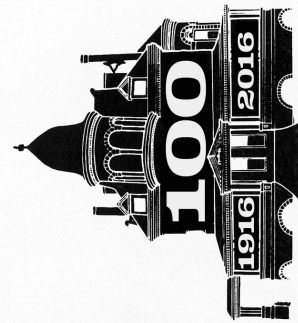


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Footprints

A publication of the Howard County Historical Society

Volume 5, Issue 2

May 2016



From 1890 to today

Baseball always a hit in Howard County

From the executive director

Fostering a flourishing community

How does a historical society celebrate a hundredth birthday? Cake and ice cream are nice — and traditional — but is that enough? A hundred years is quite an accomplishment for an organization or an individual. The world changes so quickly that anything with longevity seems unusual (yet we yearn for stability and chafe under a constant barrage of the new and amazing). This historical society is celebrating its centennial by working to ensure its bicentennial. Our mission, “to collect, preserve, and share Howard County history,” has no expiration date. New history is being created every day.

Our understanding of history — and thus of ourselves — changes and grows with each passing year. Working toward our bicentennial is every bit as important as celebrating our centennial. By extension, the same can be said of our state as we celebrate Indiana’s second hundred years. Today is built on yesterday — and tomorrow will be built on today. As a historical society, a community, a state, let’s consciously build the kind of tomorrow that we would be happy to live in today.

Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

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Save the date
May 18 – For Members Only: Kurt Meyer, Author and Preservation Activist
May 30 – HCHS Night at the Kokomo Jackrabbits
Aug. 26 – Howard County Hall of Legends
Sept. 5-11 – Kokomo Automotive Heritage Museum Salutes Indiana’s Automotive Heritage
Sept. 17-18 – Koh Koh Mah Encampment
Oct. 5 – Bicentennial Torch Relay in Howard County
Oct. 18 – HCHS Annual Meeting

Membership

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

Todd & Deanna Picton/Gifford	Brandon Fisher	Dianne Waggaman
Lynn Smith	Kappa Kappa Kappa Inc.	Margaret Butler Endowment
Gloyd Johnson	Beta Lambda Chapter	Fund
Psi Iota Xi Sorority	Dr. Bradley Vossberg	
Jonathan & Amy Russell	Brian & Laura Sheets	

100 Years, continued from page 3

the mansion have probably noticed the recent cosmetic damage to paint and plaster, but hidden water damage to structural wood and masonry is a particular concern. With the entire structure of the mansion depending on the roof, we can neither afford to ignore the problem nor continue to procrastinate. The question is no longer “will we?” but “when?”

Within the next few months, you’ll be hearing much more about the Seiberling roof as we kick off a campaign to pay for its replacement. Given the beauty of the house, its significance and its status on the National Register of Historic Homes, we plan to use architecturally and historically appropriate slate. The project will be expensive over the short term, but cost effective over the long term. Our annual roof maintenance costs will see an immediate drop, as will those for plaster work and paint, and – barring natural disasters – the new roof will be good for another hundred years. Or more.

The whole community of Howard County has a stake in the preservation of the mansion. When the campaign begins and you’re asked to help, please be generous.

Grant, continued from page 3

the society’s future maintenance of the structure. One area of particular concern is the mansion’s original, 126-year-old, slate roof.

Indiana Landmarks, headquartered in Indianapolis, is a nonprofit organization, working to defend architecturally unique, historically significant and communally cherished properties. The organization rescues, rehabilitates and gives them new purpose — helping save the state’s shared heritage and bring new life to communities.

Mark Dollase of Indiana Landmarks presented the grant to the society on April 4. RATIO Architects of Indianapolis, well known for preservation work on properties such as the Benjamin Harrison home, Hinkle Fieldhouse, the Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site, Charley Creek Inn and many others, has been engaged to provide the assessment.

Author and preservationist to speak at Elliott House May 18

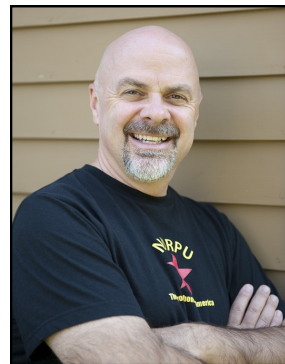
A special program for members only

By Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

Author and preservation activist Kurt Meyer of Noblesville will present a program for HCHS members only at 6:30 p.m. May 18 at the Elliott House.

Meyer has written about the history and changing face of American small town life in hundreds of newspaper columns, blog posts and two novels. Living a modern life with respect for the past is a recurring theme in his work, leading him to speak before scores of civic and preservation groups, historical societies, book clubs and library boards. Meyer has been a community activist for nearly 30 years, leading his local preservation group and serving on its board for 20 years, representing it before Indiana Landmarks Affiliate Council and advocating for historic preservation before boards of zoning appeals, plan commissions and city councils.

Meyer also knows the economics of historic preservation. He's been a realtor specializing in historic properties for 22 years, was the first president of Noblesville's Main Street organization and created his community's first facade grant program. His work there — a gas boom city like Kokomo that grew wildly in the late 1800s — makes his experience and insights



Preservation activist
and author Kurt Meyer

particularly valuable to us in Howard County.

