

Footprints

A publication of the Howard County Historical Society

Volume 3, Issue 1

February 2014

Snowy winters past



In this issue:

- Could there be another 'First' for Kokomo?
- Museum takes on a digital dimension
- Warm up at Winter Woolen Workshop

Above, 100 block of South Main Street in January 1978

From the executive director

Another year for the history books

Here we are at the beginning of a new year: talking about what we've done in the past 365 days and what we'll do in the next 365. That leads me to think about time and this odd idea of ending and starting every 365 days.

Early in mankind's existence, time was simple. It was about the sun and the progression of our own short lives. It was day-night, asleep-awake and time to eat. Somewhere in the long-forgotten past, we began to order our lives by our perception time, making note of particular times, like when the tides came and went and when to plant crops in the spring. It was a survival tactic that helped us plan ahead and teach our children how to order their lives. We kept records in oral traditions, pictographs, runes, glyphs, eventually written language — and as we amassed records and experience, we refined our knowledge and use of time.

The knowledge is preserved in museums, libraries and schools and enables us to live as we do (as well as decide whether we *should* live like this). Plus, museums and libraries give us the opportunity to stop the clock for a few

hours and catch our breath.

So here we are again, moving from one 365-day period into the next. At the historical society, our heating bills are undergoing their annual jump, we've finished the annual cleaning and the new members of the Board of Trustees have taken their seats. The annual campaign wrapped up with generous donors helping to fund our operations for 2014. The new mobile device tour is ready for users. And we're planning ahead — not just for the coming year but for the long-term future.

We divide our lives up in ever smaller chunks in time, ordering our lives in minutes and seconds instead of days and seasons. The process of preserving and sharing our history isn't ordered by the clock or calendars, though. It doesn't stop and start. To paraphrase the Big Lebowski, "The history abides".

I hope you'll make time soon to visit the Seiberling, stop the clock for a bit, soak up the atmosphere of the Gas Boom Era, and just abide.

Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

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Snowy winters past



Maybe, by the time you read this, we will be experiencing the greatest February heat wave in Howard County history.

But, at the moment, and for the past several weeks, we have endured a mind-boggling amount of snow and cold, prompting us to go through the archives to find photos of snowy winters past.

On the cover is a photo from the notorious Blizzard of '78, when about three feet of snow fell in a 24-hour period. This was followed by sub-zero temperatures and winds of up to 55 mph, leading to drifts of 10 to 20 feet tall, and bringing activity in the county to a standstill.

One overriding theme of the archive photos has been vehicles in the snow — usually stuck, as in these pictures from 1920 (center) and 1950 (below).

However, the man in the oldest photo to we're sharing, from 1914, seems to have had the right idea — a horse and sleigh — although it was probably his only option 100 years ago.

Maybe 100 years from now, our 4-wheel-drive SUVs, heated seats and remote starts will seem as antiquated as hitching up a horse.

In the meantime, our fingers are crossed that the heat wave has arrived, and you will be fanning yourself with this issue of *Footprints* after you finish reading it.

Emily West
***Footprints* Editor**

A new digital dimension to Howard County history

It's hard to beat the experience of seeing a real, original, historical artifact. Not a reproduction, not an image, but the actual physical remainder of a person or event that reverberates through time. At the Smithsonian, for example, it might be the hat worn by Abe Lincoln on the day he was murdered. During the 1994 Sesquicentennial in Howard County, it was a chance to see Elwood Haynes first car. Last year in the museum, it was a letter to home from the county's highest-ranking Civil War veteran – written in his own hand during that war.

Museums give you that experience, and preserve it to share with your grandchildren.

The museums of our time have the opportunity to use people and technology to deepen the museum experience. You can not only see the artifact, but talk with a museum host about it. And now, you can hear and see even more using today's mobile technology: cellphones, smartphones and mobile tablets.

With the advent of the Howard County Heritage Tour, you have several options for digging a little deeper into exhibits, artifacts, and places that interest you. For example, when you stand in front of the museum's Delco exhibit, you can listen to a more detailed history of Delco's role in the community via cellphone, or you can use your mobile device to access the same information in written form along with a series of photographs from Delco's history.

How to use the cellphone audio tour

In the past, you may recall having seen or used audio tours on cassette tapes. We have a

better option now, using your cellphone, and it's free to use. The phone number 765-252-2094. Because it's a number, it's very inexpensive to dial as often as you wish.

