had a grand confection of a home built to house his growing family in Kokomo, Ind. The massive mansion and its towers were topped by the appropriate material – black slate carefully and ornately crafted from stone quarried in Pennsylvania.

Fast forward 125 years. Those carefully and ornately crafted slate shingles are now a faded gray; cracking and crumbling, they are succumbing to the thousands of Indiana rains, winds, and, most critically, freeze-and-thaw cycles that have battered them for more than a century.

After a year of fundraising, grant awards and public support, the deteriorating roof – and the attendant leaks that threaten interior spaces

and treasured artifacts – are about to become history themselves. And the contractor undertaking the job – Hinshaw Roofing & Sheet Metal Co., Inc., of Frankfort, Ind. – seems to have just the folks to do it right.

Take, for example, Bob Pearson, project manager and safety director for the 70-year-old business now run by people who learned the trade from the founding family. In his 27<sup>th</sup> year with the company, Pearson loves roofing, but he especially loves slate and tile projects that utilize techniques that are centuries old. He takes a historical perspective in each project (Among its many projects, Hinshaw is responsible for the re-roofing of many historic build-

ings on the Purdue University campus) and takes pride in recreating the craftsmanship of the past. He talks of the Seiberling project with respect for the original work and a commitment to a complete and exact restoration.

For centuries, slate has been used as a durable and long-lived roofing material but, like the natural gas that drew industrialists like Monroe Seiberling to the Midwest, supplies are not infinite. Pearson said that in 1910, the United States had 67 slate quarries; today there are 17. Its use continues but producers are now quarrying all the known sites. Only one quarry remains in western Pennsylvania, where the

original Seiberling Mansion slate was quarried. According to Pearson, the current condition of the slate gives away its origin. Western Pennsylvania slate is softer than that found in New Hampshire, Vermont and Virginia. Not only did it oxidize over the

***“When the roof was originally installed, it was black as black can be. What will go on will be black, not gray. People will go, ‘Wow!’”***

**Bob Pearson  
Project Manager  
Hinshaw Roofing & Sheet Metal Co.**

years, leading to the fading; it is subject to “shaling,” absorbing water between its layers that can then freeze, causing the thin sheets to crack and flake off. But the original must have been the top A1 grade on the industry’s A1 to A3 scale, he added. “It had to be a Grade A slate when it was quarried or it would never have lasted this long,” he said. “I have seen western Pennsylvania slate completely off a roof in 50 years and most only lasted up to 75 years.”

The replacement slate is coming from a quarry in Quebec associated with New England Slate Company just across the Vermont bor-



See ‘Roofing’ on page 8



# ‘Unique’ Seiberling roof is a complicated challenge company is happy to accept

**By Linda Ferries**  
**HCHS Publication Committee Chair**

**B**y late August, the long-awaited re-roofing of the Seiberling Mansion will be under way. And while the nearly \$440,000 contract price is impressive, consider some of the expenses: The scaffolding to support the efforts of Hinshaw’s six-man roofing crew alone will cost more than \$80,000. And then there’s the guttering system, the flashing and, oh, yes, thousands of slate shingles, 14,616 to be exact.

“What makes the Seiberling project so unique is that we are scaffolding all around the building,” Pearson said, noting this includes over the porches and up to the “bell” that tops the front tower more than four stories above the ground. “It’s a 12/12 pitch (meaning the main roof rises at a 45-degree angle),” he added. “To put slate on is very tedious. We want to keep our people safe.”

“When we first looked at the Seiberling, I thought that it was cool,” Pearson said. He was amazed at the home’s hidden gutter system that will also be restored during the project, noting they were not “built-in” gutters as was thought, but rather “Yankee” gutters that actually lay on the roof behind the fascia. As part of this project, Hinshaw has ordered 67 3-foot-by-10-foot sheets of copper to restore the gutters and the flashing on the roof.

Pearson noted the original guttering was probably tin and what’s now on it, the second or perhaps third gutter effort, is steel and tin. “We are going back with all copper and we’re using the thicker, 20-ounce (per square foot) copper sheeting,” Pearson said. “If the slate is going to last 100 years, you want the flashing to last 100 years as well.”



**Bob Pearson, of Hinshaw Roofing & Sheet Metal Co. is project manager for Seiberling Mansion roofing project.**

And then there’s the slate. Two truckloads of slate will be coming – carrying a total of nearly 70 squares (a normal roof takes an average of 30 to 35 squares) in a variety of shapes and sizes that add up to a total of 14,616 individual pieces.

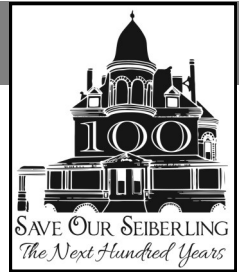
“The Seiberling Mansion would only take 58 squares but we have to purchase nine additional squares because of all the additional cuts we will have to make because of the bell and the tower,” Pearson said.

He said the total number includes about 5 percent “attic stock” for any repairs necessitated by future storm damage. “You really want



**See ‘Challenge’ on page 8**

# Roof campaign update



**By Dave Broman**  
**HCHS Executive Director**

**T**hings are about to get real at the Seiberling Mansion. The contract is signed. The schedule is set. The slate is ordered. By the time the snow flies, the Queen of West Sycamore will have a new crown.

Since 2014, the historical society has been marshalling its resources, applying for grants, asking for individual gifts and making the case for the mansion's value to Howard County. The project is no longer a distant dream.

Visit today and you'll see sheets of metal and rubber where pieces of slate and decorative trim have been removed for measurement and reproduction. Visit in late August, and you'll see scaffolding being erected. Visit during early September to see work begin on the unique, acorn-shaped roof over the south tower.

The techniques and equipment used to install slate roofing have changed little during past couple centuries, but the number of people

with those skills has slowly diminished. Visitors to the mansion will see skilled craftsmen re-creating the original roof design with new material. Most of their work will take place during morning hours, before the mansion opens at 1 p.m. We encourage everyone – especially those who supported the roof campaign with their gifts – to come see the work in progress.

As the original roof is removed from the mansion, care will be taken to save as much of the slate as possible. Plans are underway to make it available for sale and give people a chance to own an important piece of local history. We'll let you know as that develops.