He's restored four historic homes himself and gathered architectural salvage from across Indiana and southern Michigan. He's spent years dumpster-diving to retrieve discarded historic house parts at construction sites and has totally stripped houses just prior to demolition.

In addition to the program, Meyer will have copies of his two novels available for purchase. Both are firmly grounded in Indiana life and reflect his love for history and preservation.

Join us in the Elliott House for desserts and the presentation. The event is free, but seating is limited. Reserve your place today by calling the HCHS office at 765-452-4314.

Learn more about Meyer from his website at kurtameyer.com.

You'll also find him online at:

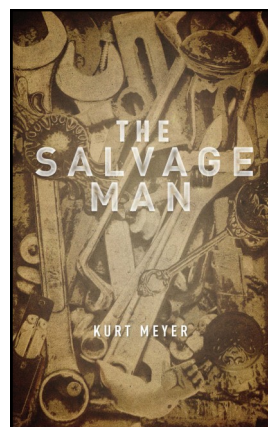
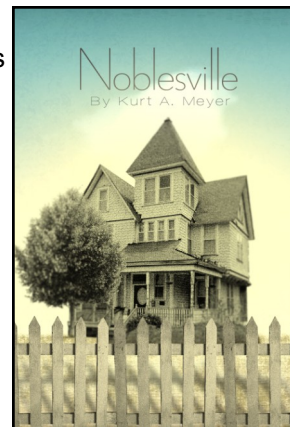
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Saving Our Seiberling:

The Next 100 Years

By Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

As members of the historical society, Seiberling Mansion is only "ours" in the sense that we're responsible for its care. The mansion belongs to the people of Howard County, and the stories it represents belong to the world. We take our stewardship role very seriously.

The mansion came under the care of the society in 1971 after several years of abandonment. The years since have brought a series of rehabilitation projects, first to correct the worst of the damage incurred by neglect, and later to restore some of its Victorian beauty. Through all of those projects, the mansion's slate roof has been repeatedly patched; its life extended by a series of temporary fixes, sometimes with great, ugly globs of tar and sometimes with replacement slates.

The Seiberling's upper roof is original and 127 years old. It has seen the gas boom come and go, and survived the great floods, tornados, and ice storms of the past century. It sheltered residents who built the county's industrial economy and helped America win two world wars. Children played under it, college students studied there, and the house it protects remains with us as a testament to the resilience of the people of Howard County.

Slate is an incredibly durable roofing material, but no roof can permanently withstand the natural forces that turn mountains into gravel. The roof has leaked repeatedly in spite of regular maintenance. Visitors to



See "100 Years" on Page 19

HCHS receives grant for preservation assessment

Indiana Landmarks has provided a \$2500 matching grant to the historical society for a preservation assessment of the Seiberling Mansion, an in-depth analysis of the structure by specialists in architectural preservation. The assessment will help the society better understand the condition of the mansion, as well as potential future problems. It will provide recommendations and priorities for

See "Grant" on Page 19



Mark Dollase of Indiana Landmarks presented a \$2,500 matching grant to HCHS Executive Director Dave Broman on April 4.

(Photo courtesy of Curt Alexander, Spectrum Photography)

Girls enjoy a day of music, stories and fun at Museum Day Live!

By Linda Ferries
HCHS Publications Committee Chair

Several dozen visitors took advantage of the Smithsonian Magazine's Museum Day Live! to tour the beautiful Seiberling Mansion on March 12 and enjoy a variety of activities put together "to inspire and empower girls, moms and grandmothers of diverse backgrounds."

Sharon Reed Corbett, a member of the Howard County Historical Society Board of Trustees, organized the afternoon of games, dress-up and story-telling that filled the museum with

excited "girls" of all ages.

The Howard County Museum, located inside the Seiberling, joined participating museums across the country in opening its doors for free to those who downloaded a Museum Day Live! ticket.

"This is a wonderful way to share not only the beauty of the mansion but our unique heritage. The intertwining stories of Monroe Seiberling, Howard County and the Indiana Gas Boom help us understand why this county and state are among the most industrial in the nation – and why innovation is an integral part of our culture," said Dave Broman, executive director



Sharon Reed Corbett shared paintings from her collection.

Seiberling Mansion to participate in Blue Star Museums

The Howard County Historical Society's museum in the Seiberling Mansion is one of more than 2,000 museums across America to offer free admission to active military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Blue Star Museums is a collaboration of the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense and participating museums. It provides an opportunity for families to enjoy the nation's cultural heritage and learn more about their new communities after a military move. A complete list of participating museums is available at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Dave Broman, executive director of the Howard County Museum, commended the organizations involved in building the program, saying, "Howard County has a strong connection to the military, and we're proud to support their presence in the community as well as their service to the country. Military families face unique and difficult challenges, and we hope this small gesture will open doors and hearts for them."