The first time you call, you'll hear a welcome message with some brief instructions. You can then select the tour stop you want to explore by entering the stop number, which will be found on a small white badge near the exhibit. You can browse through the museum at your own speed and visit the exhibits in any order you wish. When you find something that interests you – dial the tour and punch in the stop number for more in-depth information.

How to use the mobile Internet tour

We've installed a public wi-fi system in the museum to provide Internet access for mobile devices. For this tour, you may use our wireless network or your cellphone network to make the connection.

There are several different ways to access the tour: via the OnCell app (available for iPhone and Android), using your web browser or with the QR codes posted at each stop.

The Internet URL is <http://myoncell.mobi/hchistory>. That address will bring up a tour site with a list of stops, and you may choose whichever one you want. As with the audio-only version, you can tour at your own speed and in whatever order you wish.

The simplest method uses QR codes. Make sure your device has a camera and a QR scanner app installed. Most do, but the apps are also readily available in the app stores. With

Continued on page 15



Safianow receives Jacob Piatt Dunn Jr. Award from IHS

From the Indiana Historical Society

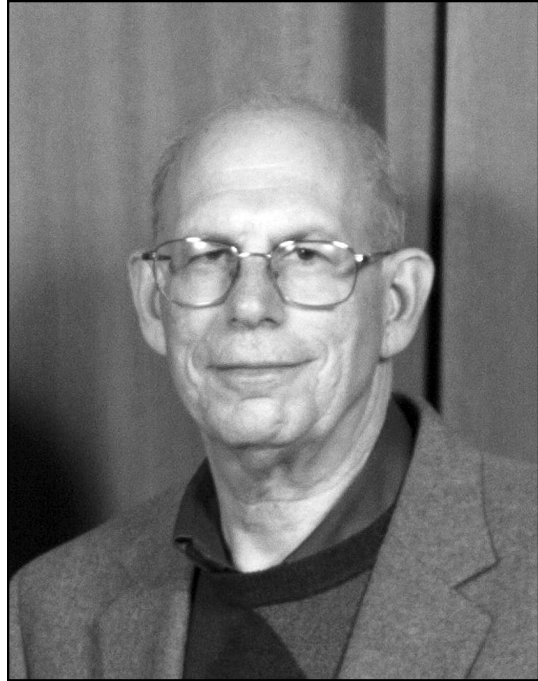
INDIANAPOLIS — Long-time HCHS member Allen Safianow of Kokomo, was selected by the Indiana Historical Society as the winner of the 2013 Jacob Piatt Dunn Jr. Award for his article "Ryan White and Kokomo, Indiana: A City Remembers."

Safianow received the award during the IHS annual Founders Day event on Dec. 2, at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center in downtown Indianapolis.

Named for noted Indiana historian and author Jacob Piatt Dunn Jr., this \$500 award honors the article that, in the opinion of the *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History* editorial board and staff, best serves the magazine's mission. This mission involves presenting thoughtful, research-based articles on Indiana history in an attractive format to a broad audience of readers.

"Ryan White and Kokomo, Indiana: A City Remembers," appeared in the winter 2013 issue of *Traces*. Safianow's article was based on interviews conducted with community members who played key roles in the evolution of Ryan White's efforts to attend classes at Western Middle School in 1985, after the 14-year old had been diagnosed with Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome. A hemophiliac, Ryan had acquired the virus from an injection of Factor VIII, which contains a clotting agent found in blood.

Safianow is professor emeritus of history at Indiana University Kokomo and serves as a trustee and chair of the Howard County Historical Society's Oral History Committee. In 2012, he accepted IHS's Indiana History Outstanding Project Award on behalf of HCHS, which won



for his committee's work to document the story of Ryan White's crusade to attend school after being diagnosed with AIDS.

Since 1830, the Indiana Historical Society has been Indiana's Storyteller™, connecting people to the past by collecting, preserving, interpreting and sharing the state's history. A private, nonprofit membership organization, IHS maintains the nation's premier research library and archives on the history of Indiana and the Old Northwest. IHS also provides support and assistance to local museums and historical groups, publishes books and periodicals; sponsors teacher workshops; and provides youth, adult and family programming.

