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# HENDRICKS COUNTY

## HISTORY BULLETIN



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THE HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ORGANIZED 1967

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"History is the torch that is meant to illuminate the past  
to guard us against the repetition of our mistakes of other days."

Claude G. Bowers, Indiana Historian



most attractive features of the Court House. Wayne Coles, who has been involved with other renovation work in the Court House, will tell us of the work that has been done, and the further plans for restoring our Court House to its original beauty.

Betty Bartley, program chairman, assures us that this will be a most interesting meeting. Ladies of Center Township with Grace Cox, chairman, will be in charge of the social hour.

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1985 bids fair to be another fine year for the HCHS. Betty Bartley, program chairman has announced the following programs. Why don't you mark these dates on your calendar now, so you won't miss any of these interesting meetings.

#### HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### 1985 PROGRAM

- FEB 3 Hendricks County Court House, Danville.  
Judge Jeffrey Boles will share information he has uncovered on the mural in the Circuit Court room. Wayne Coles will discuss the renovation work planned for the Court House interior.
- MAY 5 Lizton Methodist Church  
Vici Weaver will review So Brief a Frontier; Scenes from the Transformation of Wilderness by Don Alan Hall. The book deals with the early history of Union Township and the pioneers who settled it.
- AUG 4 Mill Creek Church  
Jodi Whicker will talk about the Furnas family of the Mill Creek area. Also Betty Bartley will give a brief history of the Mill Creek Meeting and the Mill Creek school.
- NOV 3 North Salem Christian Church  
Libbe Hughes will present a program on the Fifty-First Indiana Regiment under the leadership of Col. Able D. Streight.

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#### TO OUR NEW AND OLD OFFICERS

Our "new" officers aren't exactly new, for all of them have served greatly in various capacities. We want to thank them for their efforts, and especially Lois Crayton, our retiring president who has given so unstintingly of her time and talents. She has guided us through a most successful 1984, and because of her leadership and the help of many like her, the HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY remains a vibrant, healthy, active society.



On Nov. 22, 1924, a group of Hendricks County citizens met in the Assembly Room of the courthouse and organized the Hendricks County Historical Society. They chose as officers: Thad Adams, president; George Reitzel, 1st vice-president; Mrs. Julian Hogate, 2nd vice president; and Fred Brengle, secretary-treasurer. Dues were \$1 per year.

Their purpose was to get leaders for each township, and have a membership drive. Promotion would be through the clubs, P.T.A., and Central Normal College.

Members were assigned topics to be prepared for presentation at the subsequent meetings. At that time, at least one person would prepare a paper to be read by another.

The northwest room on the third floor of the court house was given to the society by the county commissioners for a museum. The group met in its new quarters Sept. 14, 1926.

Charter members were: Thad S. Adams, Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Blessing, Mr. and Mrs. Fred E. Brengle, Mrs. W. C. Osborne, Otis E. Gulley, and Mr. and Mrs. Julian Hogate, all of Danville; Roscoe Leak, Lizton, Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Ryner, Coatesville, and Margaret L. Shuler, Indianapolis.

The organization lasted until 1928.

The people of the county felt that Hendricks County should have a proper celebration of Indiana's 150th birthday. Our Hendricks County Historical Society was the outgrowth of the birthday celebration.

On July 13, 1967, a group of county citizens gathered at the Boy's School in Plainfield. Roy Fisher, Pittsboro, chairman pro tem, presided. Hubert Hawkins, director of the Indiana Historical Bureau spoke.

The group drew up a constitution and elected the following officers: Frank Litherland, Plainfield, president, Mrs. Hazel Felknor, Avon, vice-president, Mrs. Mildred B. Smith, Brownsburg, secretary, Mrs. Blanche Wean, Danville, treasurer, and Miss Ina Shaw, Danville, historian. And thus the Hendricks County Historical Society was reorganized.

The second meeting was on the second Sunday in October, 1967 at the Fellowship Hall in the Pittsboro Christian Church. All who joined that day became charter members. Charter members numbered 85.

Meetings were to be on the second Sunday of January, April, July and October. Special occasions such as Mother's Day, and commencements caused a conflict, as well as the January meeting being too close to Christmas, so it was decided to change the meetings to the first Sunday of February, May, August, and November. Our dues are now \$3.