"Parents of young children tell us that they go together to museums to learn new things and have family time together," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Blue Star Museums helps them to do both, by helping military families learn about the cultural resources in their communities, and offering a fun, high-quality experience that's budget friendly as well as family friendly."

We're proud to help connect museums to military communities nationwide."

"Blue Star Museums has grown into a nationally recognized program that service members and their families look forward to each year," said Blue Star Families CEO Kathy Roth-Douquet. "It helps bring our local military and civilian communities together, and offers families fun and enriching activities in their home towns. We are thrilled with the continued growth of the program and the unparalleled opportunities it offers."

This year, more than 2,000 (and counting) museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and American Samoa are taking part in the initiative. The museums represent fine arts, science, history, nature and dozens of children's museums.

The free admission program is available to any bearer of a Geneva Convention common access card (CAC), a DD Form 1173 ID card (dependent ID) or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card, which includes active duty U.S. military – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, as well as members of the National Guard and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps – and up to five family members. Some special or limited-time museum exhibits may not be included in this free admission program.

To find participating museums and plan your trip, visit arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Howardcountymuseum.org
Facebook.com/hchistory
Pinterest.com/hchistory

It's time to make your nomination for the 2016 *Hall of Legends*

The Howard County Historical Society is accepting nominations for the Howard County Hall of Legends. The new members will be inducted on Aug. 26.

The Hall of Legends includes auto pioneer Elwood Haynes, author Norman Bridwell of "Clifford the Big Red Dog" fame, journalist Steve Kroft, actor Strother Martin, talk show host Tavis Smiley and industrial entrepreneurs Monroe Seiberling and George Kingston, among others. A complete list, with biographies and photographs, is available at howardcountymuseum.org.

The Hall of Legends is open to individuals who have achieved significant recognition in the areas of Public Service, Commerce and

Industry, Science, Technology, Health Sciences, Art, Literature, Journalism, Humanities or Performing Arts.

To be eligible, the nominee must have been born in Howard County, lived in Howard County, worked in Howard County or established a reputation as being a contributor to the good reputation of Howard County.

All nominations must include supporting information and documentation.

Submissions should be delivered to: Hall of Legends, c/o Howard County Historical Society, 1200 W. Sycamore, Kokomo, IN 46901 or to info@howardcountymuseum.org.

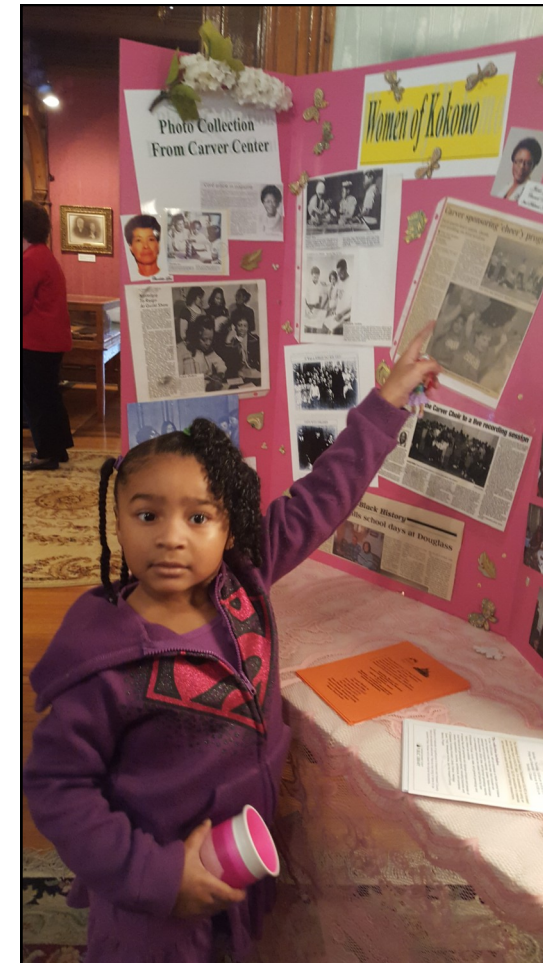
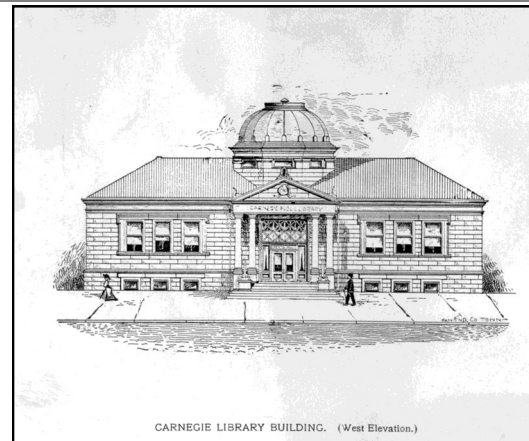
A downloadable nomination form is available at howardcountymuseum.org.

Library, continued from Page 15

The Kokomo Carnegie building was demolished in 1967 to make way for the present Kokomo-Howard County Public Library.