Warm up your creativity Feb. 22-23 at the Winter Woolen Workshop

What better way to spend a winter day than to have your hands on some warm wool? The Winter Woolen Workshop on Feb. 22 and 23 will give you that opportunity. That weekend, all-day workshops and demonstrations of a variety of handcrafts will take place at the Seiberling Mansion and Elliott House.



Participants can try their hands and watch others demonstrate early samplers, colonial painting, traditional and primitive rug hooking, needle felting, hand quilting, wool applique, crazy quilt stitches, spinning and weaving, oxford rug punch, tatting, punch needle embroidery, knitting, crocheting and silk ribbon embroidery. Bring a project from home to work on or try something new. In addition, you can enjoy browsing among a variety of items for sale by the many vendors at the event.

The eighth annual Winter Woolen Workshop is presented by Beth's Main Street Folkart and the Howard County Historical Society. Cost of a two-day admission is \$10. Proceeds benefit the Howard County Historical Society. Advance sale tickets available at howardcountymuseum.org.

Hours are Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, contact Beth Notaro at 765-236-1000, bethsmnstfolkart@aol.com or www.picturetrail.com/bethsmainstreet.

A hand quilter works on her project, above, at the 2013 workshop. Vendors, below, sold their wares last year in the Elliott House.



Historian hears requests from near and far

By John Morr
Howard County Historian

Serving as a county historian can lead to some unusual and interesting queries from near and far.

My most interesting request of 2013 was actually related to an intriguing investigation we already were pursuing. The Howard County Historical Society has been looking into another possible “first” invention for Kokomo — once again, related to the automobile.

A few years ago, we learned of a man who worked for the Kokomo Rubber Company, back when Elwood Haynes and the Apperson brothers began manufacturing automobiles in Kokomo. That gentlemen’s son, who resides in southern Indiana in Parke County, gave us much information about what his father invented, and the story of William Swern is shared elsewhere in this issue of *Footprints*.

As to the request, I had communicated on numerous occasions with the inventor’s son, who is a nonagenarian and very active. In June, the son, Bill Jr., sent me an email asking for some help. He said that back in 1985, he met a teenage girl and her mother, who were from Kokomo, at an antique tractor show in Winamac. The girl was wearing an old-fashioned dress, and when he discovered they were from Kokomo, it gave Bill an idea. He was working on a slide-show project about Indiana’s early automobile industry and asked the girl and her mother if the girl might be willing to pose for some photos back in Kokomo alongside some antique automobiles at the Haynes Museum. Bill took several pictures of this young lady.

In 2013, Bill had come across these pictures in his collection and hoped I might be able to help him find her or her relatives and pass the photos on. He had written down a name and remembered she was in 4-H and they lived on

the west side of Kokomo. The name he had written down was Tressa Teller.

So, I switched into historian mode and tapped my somewhat questionable brain cell storage bank to see if I could help Bill out.

The first thing that came to mind was the girl’s last name. I was familiar with this name through my extended association with the Howard County Genealogical Society. A local fellow we know as Alan Teller is camp commander of the Orlando A. Somers Camp No. 1 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. We have shared information and presentations with his organization on several occasions.

My wife, Cindy, who is curatorial assistant at the Howard County Historical Society, had Alan’s email address. She wrote to him, asking him if he might have a familial link with a young lady named Tressa from 1985.

Low and behold, Alan responded to the email, writing, “Tressa is Teresa Teller, my daughter... She and her mother remember the tractor show and the photos. It is great to know my association with the Historical Society allows a contact like this to be made. Thank you for helping to open a page into her past.”

Not long after Mr. Teller’s response, Bill, Jr. told me he had heard from Teresa, had passed the photos onto her and was very pleased that we had been able to link them back together.

There is no rocket science in our efforts, no wizardry or magic. It is just what we do — and we enjoy doing it. Helping folks to answer local history questions, to find information or steer them in the right direction is our charge.

Speaking as the county historian, and for those who have served before me, we could not be successful at our charge if it were not for the history-related organizations such as the Howard County Historical Society and the many, many other members of the Howard County Historical Alliance.



Another 'First' for Kokomo?

By Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

Howard County is justifiably proud of its history of invention – and its inventors. The names of Haynes, Spraker, Kingston and Maxwell are legendary, as are the alloys, automobiles, pneumatic tires and carburetors they developed.