The second phase of the project will begin after the holidays when we start repairing the water damage caused by the leaking roof. Plaster and paint will certainly be part of it, but work on structural wood may also be necessary.

## Thanks to all who have donated to the roof campaign

### **Capstone Level — \$25,000 +**

James Long  
Thomas & Judy Sheehan  
Bill & Ginny Hingst  
Indiana Historical Society & Lilly  
Endowment  
Community Foundation of Howard  
County

### **Gable Level — \$10,000-\$24,999**

Efroymsen Family Fund of the  
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### **Pillar Level — \$5,000-\$9,000**

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Charles & Patricia Hinders

Dr. Charles & Alice Simons  
Rick & Diane Smith  
St. Vincent Kokomo  
Paul & Shelly Wyman

### **Cornerstone Level — \$1,000-\$4,999**

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Omar England, in memory  
of Maribel England  
Geoffery Godlove  
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David & Carla Summers  
Greg & Melody Sumpter  
Marjorie Herr Swing  
Matt & Ellen Tate  
Rheld & Lorina Tate  
Donald & Louise Thomas

## Dark Pages, continued from page 3

"It has been my dream to bring this type of event to the Seiberling for quite some time," Stew Lauterbach says. "And to use this script that my father helped write is quite special."

Chairperson Dana Osburn says costumes are not required but she encourages all who attend to wear costumes to get in the spirit of the evening.

"The books that are featured were all written about the time the Seiberling Mansion was

built," Osburn says. "We're excited to offer something different to Howard County."

The cost for the evening is \$50 per person or \$40 for HCHS members through the historical society office. Tickets are limited and available to guests older than 21 because of the content of the Victorian horror stories.

For more information, call the office at 765-452-4314. Memberships may be purchased at any time, including at the door. All proceeds of

## Roofing, continued from page 4

der. Graded A1 and even harder and more durable, it is being cut in a number of patterns and sizes to exactly match the original and, as its name of North Country Black indicates, to restore the roof's original color. "When the roof was originally installed, it was black as black can be," Pearson said. "What will go on will be black, not gray. People will go, 'Wow!'"

Pearson readily offers a primer on slate and

its use as a roofing material. Slate is composed of thin layers of mineral compressed together. It is quarried and saw cut to prescribed lengths but then must be split by hand to the right thickness by experienced craftsmen.

Most of the slate for the Seiberling Mansion is being cut in 20-by-10-inch or 12-by-10-inch shingles. And, Pearson said, while most are

## Challenge, continued from page 5

the replacement slate to closely match the original," Pearson added. "This will assure that for the next 75 to 80 years, the repair stock will come from the same lot of slate quarried as the original slate installed."

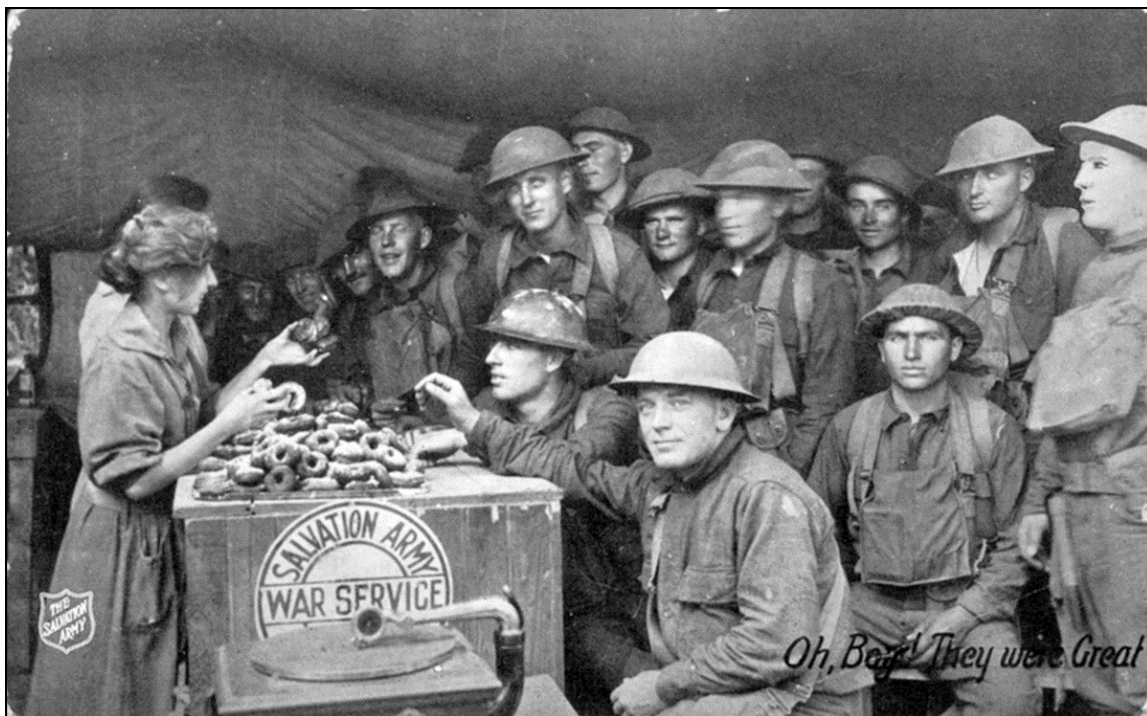
Of great help on the project is the detailed drone video of the roof taken last year by Mike Dukes, media specialist for the City of Kokomo. It allows planners to stop on particular close-ups to actually count the number of slates in a section. For instance, Pearson said, the three eyebrow windows peeking out from the attic will take 341 pieces of slate, which represents .85 of a roofing square.

The cone and bell towers pose special challenges. With a preponderance of rectangular slate and only a couple of rows of clipped corners scattered in the middle, the cone is not

like either the main house or the bell. The bell that rises above the front of the mansion will require three squares of clipped shingles and another 6.5 squares of rectangular ones, all applied in the pattern that will recreate its original "acorn" appearance. "More than 1,000 pieces are needed just for the top of the bell," Pearson said.

The Hinshaw crew will have special help for this part of the project. Veteran roofer Herb Danner, who retired in 2001, is coming back to work with a former "understudy" who is now the project foreman to tackle the bell.