People occasionally lament its loss, but let's not lose sight of the beautiful library we have today — or the invaluable services it provides to the people of Howard County. Beginning with the first county museum, the historical society and the library have worked together to provide education and entertainment to county residents, to preserve the stories of our past, and to share the kind of experiences and lessons that make life better for all. The library and the museum are two of our greatest treasures.

(Author's note: much of the information for this article was provided by Amy Russell of the History and Genealogy Dept. of the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library and is based on Books Along The Wildcat by Leonard Felkey.)



This young lady found something especially interesting in the display about women of color in Howard County.

of the Howard County Historical Society.

A "vision board" craft project and a dress-up station were found in the third-floor ballroom, while a scavenger hunt entertained visitors on the main floor. Lisa Simmons provided inspiring vocal solos and Karon Lancaster shared historic tales of women of color in Howard County. A number of vintage photos of women of Kokomo were on display.

"This day was an opportunity to share the accomplishments of many African-American women in our community who have worked tirelessly as wives, mothers, employees, churchwomen, volunteer leaders and more," Reed-Corbett said. "It was exciting to revisit the 'Black Women in the Middle West' project led by Kokomo's Ruth Temoney and supported by many women in the our community doing research. The result of the project's research is stored at the Indiana Historical Society's Indiana History Center in Indianapolis."

Reed Corbett, who recently retired as director of the Leadership Kokomo program, offered special thanks to Ann Marie White as well as Lisa Simmons, Karon Lancaster and Pam Hanshew, who are all Leadership Kokomo veterans. She also thanked Dave Broman and Bill Baldwin of the historical society and representatives of Carver Community Center for providing great support to the Museum Day Live! activity.



These girls took advantage of the dress-up station in the mansion ballroom to try on hats and shoes from another era.

Add 'Howard County Historian' to Russell's long list of titles

By Linda Ferries
HCHS Publications Committee Chair

A true Renaissance man, Jonathan Russell's interests run from sculpture to painting, from the history of the United States to his family history, from etched glass to pipe organs, from military service to teaching junior high art classes, from restoring historic buildings to creating a thoroughly modern "maker space". Sculptor, painter, sign maker, karate master, preservationist, muralist, teacher, mentor, leader – he's recently added a new title to his list of credits, that of Howard County Historian.

The owner of Russell Design, as he nears the age of 70, Russell thought he planned to slow down, back out of some obligations, take it a little easier. Instead, he's taken on a variety of new assignments that have him busier than ever.



Howard County's newly named historian is Jonathan Russell, here standing in front of the statue of Martin Luther King Jr. he created from Indiana limestone.

In February, the Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana Historical Bureau announced that Russell has been appointed Howard County historian. In this role, Russell will act as a liaison between statewide agencies and local organizations.

He will also answer questions from the public about Howard County's traditions and legacy. It's a natural fit for a man whose love of history goes back to his childhood. One of his earliest memories is, as a child in Delaware in 1953, meeting and talking with one of the state's last surviving participants of the Civil War, a centenarian who had served as a cabin boy. His family later moved in and out of Indiana as his father served a variety of churches; Russell settled here permanently in the early 1970s after serving as an Army medic in Vietnam and completing a bachelor's degree in art education, fine art and art history at Purdue. For his first

was 1901 and wealthy entrepreneur Andrew Carnegie was in the middle of one of the most remarkable philanthropic projects ever undertaken: the building of nearly 1,800 American libraries. One hundred sixty-six Carnegie libraries were built in Indiana between 1901 and 1918. Kokomo's new building opened in 1905, based on a Carnegie grant of \$25,000.

During the following decades, the library collected books for the soldiers of World War I, started the first branch library, helped the community learn how to cope with the Great Depression, started the annual Summer Reading Program and provided the first home for the Howard County Museum. The library was part of the Kokomo Center Township school system during those years, but the end of World War II and the return of the GIs led to overwhelming growth and changes. The school system turned the library over to a new, independent library board in 1963 and the quest for a new building began.



A view from the northwest of Union Street and the Kokomo-Howard County Carnegie Library in 1909. Streetcar tracks ran in front of the library at that time.

It was clear as early as the late 1950s that the community library had outgrown the beautiful but worn-out Carnegie building. At least 11 of the state's Carnegie library buildings faced the same problem and are now gone, with only a handful still used as libraries. The rest have become museums, city buildings, police stations, and one is even a private residence.



Continued on Page 16

Preserve your family history for future generations

As a way to celebrate Indiana's Bicentennial, the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library and Howard County Historical Society are teaming up to preserve your family history digitally. The project is called "Howard County, My Home." Here's how it works:

- It's FREE!
- Now through May 30, head to the Genealogy & Local History Department on the lower level of KHCPL Main, 220 N. Union St.
- Submit up to 10 pieces of your family's history (photos, vital records, local postcards, letters detailing history/happenings/life, etc.)

- We scan it while you wait.
- KHCPL and the Howard County Historical Society will make your family's history part of Kokomo and Howard County's permanent and searchable digital archives.

- August through November in the Art Gallery on the lower level of KHCPL Main, view copies of photos and other people's local history along with a map noting all coordinating locations.