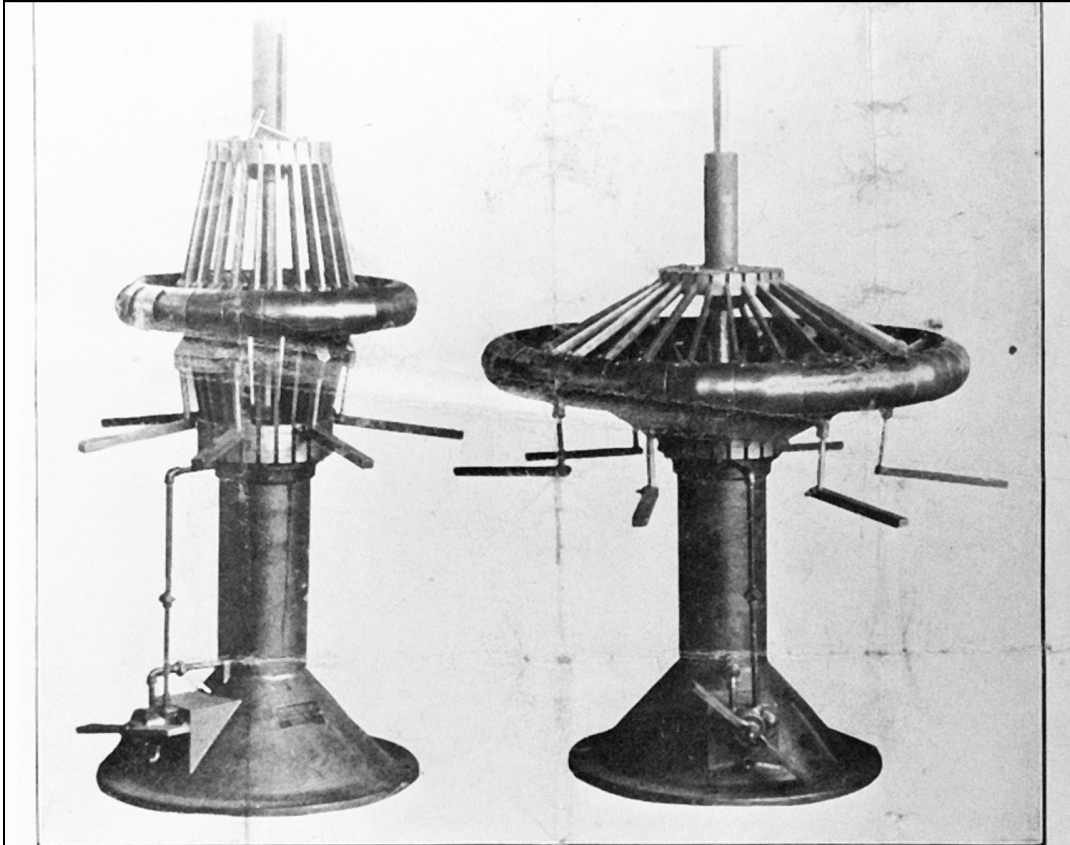
But is a name missing from the list? Does one more name deserve a place on the list of "Firsts"?

William Swern was born in Ohio in 1887 at the start of the gas boom. Rubber tires for the new-fangled automobiles brought him to Kokomo in January 1919, where he went to work for D.C. Spraker's Kokomo Rubber company. Within the year, he was a foreman. He took the job seriously, always thinking about better ways to make tires.

In the early 1920s, demand was a serious problem in the tire business. Auto ownership was skyrocketing, but road construction lagged. More cars running on rough and undeveloped roads meant more flat or shredded tires. The tire business needed a change, and Bill Swern had some new ideas.

Before Swern, tire making was a slow, labor-intensive process. Tires were built one at a time, with the fabric and rubber laid up by hand. The materials and equipment were heavy, the workers exhausted, the plants filthy, and supply couldn't keep up with demand. Bill experienced the physical demands firsthand, and watched what it did to his crews. As a foreman, he would have been responsible for the plant's ability to keep up with demand.

In 1921, Swern figured out a way to break the manufacturing process into steps. Instead of



Swernbuild System New Type Expanding Machine

Our new Type Tire Expanding Machine shown above has twenty-four expanding segments, which assures equal expansion through-out the tire. It also has a range sufficient for any size tire and an automatic stop device, which consists of holes in a steel rod, placed to suit the tire to be expanded. This is done by using key shown in contracted machine, which is slipped from one hole to another for the different size tires. If the centering guides are set for 29x4.40 tire, any four inch tire can be centered without changes other than the pin or key in the stop device. We furnish this machine with any size segments. Shipping weight 500 lbs.