"This is a dying art, when you have something this unique," Pearson continued. "Herb has done 50 or 60 slate projects, including two bells, one in Indianapolis and one on Lake Maxinkuckee. You have to chalk-line both hori-



Salvation Army War Service workers serve doughnuts to the “doughboys” of World War I.

PHOTOS FROM THE HCHS COLLECTION

## Annual meeting will commemorate ‘Howard County in World War I’

**W**as your Great-Grandpa Jones a “doughboy” in “The Great War?” Did your Great-Great-Aunt Matilda bake cookies for the troops across the Atlantic? Do you have letters sent back from the fighting fields in France? Or a vintage uniform or medals?

If so, the Howard County Historical Society hopes you will share those memories and mementoes at the society’s annual meeting on Oct. 17, where Howard County’s involvement in World War I will be commemorated.

The dinner is the culmination of a project, “Howard County in World War I, which was approved by the Indiana World War I Centennial Committee to be part of the State of Indiana’s official commemoration of the war’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

“We are excited our Oct. 17 annual meeting will be part of the state and national effort ‘to educate, honor and commemorate ‘the Great War’, and we hope local residents will be excited to be a part of it as well,” said Peggy Hobson, HCHS board member and chair of the

event committee. "We hope anyone in Howard County with family connections to the war will want to share their mementoes and stories as part of this historical activity."

The Howard County Historical Society will put these borrowed or donated items on exhibit to tell the story of Howard County's war involvement. On Oct. 17 at Rozzi's Continental

Ballroom, as part of its annual meeting, the historical society will have a program that will be open to the public to showcase the artifacts and re-enact the war effort put forward by Howard County.

Jonathan Russell, Howard County historian, has been gathering information on the county's World War I involvement and is supporting the local commemoration of the war's centennial. His column detailing some of that fascinating history was included in the February edition of *Footprints*.

In planning the October annual meeting, the society has focused on the wealth of information collected by Howard County educator and historian C.V. Haworth in his 352-page "History of Howard County in the World War" published in 1920, just two years after the war's end. Very comprehensive, "Howard County in the World War" includes organizations contributing to the war effort and an explanation of the projects and/or donations they made. It lists all Howard County residents known to have been in military service in the war.

Hobson and her committee have contacted such organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion and the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library that not only were in existence in Howard County at the time but that, as they learned from Mr. Haworth's book, contributed to the war effort. "There were fund drives, letter-writing campaigns and shipping of food and supply packages that local organiza-

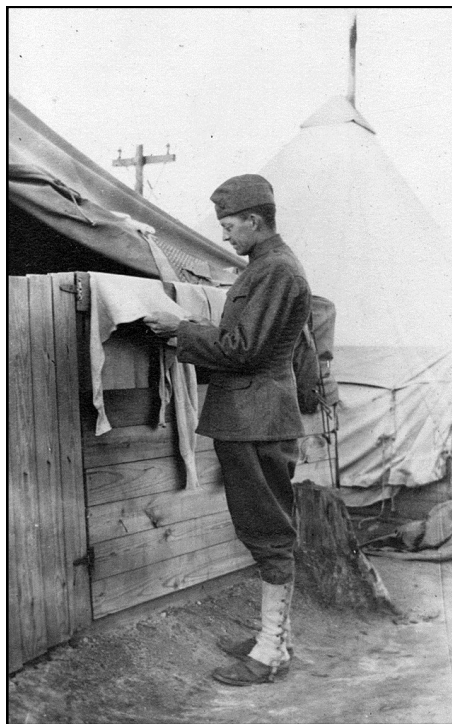


tions supported and we want to share those stories," she said.

Hobson said the group hopes to go beyond the photos and the artifacts to share the personal stories of people caught up in "The War to End War." If you are willing to lend memorabilia related to Howard County in World War I for the project, contact Hobson at 765-271-0039 or [mpzhobson@gmail.com](mailto:mpzhobson@gmail.com) for more

information by Sept. 15.

Reservations for the Oct. 17 event will be available through the Howard County Historical Society starting Sept. 1. For more information, call the historical society office at 765-452-



**Vern Ray Bridwell of Kokomo, father of author Norman Bridwell, hangs his clothes to dry at Camp Sheridan in Alabama in 1918 during World War I.**





Above, crowds line Main Street in Kokomo to watch a parade of soldiers returning from World War I.

Bottom left, portrait of Walter Irvin in his WW I uniform.

At right is Sgt. Harvey Prather, who enlisted on June 6, 1917. He served in Co. E 327th Infantry 82nd Division.



# World War II oral historian shares experiences

By Linda Ferries  
HCHS Publications Committee Chair

**K**ayleen Reusser of Bluffton – writer, history blogger and author of two books of the memories of veterans of World War II and later conflicts – shared her experiences and observations with several dozen members of the Howard County Historical Society in June.

The “members-only” meeting brought together history buffs along with two World War II veterans and the widows of several others for a look at Kayleen’s efforts to save the stories of individuals who served the nation both overseas and at home. The event included a travelogue of Kayleen’s recent trip to see the battlegrounds, cemeteries and monuments connected to the war effort in France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Luxembourg.

Kayleen calls her work with World War II veterans her “mission in life.” Husband John retired from the U.S. Air Force and their son fol-

lowed John into the service and is currently serving in the Air Force. With a family that is pro-military and pro-America and a career in writing, Kayleen’s interest in capturing the histories of individual service personnel from World War II, as well as Korea, Vietnam and post-911 conflicts, comes naturally.

So far, she has interviewed 170 World War II veterans, many from the Fort Wayne area but also around the state and nation. She even interviewed a Pearl Harbor survivor who now lives in Honolulu through the online video phone connection Skype. And the interviews range from those who flew bombing missions over Germany and fought in foxholes in the South Pacific to those who never left American shores.

“People have said, ‘I didn’t do anything important. I didn’t even go overseas,’ Kayleen reported. “I say, ‘Did you show up? Then you have a story worth sharing.’” For example, as farmers in northeast Indiana, both her father

and father-in-law were deferred from the World War II draft and supported the war effort by continuing to provide needed food for their fellow citizens at home and abroad.