For more information, call Amy Russell at 765-626-0838.

Roots of the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library run deep

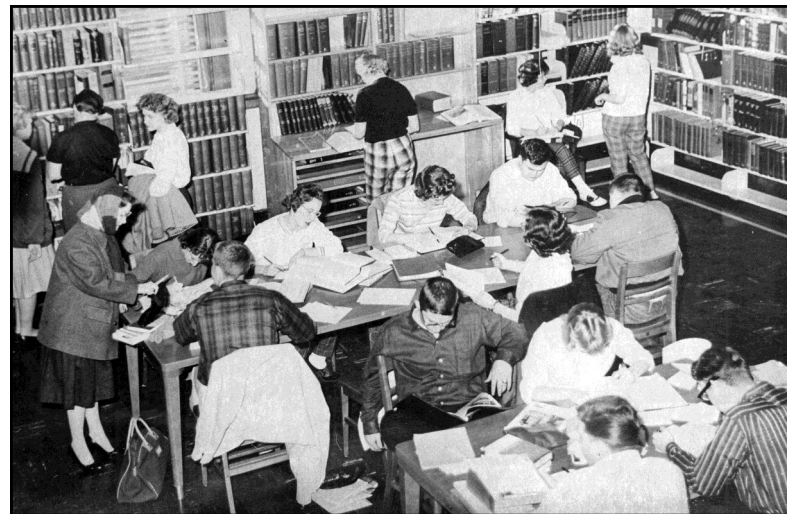
By Dave Broman
HCHS Executive Director

The historical society and the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library have worked hand-in-hand for nearly a hundred years — but the library's roots in the community go far deeper.

In December 1844, a few short months after the founding of the county, the new commissioners authorized a library fund and slowly began adding to it. It took them seven years to build up a hundred dollars, which they promptly spent in 1851 on books. The following year, the state passed a new school law, which included a provision for township libraries, so the commissioners established six library districts in the county. What seemed like a good idea at the time was severely stunted by the Civil War and eventually it was dropped, but the interest in libraries kept growing.

Shortly before Thanksgiving in 1880, the Opera House in Kokomo (which still stands at the corner of Walnut and Buckeye) hosted a benefit performance to raise money for a free library. By the end of 1885, enough money had been collected and the new Kokomo library opened in the Normal School on Jan. 7, 1886. A young grammar teacher named Joshua Leach was the first librarian (some of his descendants still reside in Kokomo), managing a collection of less than 100 books.

Normal School was located at Market and Sycamore streets, in what is now a parking lot across from Central International School. It burned in 1898, but the library had already outgrown the school by then and was ensconced in the then-new Kokomo City Building, along with its more 4,400 books. The books were moved two more times before the community began a campaign for a dedicated library building. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the year



It wasn't the local soda fountain, but the Kokomo-Howard County Carnegie Library was still a popular spot for local high school students in the 1950s and 1960s. Use of the older building outgrew its capacity, and the library board began its quest for a larger facility in 1963.

10 years in Howard County, he was an art instructor in Western Schools.

During his more than 40 years in Howard County, he's racked up an impressive list of experiences. He is a member and former president of the Howard County Historical Society and the Howard County Genealogical Society and also served as president of the Kokomo Historic Review Board. He was active in the founding of the Old Silk Stocking Neighborhood Association and Architectural Heritage of Kokomo-Howard County Inc. in the 1980s and has been instrumental in obtaining National Register of Historic Places designation for a number of historic properties.

Russell currently serves on the advisory board of the Russiaville Historical Society, where he is active in the restoration of the interurban station. In addition, Russell is founding member of the Kokomo Designers' Showhome, which in the 1990s featured updates of both the Elliott House and the Seiberling Mansion. He helps promote history of the Wildcat Valley, hoping to expand that program east to Howard County.

Military service and military history are also subjects dear to this veteran of the Vietnam War. As a member of the board of the Howard County Veterans Memorial Committee, he has been an integral part of the Darrough Chapel Park development. And one of his latest ventures is as a leader in the new SHAK Makerspace, an association of inventors, tinkerers, artisans and builders resurrecting the "Spirit of Haynes and Apperson in Kokomo" on North Washington Street in the long-time home of Russell Design.

Russell was recently in the news as the sculptor who created out of Indiana limestone the impressive statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that serves as centerpiece of the new memorial park on Apperson Way at Jackson

Street. He'll be teaching a stone carving class at SHAK this summer.

Living up to the maxim that if you want something done ask a busy person, Russell has an ambitious list of goals for his new position as county historian. These include:

- Developing an association that promotes the history, genealogy and preservation efforts within the area, bringing together leaders of various museums to coordinate efforts, share displays and artifacts, and promote each other. This includes HCHS, the historical societies of Greentown and Russiaville, the Grissom Air Museum, the Haynes Museum and the Kokomo Automotive Museum. His vision is to better serve our local communities and visitors.