Additional information and prices will be furnished upon request.

THE SWERNBUILD SYSTEM
Kokomo, Indiana



Bill Swern

each tire being built by one person, his system assigned different steps in the process to different crews — and then moved each tire from one group to the next until it was finished. Some say that was one of the first, if not the very first, assembly line operations in America. Henry Ford is officially credited with a moving as-

sembly line in 1914, but Swern's was likely the first in a tire factory.

As he worked to improve his crew's output and quality, Swern's inventive mind came up with new devices to streamline the assembly line. He earned three patents for his inventions. The first was filed in 1923 for a "tire — forming machine". With it, he hoped to change the basic process and increase production rates. His machine replaced pneumatic, or inflated, forms with an expanding metal hub. The following year, he submitted a patent application for a "process of forming drum tires" and improved on the techniques and equipment he was developing with his first invention. In 1926, he filed for his third patent — for a "tire building drum", which was intended to improve the quality of the final product.

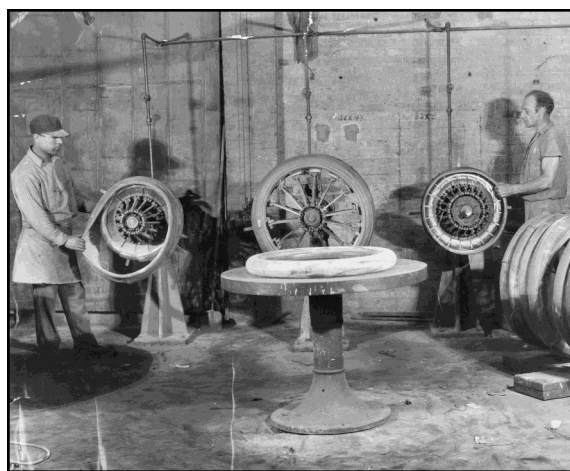
In the long run, Swern realized little personal benefit from his innovation. Others were better able to take advantage of them, including Goodyear Tire and Rubber. Swern left Kokomo Rubber in 1923 and started Swernbuild Systems of Kokomo in partnership with a man named George Morrow. The partnership was short-lived, ending when Morrow was caught using company money for personal purposes. Swern traveled the country selling his equipment and had some mail-order success with

sales to Canada, Australia and England. He didn't take to the role of traveling salesman, though. In 1929, shortly before the economy crashed, he bought a farm in Parke County. The Depression drastically changed his economic circumstances and nearly killed his dreams for the farm.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber approached Swern in the early 1930s about obtaining rights to one of his patents. According to family history, the company said it could reproduce his machine, but that it would be easier for all concerned if he would sell the rights. His lawyer advised him to sell for whatever he could get, saying there was no way to fight them in court. To keep his farm and family's home, Swern chose to sell in 1933. Another of the patents was sold to Paul Frank of National Rubber Machinery in Akron, Ohio. In spite of those sales, though, the Swernbuild System was displayed at the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago as the modern way to manufacture automotive tires.

Bill Swern spent the rest of his working life as a farmer. He passed away in 1983, a day short of his 96th birthday. He's buried in Lafayette, where some of his descendants still live.

Information for this article came from a family history, written by William Swern Jr., and from U.S. Patent Office records.



Updated architecture brochure a guide through historic neighborhood

By Linda Ferries
HCHS Publications Committee Member

The Kokomo Historic Review Board is gathering information for an update of its 2005 "Historic Architecture: A Walking Tour of the Old Silk Stocking Neighborhood."

The brochure, which features the Howard County Historical Society's Seiberling Mansion and the late 19th century neighborhood that surrounds it, offers a guide to many beautiful homes that "decorate tree-lined Walnut Street, Sycamore Street, Superior Street, Kingston Road and beyond." It includes an introduction to the historic architectural styles on display – Italianate, Queen Anne, Craftsman, American Foursquare, Bungalow, Second Empire and Revival styles from Tudor to Renaissance to Colonial. For some properties, historical information of owners and uses is included.