She has published one book, *World War II Legacies: Stories of Northeast Indiana Veterans*, and a second, *They Did It for Honor: Stories of American World War II Veterans*, will be available by the end of summer. Both, she said, were written in a style designed to be easy to understand and relate to.

“I worked as a middle school librarian for many years,” she explained. “I wanted to write so non-military readers, even



Historian Kayleen Reusser with local World War II veterans Fred Odiet (left) and Jack Bennett at the HCHS members-only event.



## Small world, isn't it?

For Kayleen Reusser, serendipitous meetings regularly prove how small the world can be.

For instance, a highlight of her recent European trip came at an unplanned stop at the Pegasus Bridge that crosses the Caen Canal in Normandy and was a crucial component in the D-Day invasion as part of the British Airborne forces' Operation Tonga. Kayleen and John were there on June 5, when 90 British taxicabs pulled up, each having come through the Chunnel Tunnel under the English Channel to bring a World War II veteran back to commemorate his actions 73 years earlier.

Of course, Kayleen started chatting with the veterans. "That's why I do it," she said. "It's the people who are important for me." And there, just three days into the trip, she met a British veteran who, she learned, had lived for a time in Bloomington, Ind.

And it was serendipity that led to Kayleen's presentation in Kokomo. A couple of years ago, with her travel-writer hat on, Kayleen visited the Seiberling Mansion to gather observations of the historic home to share with readers of the Visit Indiana travel blog. (Find her blog entry at <http://bit.ly/2gWVi84> )

While there, she connected with HCHS Executive Director Dave Broman. Turns out Dave and Kayleen's husband were members of the same graduating class at Bluffton High School many years ago. A good chat ensued, a friendship was restarted, and Kayleen's interest in World War II became a good subject for a program offered as a benefit of HCHS membership.

sixth-graders, can understand. It's important for them to learn about this. And the stories are universal."

Kayleen is continuing to gather stories. While in Kokomo for her June presentation, Kayleen met two veterans from Kokomo who attended her lecture: Jack Bennett, who served in the Army Air Corps in the South Pacific, and Fred Odiet, a Navy hospital corpsman who helped Seabees build a hospital in Guam in July 1944 and also served in the Philippines and Okinawa.

"It's really becoming a challenge to recruit people to be interviewed," Kayleen noted, acknowledging the advancing age and mortality of those who served in the war. "Often I make connections through friends or their children who have heard me speak." She also is in her third year of sharing World War II stories in a biweekly column in the Fort Wayne News Sentinel that sometimes generates leads to new interviews.

She encouraged her audience to share in honoring and recognizing those veterans who remain. "Do what you can," she said. "Welcome an Honor Flight home or, better yet, participate in an Honor Flight." Both Kayleen and John have been active in that program and have served as companions to veterans making the pilgrimage to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

As a student of World War II and those who served, Kayleen said her "bucket list" had been topped by a goal of seeing the sites in Europe relating to the conflict. That goal was realized in June when she and John joined 30 others in the 73<sup>rd</sup> D-Day Anniversary Tour. Kayleen shared a number of highlights and photos in her remarks at the Elliott House, where she was joined by her husband and their daughter Mandy.

The trip was emotional and moving, especially as the group toured Omaha Beach and nearby sites on June 6, exactly 73 years after the Allies' famous D-Day landing that began the effort to reclaim Europe from the Nazis. There was the memorial to the Higgins Boat, a small craft built by the hundreds in New Orleans that proved critical in the success of amphibious landings during the war and the statues of soldiers and sailors that stand as memorials to the men



See 'Historian' on page 22

# Six to be inducted into 2017 Howard County Hall of Legends

**M**embers of the selection committee for the Howard County Hall of Legends must have been thinking as much about the future as the past: their 2017 nominees share a commitment to coming generations. In addition to choosing six new Legends, the committee made a significant decision to expand nominations beyond individuals and include organizations that have had important and lasting effects.

In Virgil Hunt, Marilyn Skinner, Sam Rhine, Alicia Berneche, Circus John Byers and We Care, we find the father of Indiana University Kokomo, a major force in education and the economy for an entire region. There is a community leader and tireless advocate for early childhood education, one of the world's preeminent educators and lecturers in biology and genetics, a nationally known opera singer and voice teacher, a baseball pro and Wild West Show performer who is considered to the father

of youth baseball in Kokomo, and an often-imitated and nationally recognized organization dedicated to raising money to benefit disadvantaged children.

This is the eighth year for the Howard County Historical Society's Hall of Legends. Since 2010, 43 Legends have been honored for their accomplishments. Among them are author Norman Bridwell, automotive pioneers Elwood Haynes and Jonathan Dixon Maxwell, country music performer Sylvia Hutton, journalists Steve Kroft and Jane King and acclaimed artist Misch Kohn (a complete list is available at [howardcountymuseum.org](http://howardcountymuseum.org)). The nominees this year are entirely consistent with the goal of the Legends: to provide our young people with role models and examples of character traits that engender success and contribute to a better world.

The 2017 class of Legends will be honored at the annual induction banquet on Aug. 25 at Bel

## 2017 Legends

### Alicia Berneche

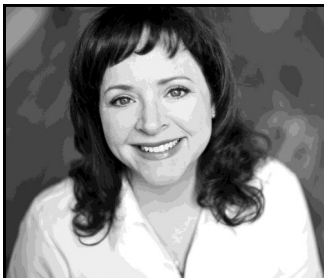
Performers, like athletes, practice unceasingly, preparing themselves for that chance-of-a-lifetime moment to dazzle an audience and "hit one out of the park."

In the summer of 2000, Alicia Berneche was fresh from graduate school at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and working in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's apprentice program when that moment came for her. She was selected as the understudy for Grammy-Award-winning American soprano Dawn Upshaw starring as Daisy Buchanan in the Lyric Opera run of *The Great Gatsby*. When Upshaw was side-

lined with a bruised vocal cord, Berneche, a 1989 graduate of Kokomo High School, was suddenly in the spotlight. It was a tricky, demanding role at arguably the second most-important opera house in the United States (after the Metropolitan Opera in New York).

Her performance was a home run -- the Chicago Sun-Times enthusiastically praised "her bright, clear soprano" while the Boston Globe called her out for "an extraordinary piece of acting." Careers in the performing arts are built on such moments.