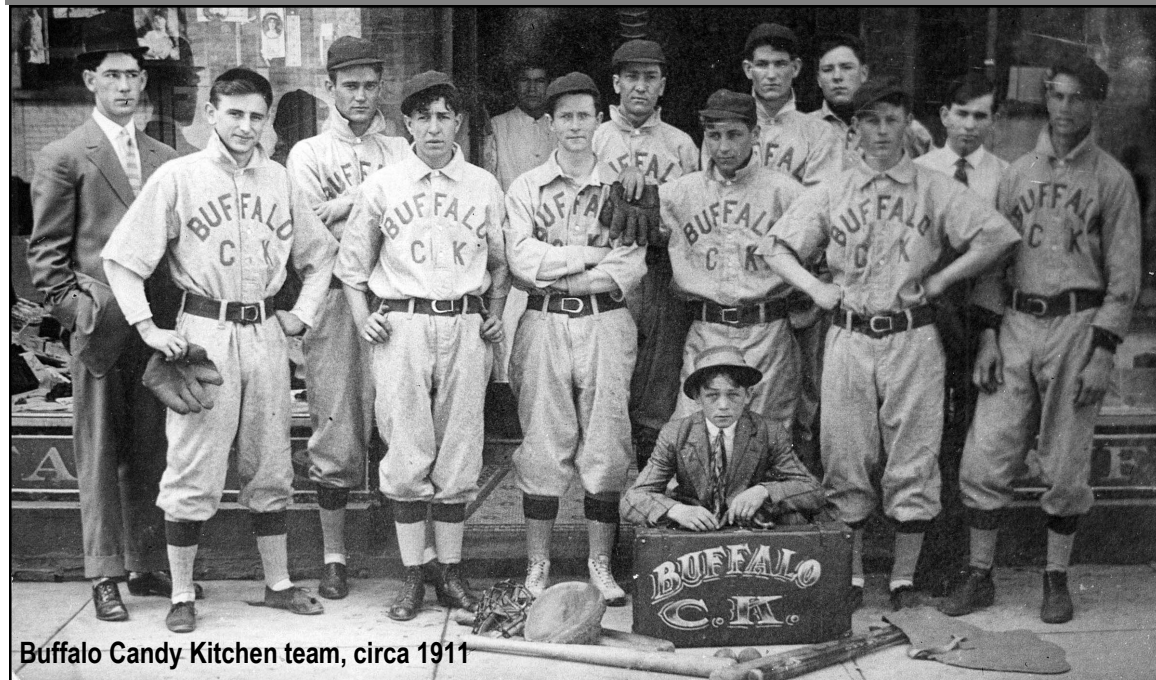
- Participating in a nationwide project of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War documenting and marking the grave of the last Civil War veteran in every county that fielded soldiers in that conflict.

- Coordinating with Promoting Wildcat Valley, a civic group centered in the Cutler and Adams Mill area with the purpose of preserving, promoting and developing the historic and natural resources of the Wildcat Creek region of Carroll County. Russell hopes to bring their efforts east to include Howard County's Wildcat Creek heritage. Russell has long been involved in the effort to restore and maintain Adams Mill, an operating grist mill built on the Wildcat in 1845.

He's excited about his new role. "Yep, I had planned to retire," Russell said. "Now I'm busier than ever."

For more information about the County Historian Program and other IHS resources and events, call 317-232-1882. In addition, a directory of local county historians is available online at www.indianahistory.org.

Baseball always a hit with fans in Howard County



Buffalo Candy Kitchen team, circa 1911

Diamond action started as early as 1890

By Steve Geiselman

Baseball in Howard County has a long and storied history, reaching back to Kokomo's participation in the Indiana State League in 1890 and continuing to the construction of a new stadium for a bunch of Jackrabbits. When exactly a group of guys first got together for a game of pitch and catch is probably hard to pin down. One thing is for certain, Howard County and Kokomo's love for America's Pastime started strong and never slowed down.

In the beginning

The first organized teams in Howard County took the field before the turn of the 20th century. In 1890, Kokomo fielded a team in the Indiana State League, and six years later, the Kokomo Blues were part of the same league. Teams in the Indiana State League included squads from Fort Wayne, Marion/Logansport, Elkhart, Bluffton, Peru, Anderson and Muncie.

Teams came and went, as "organized" was a loose term back in those days.

In 1899, Kokomo was part of two different teams in the Indiana-Illinois League. Kokomo/Mattoon and Anderson/Kokomo/Bloomington played in an unknown number of games that

An unidentified partial newspaper clipping from the HCHS archives shows The Kokomo Advertisers, "Kokomo's colored representatives in the baseball field," according to the original caption. Those identified in the front row are, from left to right, "Orndorff, D. Johnson, Biggs, T. Fort and Payne."



Easton, Pa. After his collegiate experience, he played 11 games in 1914 with the Pittsburgh Pirates — a team that included the great Honus Wagner. In 31 at-bats, Scheeren hit .290 with one home run and two RBIs. That season would prove to be the top of his arc into professional baseball. He spent the rest of 1915 with Youngstown of the Central League. In 93 games, he hit a paltry .213 with seven home runs. The following season he joined Wheeling, also of the Central League, where he played in 118 games and hit .283. That was his last recorded season in professional baseball.