With the brochure approaching its 10th anniversary, an update is in the works that will expand the tour to include properties on Mulberry and Taylor streets.

Charles Duncan, president of the Kokomo Historic Review Board, explains the project:

"In 2008, The Old Silk Stocking Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places along with the Courthouse Square and Railroad Depot Districts. The National Register nomination process, and Indiana Landmarks interim report before that, identified many significant historic properties in the district that were not included in our original Walking Tour Brochure. With the review, the HRB wants to include more of these significant historic properties."

Jerry Meiring, an HRB advisor and community specialist in the City of Kokomo's Department of Development, is coordinating the pro-

ject. About 20 additional properties have been identified for possible inclusion in the new brochure based on their designation in the Indiana Landmarks "interim report" on historic architecture in Kokomo. Most were designated as "outstanding" historic structures. Letters have gone out to the property owners asking for permission to include a photo and a historical and architectural description of their property in the new brochure.

"We hope the property owners will be proud to be included in this publication that showcases Kokomo's history and architecture," Duncan said. "We hope they will share historic photos, information about the architect or builder and the original and subsequent owners, and any interesting anecdotes they may have."

Those who have been contacted are asked to respond to the HRB by calling Jerry Meiring at 765-456-7375 or by email at jmeiring@cityofkokomo.org.

The Kokomo Historic Review Board was established by a City Council ordinance more than 30 years ago "to implement a comprehensive program of historic preservation." Since that time, the Historic Review Board has reviewed and granted local historic designation to 70 properties in the City of Kokomo. Anyone interested in nominating their property for that recognition are welcome to contact Jerry Meiring as well.

Copies of the current brochure are available at the Howard County Historical Society, the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library, the Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau at 325 N. Main St., and at two locations in City Hall (the One-Stop office on the first floor and the Department of Development office on the third floor).

Membership

Thanks to all who joined the Howard County Historical Society
or renewed their memberships in recent months.

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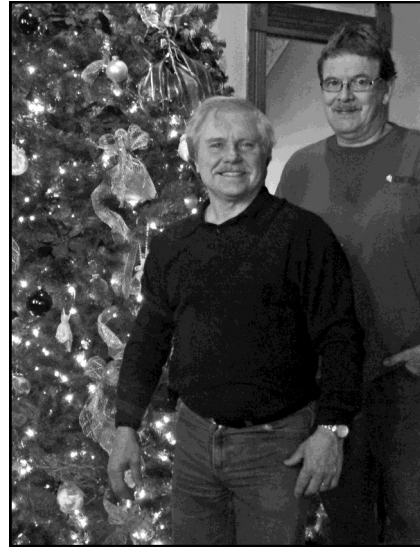
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A last taste of the holidays

The decorations are gone and the strings of lights have all been rolled up and put away. Another successful “Christmas at the Seiberling” is now a memory.

Thanks to historical society member Paula Goff, here is one last taste of the 2013 holiday season at the Seiberling Mansion to help hold you over until next year.

This year, “Christmas at the Seiberling” included dozens of angels that were found throughout the mansion, including this tiny trio, at right, and a larger one in the parlor, below.



Darrell and Bruce Blasius, above, won the People’s Choice Award for their decoration of the third-floor ballroom.

On the opposite page, the mansion was illuminated with hundreds of lights, including a lighted angel outside in the third-floor cupola.

PAULA GOFF
PHOTOS





Digital dimension, continued from page 4

the app enabled, simply focus your camera on the QR badge posted at the exhibit. The device will recognize the unique QR design and automatically open your web browser to the tour page for that stop.

However you choose to get to the tour pages, you'll find additional information in written and audio formats, as well as clickable images. Most of the images are historical and are selected to enhance your exploration of the topic.

The mobile device tour of the mansion is Phase 3 of the Howard County Heritage Tour, which has been funded by the Greater Kokomo Convention and Visitors Bureau. It's being produced by the historical society in coopera-

tion with the members of the Howard County Historical Alliance. The first two phases of the project rolled out the Old Silk Stocking District Walking Tour and the Downtown Kokomo Historical Architecture Walking Tour, which were developed by the Kokomo Historic Review Board.

It is our hope that the new digital tour enhancement will make your visit more meaningful, strengthen your appreciation of Howard County's remarkable history, and help you share both with the next generation.

Dave Broman

dave.broman@howardcountymuseum.org

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