Berneche, who earned a bachelor's degree in music at DePauw University in 1993, started



working toward success at an early age. At 6, she was a violinist in the Kokomo Youth Symphony. In her teens she won best actress for her role as Molly Ralston in Kokomo Civic The-

atre's production of *The Mousetrap* and was the first female ever to represent the Kokomo High School Speech Team in national competitions. But the encouragement of a voice coach in high school helped her find a home for her twin loves of music and acting -- in the world of

opera.

International acclaim for her Chicago debut was followed in 2002 by the world premiere of *Galileo Galilei* in New York and London (the New York Times said an aria by Berneche was "sung affectingly"). She has since worked steadily and successfully and sung with celebrated conductors and ensembles at many of the world's top houses. Classically trained in the standard repertoire of opera, Berneche specializes in contemporary opera (she even recently wrote the libretto for a modern work).

With a commitment to preparing the next generation of specialists in her art form, Berneche now teaches voice at Glenbrook

## "Circus John" Byers

It was a rite of passage for generations of Kokomo youth. "Spring is here. It's official now" was the annual announcement in Kokomo newspapers in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

"Circus John" Byers was once again organizing local baseball teams to compete in area amateur and semi-pro leagues. With winter in the past, he could be seen canvassing store owners in the business district, raising money for equipment and uniforms.

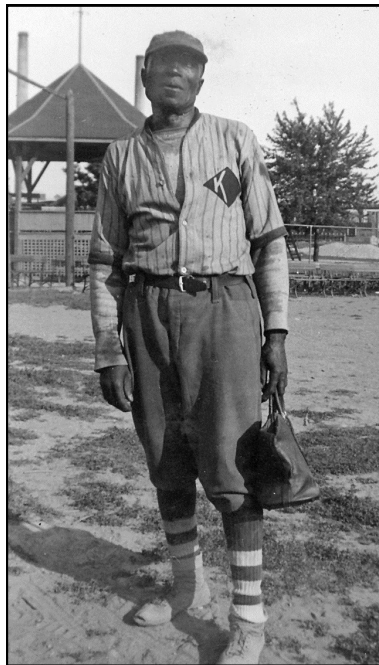
Talented and gifted, Byers — who once was described by the *Kokomo Tribune* as "one of the most legendary individuals ever to live in Kokomo" — was born in Tennessee probably around 1870. He arrived in Kokomo twice, in 1919 and again, for good, in the mid-1920s (circus work had brought him to Peru, hence the nickname).

Farmhand, steamboat sailor, railroad "Road Man," Wild West Show performer, journeyman ball player — at a time when people rarely saw much beyond their hometowns, Byers spent most of his early life on the road.

For several decades after settling in Howard County, he organized, managed, and often played for a number of local teams, including the well-known Kokomo Specials and the

eponymous "Circus" Giants in the 1920s and 1930s. Byers had prowess at every position. He once pitched a no-hitter; in another game, his home runs fueled a 19-6 blowout.

But his legend came from the league play (ages 9 to 21) and informal baseball clinics he offered for boys at Foster Park to keep them busy during the summer months. He became known as the father of youth baseball in Kokomo. Stern but devoted, he set strict ground rules for "his kids" — no smoking, no profanity, be on time, play fair. Still, many who played for him later re-



membered that he taught the kids to “have fun,” and as someone who brought a lot of joy to children of Kokomo for many years.

Even late in life, Kokomo’s “Mr. Baseball” continued to make a difference, including serving as an advisor for a girls’ volleyball and soccer league. Regardless of the sport, he was

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## Virgil Hunt

When the new science building on the campus of Indiana University Kokomo was dedicated in 2002, its title was an apt honor for its namesake’s decades-long commitment and contribution. “Virgil and Elizabeth Hunt Hall” was a fitting tribute to the man whose vision and leadership helped IU Kokomo grow from a handful of students in an all-but-abandoned Victorian mansion to its modern 51-acre campus with more than 4,000 students.

Among the most distinguished academic leaders ever associated with Indiana University, Virgil Hunt was a visionary and influential educator. The “founding father” of IU Kokomo served as the first campus director from 1945-56, then moved to IU Indianapolis to become dean. In 1966, he was named the first registrar of the Indiana University Medical Center. He retired from that post in 1976, ending a 43-year career in higher education, and 33 years with Indiana University.

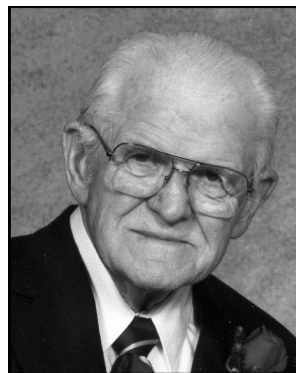
A native Hoosier, Hunt earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in chemistry from Indiana University in the early 1930s. He taught chemistry and science at colleges in Arizona, Kentucky and Danville, Ind., and at Central Normal College in Danville from 1940-43 became the youngest college president in the United States

at the age of 28.

During World War II, Hunt served as a physics instructor for the Army and Navy.

Anticipating the need to provide higher education opportunities for GIs after the war, Indiana University adopted Kokomo Junior College as an IU extension center in 1945, and appointed Hunt as the center’s first executive secretary (later director). Hunt helped to enroll a group of Jewish students who had been denied admission to other colleges, and later as director recruited the campus’s first African-American student and one of IU’s first African-American faculty members (fellow Hall of Legends member Dr. Herbert Miller).

Hunt was devoted to fundraising, campus expansion, donor support and student recruitment. In addition to academics, the legacy of Hunt, his wife and their family is reflected in a number of awards and endowments. Among many honors he received were the Sagamore of the Wabash, the Jefferson Award and the



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## Sam Rhine

Sam Rhine is a college professor from Howard County whose knowledge of his subject routinely generates standing-room-only audiences eager to hear him speak in locations around the world – from Toronto to Tokyo, Prague to Nairobi. He has filled auditoriums and assembly halls and is repeatedly invited back. He even receives what amounts to “fan mail” from enthralled and inspired students — and

their parents — who appreciate his common-sense approach and lucid lectures.