Fred Scheeren said that the family legend behind Fritz's departure from baseball mentions something about an illicit relationship with a team owner's spouse.

"I don't think that was the case," Scheeren said. "Given his stats, it was more likely that he wasn't good enough."

New era of baseball

Baseball made a dramatic return to Kokomo in the spring of 2015 with the arrival of the Kokomo Jackrabbits, a Prospect League team. The Jackrabbits are part of the 12-team college summer wooden-bat league and play their games at Kokomo Municipal Stadium.

Kokomo Municipal Stadium was built close to downtown Kokomo as an alternative to the aging Highland Park Stadium, which went up in 1955 when the Giants came to town.

Ballpark Business, an online news and information resource for anyone interested in the business side of baseball franchise operations, released its national Top 100 2015 summer collegiate attendance rankings and the Jackrabbits debuted on the list at No. 26 as the top-ranked new team in the country and had the top attendance of any team in Indiana. The Jackrabbits averaged 1,523 fans over 29 dates at Kokomo Municipal Stadium and drew a total of 44,181 fans.

All 12 teams of the Prospect League finished in the Top 100 and only the Chillicothe Paints (1,824) and the Danville Dans (1,795) outdrew the Jackrabbits.

In June 2015, Kokomo Municipal Stadium was named Best of the Ballparks: Best Summer Collegiate Ballpark in a poll conducted by Ballpark Digest.

(Steve Geiselman is a former newspaper sports reporter and presently works as a community planner with the City of Kokomo Development Department.)



William Derbyshire played for the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Nine, and later for the Kokomo Dodgers. The Dodgers played in Highland Park Stadium from 1956-1961.

final statistics include a .241 batting average, one home run and 44 runs batted in. He played in 157 games total.

Other major league baseball players with a Howard County connection include Don Castle (Texas Rangers, 1973), Anthony Shumaker (Philadelphia Phillies), Dan Dumoulin (Cincinnati Reds) and Fredrick "Fritz" Scheeren (Pittsburgh Pirates).

Fritz Schreen's story is particularly interesting as most – if not all – local baseball fans would be hard-pressed to tell you much about him. They probably don't even know him and for good reason.

Scheeren was born in Kokomo in 1891, and his family moved away shortly thereafter. The family headed east to Pennsylvania. Scheeren died in 1973, but his nephew, Fred Scheeren, who works for an investment firm in West Virginia, was able to offer some insight to what happened and the reason behind the move.

"My understanding is that the family moved to near the Pittsburgh area in order to open a saloon," Scheeren said. "It was just outside of the city."

According to Scheeren, Fritz and his brothers would stage bare-knuckle fights in the evenings in order to draw patrons to the bar.

Eventually Fritz left the fighting behind and made his way to the ball diamond. Little is known about his pre-professional career, according to Scheeren.

Fritz attended and played baseball at Lafayette College in



Stellite - 1927 Kokomo city champions.

season.

The year 1900 saw Kokomo returned to the Indiana State League for one season. Baseball was gone from the city until 1907 when Kokomo fielded a team in the Ohio-Indiana League. Finally, in 1909 the Kokomo Wildcats were part of the Northern State of Indiana League.

That would be the end of organized semi-pro baseball Kokomo and Howard County until 1955.

Kokomo Industrial League

In between semi-pro and pro teams, booming Industrial Leagues took off across the state including Howard County. Howard County was a hotbed of diamond action from 1916 to 1921 with the creation of the Kokomo Industrial League. The league consisted of 10 teams, all sponsored and organized by local industries. Teams included Haynes Automobile Company, Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Hoosier Iron Works, Kokomo Electric and Apperson Automobile Company.

On opening days, the teams would parade from downtown to Exposition Park, which is now Highland Park. Crowds for games would reach nearly 3,000 and the league became so popular that talented players who lived within 100 miles of Kokomo would be given a job at a local factory.

According to newspaper accounts from the time, the league broke up ultimately because of the intense rivalry and bitter feelings that would be generated each season. In 1921, several teams were found to have major league players on the roster.

It was said that the league became "too big for its britches."

Gus Vandenbosch, who ran the league, told *The Kokomo Tribune* in 1947 that the league became a financial mess and eventually only four teams could afford to compete at the level necessary to be successful

Dodgers and Giants come to town

Kokomo and Howard County have seen their fair share of organized, pro or semi-pro baseball teams over the years. The first prominent team to bring a presence to Kokomo was the then-New York Giants, who established a team in 1955. The Kokomo Giants would only exist for one year but sported at least one big-name player in Orlando Cepeda.

The Giants played just one season in the Mississippi-Ohio Valley League, which featured teams from such places as Lafayette, Ind., Dubuque, Iowa, and Decatur, Ill. Local pitcher George Fort pitched in two games for the Giants, winning one and losing one. He also has one plate appearance but failed to collect a hit.