What subject rivets the listeners of this 1964 Western High School graduate? Artificial intelligence? Self-driving cars? Some other trending topic? Nope. Sam Rhine’s passion is the science of biology.

After earning a master’s degree from Indiana University in 1972, Rhine learned early on that biology, when properly presented, can be easi-

ly grasped in a real-world context. As a graduate student at IU and later at Harvard University, he discovered that high school students became receptive and responsive when real life issues were explored through the filter of biology. He eventually was presenting whole-school convocations to hundreds of students on two main topics: prevention of birth defects ("The Most Important Nine Months of Your Life") and prevention of AIDS ("Say 'Know' to AIDS").

Most recently, the long-time IU professor has focused on Genetic Update Conferences, one-day events for biology teachers and students that present the latest in genetic advances, research areas and career opportunities. A sample of the seminar reactions: "[A]bsolutely amazed me." "We are still using class time to discuss the various topics you covered and are they engaged!" "Thank you for inspiring my son!"

Rhine is notably well-regarded among peers; one education expert even described him as "one of the most effective human genetics edu-

cators in America today."

After 30-plus years teaching, two honors exemplify his standing in his field. In November 1997, Rhine received the "Honorary Member Award" from the National Association of Biology Teachers, which is presented to one teacher annually as the "highest honor we bestow on members of our profession." In February 2007, he received the exclusive "Distinguished Hoosier Scholar Award" from the Hoosier Association of Science Teachers Inc., which honors native Hoosiers for outstanding commitment to science education and has only been given three times in the association's 40-year history.



## Marilyn Skinner

When Marilyn Skinner received Indiana's most prestigious state honor — the Sagamore of the Wabash — in 2013, it was a fitting milestone for a remarkable teacher and community volunteer who has devoted so much of her life to helping children prepare for success.



An advocate for early childhood development since starting her career as a teacher at Kokomo's Bon Air Elementary School in 1958, Skinner was soon learning to adapt to leadership roles herself. Moving from the classroom to administration, she became the first woman ever to

serve as assistant principal, vice principal, principal and then assistant superintendent in the Kokomo public school system for 15 years before her retirement in 1996.

Kokomo-area students indeed benefited from her inspired dedication, and then new generations of students continued to benefit when the newly retired educator "failed at retirement", as she put it.

She started working again part-time with the Head Start program, which promotes school readiness of children younger than 5. She then supervised student teachers for Indiana University, Purdue University, Ball State University and Manchester College, before deciding it was time to "really retire." With a laugh, she admits she failed at it again.

She soon was back at work, serving as the first director of Indiana University Kokomo's Center for Early Childhood Education, while

staying visible as a volunteer, serving as board member and then president of the Howard County Mental Health Association and helped United Way exceed its campaign fund-raising goal the year she served as campaign chair.

A longtime community and arts patron, Skinner has been involved in some capacity with many local agencies and organizations, ranging from the Salvation Army to the Howard County Community Foundation to Bona Vista

Programs to the Kokomo Area Reading Council. She is a past president of the Howard County Historical Society.

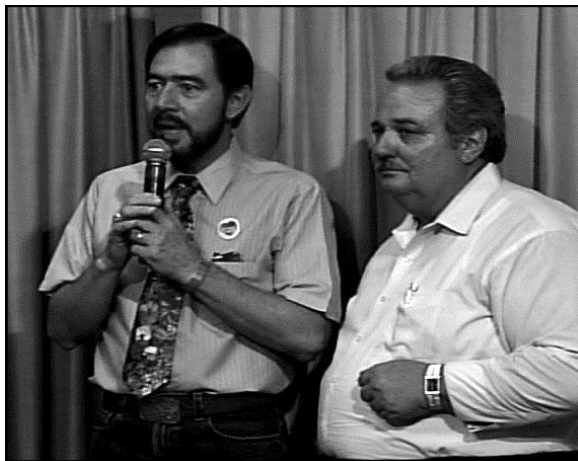
Skinner earned bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Ball State University and a doctorate in education from Indiana University. Her many honors include The Indiana Commission for Women's Torchbearer Award, and the Indiana Women of Achievement Award for Distinction in Early Childhood Education

## **We Care**

The story of We Care definitely has legend status in Kokomo and Howard County, and the organization's success has led to national recognition and imitation.

We Care began as a spontaneous, grassroots response to economic hard times. The recession that began in 1973 was particularly difficult for industrial towns like Kokomo. Shortly before Christmas that year, a laid-off auto-worker called a talk radio program on WWKI to talk about his situation, wondering how he could provide a happy Christmas for his family under the circumstances. One of the broadcasters, Dick Bronson, offered to donate half the money in his wallet if others in the radio audience would do likewise. By the end of the program, enough money had been donated to help the caller and several other families.

Under the leadership of Bronson, his radio cohost Charlie Cropper, and volunteer Jan Buechler, the We Care coordinator, the fund-raising effort was repeated in 1974 as a six-hour telethon, and then expanded to a 47-hour auction the following year. We Care was given independent status as a 501(c)3 in 1983. The We Care Trim-A-Tree festival and tree auction were added, along with the We Care Store and a line of collectibles and food items. Hundreds of dedicated volunteers come together each year, with thousands of donors, to continue the tradition, organizing activities, managing donations, answering phones, working the store and handling the details of a high-intensity marathon auction. Many other individuals and or-



**We Care came to be in 1973 during a radio broadcast with cohosts Charlie Cropper, left, and Dick Bronson.**

ganizations held independent fundraisers, such as We Care Park, adding thousands of dollars to the annual total. Proceeds reached a peak of \$857,500 in 2002, and the average in recent years has been \$400,000-\$450,000. The money is divided between five local social service organizations to support their Christmas programs.

In 1985, We Care received the first of three C-Flag volunteerism awards from President Ronald Reagan under his program of Presidential Citations for Private Sector Initiatives. Other awards followed, both for the organization and its founders.

Leadership of We Care has passed from the hands of Cropper, Buechler and Bronson to a core group of long-time volunteers, presently

# A 'fairs' to remember

By Jon Russell  
Howard County Historian

**T**hough grammatically incorrect, the title probably caught your attention. However, this article is not about a particular advertising idiom, or lifestyle, it's about one of Howard County's favorite events: The County Fair.

Because this is an historical publication — and it's summer — I thought it may be appropriate to write about the history of the county fair, beginning with the earliest known events.

Early on, fairs were small operations of the Agricultural Society that took place in the 1850s on land located north of what is now Sycamore Street, east of Apperson Way. These fairs continued until the Civil War, when the land was converted into a mustering site for volunteer soldiers: Camp Stilwell.

In 1870, the Howard County Agricultural Association, a joint stock company formed in 1869 by Col. Willis Blanche, produced the first large event on land leased from David Foster. The fair featured exhibits of farm products, the cooking and sewing skills of local farm women and horse racing. It is said that some of the best trotters and pacers in the country would

turn up for these events. By the late 1880s, attendance was doing well, but the association was headed for ruin. The last fair at that site took place in the fall of 1891 because the association was broke. The mortgage foreclosed and the land was sold to Kokomo Steel & Wire Co., later known as Continental Steel.

The fair continued in 1894 with a competitor, the Kokomo Driving Park, on land located southwest of Crown Point Cemetery. Even though auto racing was introduced after the turn of the century, popularity declined and the land was sold off in 1909 by its last owner, J.M. Leach. It would become the property of Pittsburgh Plate Glass.

After more than 30 years, the Howard County Fair was no longer seated in Kokomo.

The Russiaville Fairgrounds opened its first county fair in 1907 with agricultural displays, food, games, fun and horse racing. A track with



An 1860 fair ribbon, from the collection of Kellie Estep.



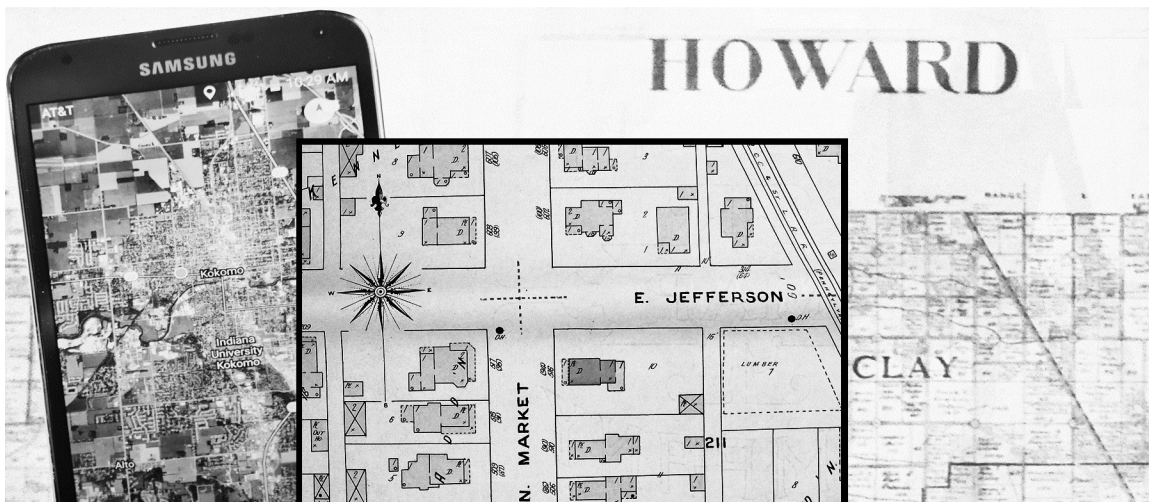
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The Howard County Fairgrounds were in Russiaville in 1907.

RUSSIAVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHO-





# Map Exhibit Offers Unique Glimpses into the Past

**By Gil Porter**  
**HCHS Publications Committee Member**

**T**he new "Howard County Cartography" exhibit in the Howard County Museum offers a fascinating view of the evolution of the area first known as the Big Miami Reserve, and visitors can learn much more than just the general outline of local history. They just might be able to learn something about their own address as well.

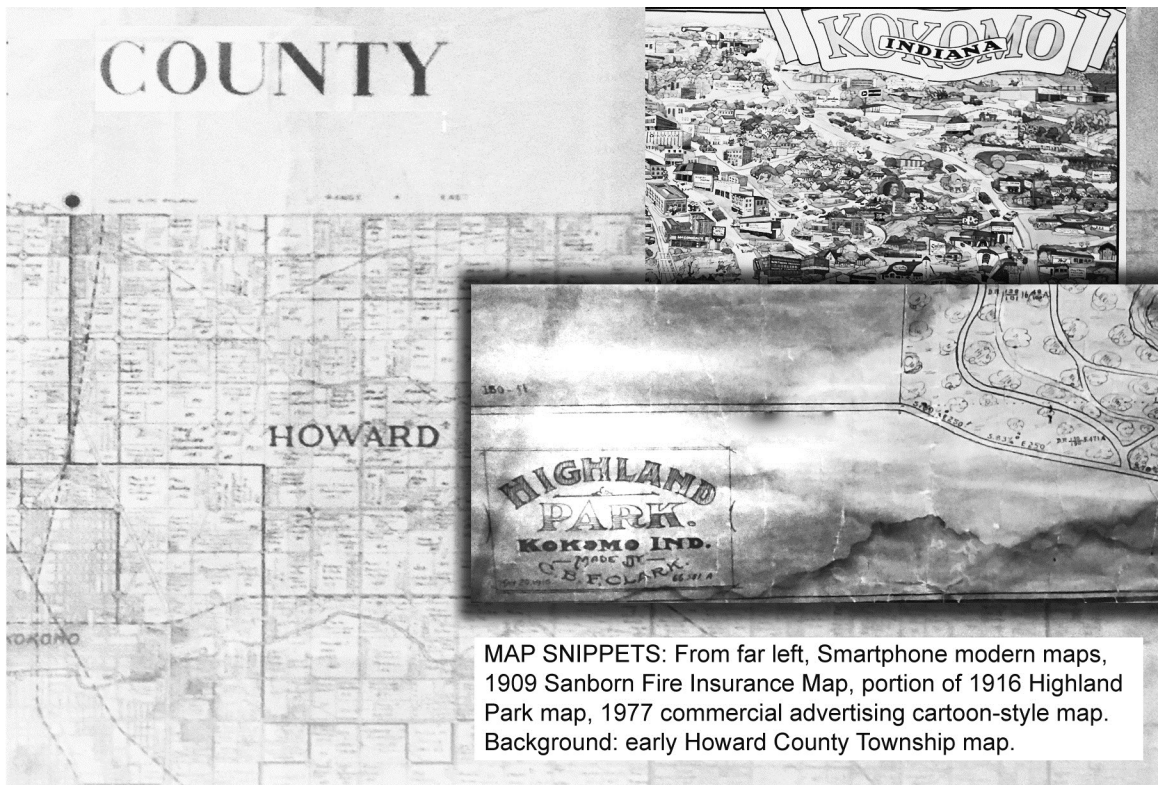
Now open in the Long Gallery, the exhibit includes reprints of extant maps from the early 1800s that trace the development of the land originally deeded to the Miami Indians nation, to the origins of Richardville (later Howard) County and ultimately to the founding of the county seat of Kokomo. The exhibit also illustrates how map-making technology changed during the 19th century, from colorful hand-painted land surveys to richly detailed draftsman-style insurance maps capturing the physical layout and construction material of individual structures.