Once the Giants left town, the void at Highland Park Stadium

Join us for HCHS Jackrabbits Night

Howard County and baseball go together like hot dogs and home runs. We have a long history with the great American game, from industrial teams to school teams and pick-up games to pros. All you have to do is count the number of ballfields in the county today to see how important it remains.

Come join us for the first-ever Howard County Historical Society Night at the Jackrabbits on May 30 as we celebrate that history! The Jackrabbits will take on the Chillicothe Paints at 6:30 p.m. at the beautiful new Municipal Stadium in Kokomo. There's a popcorn giveaway, burger specials, balloons, clowns and more – and tickets start at just \$10 per person. It's a great way to kick off the summer season, and \$2 from each ticket sold comes to the historical society to help preserve our history.

Order your tickets online at www.kokomobaseball.com/groups using the code word "HISTORICAL" or download an order form from our website at www.howardcountymuseum.org.

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was quickly filled by the Kokomo Dodgers, a Class D baseball team that was an affiliate of the Brooklyn and then Los Angeles Dodgers. The team featured future major league star Tommy Davis and was managed for a while by Pete Reiser, himself a standout at the major league level.

Other major leaguers who played for the Dodgers – but not as successful or well-known as Davis and Reiser – include Rod Miler, Bill Kelso, Clarence Jones, Don Miles, Ed Palmquist, Nate Smith, Mike Brumley and Tim Harkness.

Another former Kokomo Dodger is Ed Serrano, who never quite made it to the big leagues. He recalled how successful the team was during that time in Kokomo.

"I was a third baseman when I came out of the service," Serrano recalled during a 2005 interview. "Then I hurt my arm, and they moved me to second base."

Before Serrano got to Kokomo, the team had some of its best seasons and featured future big-name baseball players.

"Pete Reiser managed the club in 1956 and 1957," he said. "He had Tommy Davis on those teams, and he later led the National League in hitting twice."

The Dodgers had developed a tradition by the time Serrano got to Kokomo. A seat could be had for a dollar, or 25 cents if you were a kid, and the crowds were large.

“One year they gave away a new car on opening night,” Serrano said. “There were about 4,000 people at Highland Park. They had one heck of a crowd. Kokomo always drew well.”

Back then a minor league team basically ran itself, according to Serrano. Help from the parent club was few and far between.

"In those days the major league club didn't give the affiliate that much money. They allowed them so much money and that was it," Serrano said. "The people here in Kokomo are the ones that kept baseball here. If it hadn't

been for people like Gus Vandenbosch, who had Pittsburgh Plate Glass, and L.O. Williams, baseball would not have lasted. I don't think the Dodgers ever contributed more than \$5,000."

Ultimately it was money that did in the Kokomo version of the Dodgers.

"It did get to the point where the money issue was too much," Serrano said. "The other teams that were in the league continued on for a while. But when I came here in 1958, the Dodgers had over 30 minor league teams. When I ended up my career, they had five minor league teams."

Howard County's Major Leaguers

Kokomo and Howard County have a fine tradition of sending players to the big leagues. Current players include Joe Thatcher, who has played for the San Diego Padres, Arizona Diamondbacks, Houston Astros and, most recently, the Cleveland Indians. Brandon Beachy, a Northwestern High School graduate, made the big show with the Atlanta Braves and is currently part of the Dodgers organization.

The area's biggest contribution to the majors came from brothers Tom and Pat Underwood,

who were local pitching sensations in the 1970s. Pat had a short career with the Detroit Tigers while Tom suited up for the New York Yankees, St. Louis Cardinals, Toronto Blue Jays, Oakland A's, Baltimore Orioles and the Philadelphia Phillies.

Unknown to many local baseball fans is the story of Kokomo's first major league baseball player, who spent five seasons with three of the sport's most storied franchises. Unlike Kokomo's modern major league pitchers, Howard "Rowdy" Elliott was a position player (catcher) who first broke into the majors in 1910 with the Boston Doves. The Doves were the 1910 version of what is now the Atlanta Braves. Elliott would go on to play with the Chicago Cubs and the Brooklyn Robins (Dodgers).

Elliott gained the nickname “Rowdy” off the field, rather than on it, according to a newspaper account from the time. His life off the field would prove to be more intriguing than his life

on the field. He was born in Kokomo on July 8, 1890, and was a diminutive 5 foot, 9 inches tall. At 160 pounds, he would be small by today's standards. How long he lived in Kokomo before moving westward remains a mystery.

On Feb. 12, 1934, in San Francisco, Elliott fell out of an apartment window into a light well, defined as “an unroofed external space provided within the volume of a large building to allow light and air to reach what would otherwise be a dark or unventilated area.”

The fall didn't kill Elliott — at least at first. A newspaper account from the time says that he was taken to the hospital and checked out. He got the all-clear and then was jailed on public drunkenness charges. Later while in jail, Elliott fell violently ill and was rushed to Harbor Hospital, where he died. Rowdy's lifestyle had gotten the better of him.

In the end, Elliott had spent five years in the major leagues over the course of nine years. His



The Kokomo Brass Works industrial baseball team, circa 1917