Generally technical, often artistic, sometimes even whimsical, maps are unique visual records of a community.

"This exhibit is a great way for the historical society to tell a story through the maps about how Howard County and Kokomo have evolved in size and complexity," said Randy Smith, curatorial assistant with the Howard County Historical Society. Smith noted that careful study of the displays in the exhibit reveals tantalizing tidbits about the town and helps to trace the history of when and why businesses developed where they did.

Plus, with maps, history can be represented in unexpected ways. For example, in 1885, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Company needed only six pages to cover all of Kokomo, then a town of about 4,000 residents (by comparison, Lafayette had 15 pages in 1885; Indianapolis had 81). By 1902, after the explosive expansion following the discovery of natural gas





MAP SNIPPETS: From far left, Smartphone modern maps, 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, portion of 1916 Highland Park map, 1977 commercial advertising cartoon-style map. Background: early Howard County Township map.

in Howard County in the late 1880s, 23 separate sheets were needed to chart the growth of a busy, dynamic city.


“The maps featured in this exhibit are varied,” Smith said. “Some maps show the entire county, some a city or township, and some just a neighborhood.” The maps serve different purposes as well, he added. For example, some provide information about who owned what land or illustrate an area’s underlying topography. Some were created for insurance purposes, others for advertising. Overall, Smith said, the exhibit experience is designed to tell history stories in a different way. “This exhibit is designed to examine the stories maps can tell.”

The oldest “original” map in the collection is a large printed map of Highland Park, circa 1916. Found in an attic of a Parks Department building, the faded document outlines the intricate landscaping, the origins of a golf course that became the Kokomo Country Club, and even a

planned zoo in the 15 acres of the park, as well as historically important items like the location of the original street car station on the north side of the park.

Smith said examining the maps can help provide clues about how “fluid” history is in terms of the visual depictions. On the Highland Park chart, for example, the map apparently was printed before Elwood Haynes had his house built on South Webster Street (today the city operates the Elwood Haynes Museum there). “The location of Haynes’ home was actually later drawn with pencil on the printed map,” Smith said.

Maps connect the present to the past and can provide context even beyond what has been written about a town and its history, Smith noted. “The exhibit is designed so that a visitor can pinpoint their location, and perhaps even be surprised by what was there before or what was once in the neighborhood.”



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## Historian, continued from 13

who braved the unbelievable barrage of German weaponry as they fought for the beaches.

They visited the church at Sainte-Mere-Eglise, with its windows memorializing the "Band of Brothers" paratrooper whose parachute famously hung up on its steeple, and a foxhole in the Ardennes Forest leftover from the Battle of the Bulge.

They toured Dachau, the concentration camp where so many died, with its ironic slogan "Work will set you free" still visible in the ironwork on its gate, and Berchtesgaden, Hitler's stunningly sited retreat high in the Bavarian Alps. They stopped at Reims, France, where Germany surrendered in May 1945, and Nuremberg, Germany, where the courtroom used for the famous war trials is still in use.

From the cemetery in Normandy with 9,000 American graves to one in Luxembourg with another 5,000 to a ceme-

## Fair, continued from page 19

a grandstand and other buildings to accommodate fair goers was built on the east side of town. Conveniently located south of the railroad and interurban tracks, where a fine station was erected in 1911, it was just a short walk into the grounds.

A transcription from the Sept. 26, 1907, *Kokomo Daily Tribune* sums up the environment, sort of: "It is in harmony with the external fitness of things that the cricket in the stubble field and aftermath, together with all the insect tribes of the air, should unite in a grand chorus during these golden days of western Howard's annual jubilee." Kind of gives a new take on "singing for your supper"?

A publication, part of a series called *The Russiaville Chronicles*, 'Life in a Small Town'... *The Russiaville Fairgrounds*, by Kirk Smith, available through the Russiaville Historical Society, gives a

detailed history of the fair that lasted through 1916.

The following years were tough for the fair, with World War I, the Great Depression and World War II pulling from both resources and audience. During that time, exhibitions were held at various locations including the old Exhibition Hall at Highland Park, the Ellis Learner farm, Huston Park and even the YMCA and Firestone buildings downtown.

The 4-H program got its boost during Foster Poe's term as county agent, and displays were held at the Farm Bureau building on North Washington Street, with livestock exhibited in a tent across the street.

A permanent building for exhibits was planned in 1940, but the war stopped any progress on that hope. The fair made the rounds between Howard Township, Russiaville and Greentown

# Membership

Thanks to all who joined the Howard County Historical Society  
or renewed their memberships from May through July.

Jim Aikman  
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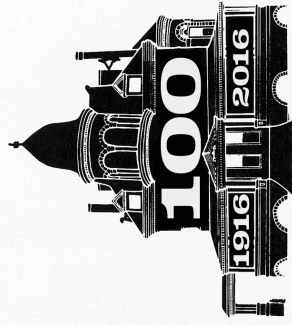
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your personal experiences with the Howard County Historical Society and the Seiberling Mansion.

Scan the QR code or use the link below to complete the survey.  
[www.questionpro.com/t/ALUQPZY47h](http://www.questionpro.com/t/ALUQPZY47h)



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