Meetings have been held in many places. It was found feasible to look for an air-conditioned place in summer.

The society has had many interesting speakers, the second being the late Wayne Guthrie of the "Indianapolis News". We've woven a close bond over the years because most wouldn't miss the meetings for anything if they could help it.

Then Margaret Baker started writing the bulletins along about the first part of 1971. She has several contributors who tell about their own neighborhoods from their own experiences and by stories handed down. Someone will relate a story, not fiction either. We don't write that kind. Someone will suggest that they write it up for the bulletin. We've received some interesting information that way.

It's always been interesting to see the historic places where we've met and nearly always, there is someone who will tell the history of the building.

Those of us who work at putting the bulletin together have really become acquainted and we have a good time. It takes a lot of will power to keep from reading the bulletin until we get finished.

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#### NEWS FROM THE INDIANA ROOM

DANVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

by Betty Bartley

The beginning of a new year is a time to make plans, and I would like the members of the Hendricks County Historical Society to help me plan for 1985: any suggestions for books on genealogy and local history, any ideas for newspaper articles or displays will be welcome.

The library has ordered a new, larger display case for the main floor, with plenty of room to display photos and artifacts. The first display will feature photos that we have recently had printed from the collection of glass negatives taken by Prof. Charles A. Hargrave at the turn of the century.

The Indiana Room has joined the National Genealogical Society, and will be receiving their publications. We also have purchased an index to the 1860 census of Hendricks County from Kratz Indexing that will be very useful to researchers.

The Census Microfilm Rental Program has raised the price for microfilm rental, and extended the rental period from two weeks to 30 days. Ask for further information in the Indiana Room.

#### DEDICATION SONG

(The following was sung by the Rev. G. S. Reedy at the Dedication Exercises for the new Hendricks County Court House in 1915. It was sung to the tune of old Welsh Melody. Words by Mrs. N. E. DeMarcus.)

1. Long ago the men of Hendricks,  
Under trees in this same place  
Heard the judge pronounce the sentence,  
After laws they traced.  
The house of justice then, dear friends,  
Was one big log to seat the men;  
The stump a seat for the judge, you see:  
So the house was one big tree.







## R E M C'S 50th

We are indebted to Owen and Lucille Stamper for calling our attention to the 50th anniversary of the R E M C and they have submitted the following interesting article. Many of us can remember the early days before electricity came to the farmers and the days when it was new and exciting. Many of us have interesting or amusing memories of those days and we hope you will share them with us.

Did you know that the year 1985 marks the 50th anniversary of our nations first state association of rural electric co-operatives (REMC's). And Hendricks County REMC was one of the first REMC's in the State of Indiana; Boone County REMC was the 1st in the nation. We would like to have some articles in each of our historical bulletins this year that tell about the early days of Hendricks Co. REMC. If you have some special things you remember and want to share with others, please send them to the editor and we will use as much of the information as possible.

Following is some information you might be interested in knowing: On May 11, 1935 Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an executive order establishing a Rural Electrification Administration and in May, 1936, a bill was passed that allowed the REA to make self-liquidating loans to co-operatives established by the farmers themselves. Hendricks Co. Farm Bureau Co-op officers were instrumental in organizing all the early meetings in our area. On August 2, 1935, twelve people assembled in Danville to discuss the possibility for securing rural electrification for Hendricks Co. There was definitely a need and a desire to have it in the rural areas.

Other meetings were held throughout the next several months and the movement began to gain momentum. A name was adopted, directors were elected, and the way was paved for incorporation under Indiana law and the filing of a loan application with REA. On June 12, 1936, the formal organization of the Hendricks Co. REMC was formed. Officers were: Chester Cooper, President; Roscoe Buntin, Vice-President, William Mackey, Secretary, and Edgar Reitzel, Treasurer. Other board members were: Atlas Gore, Albert Cable, Alva Hocker, Frank Nichols, Clarence Masten, Merritt Gregory, Walter Barlow, Frank Fisher, Charles Davison, and Walter Johnson.

The 1st annual meeting of members was held in the county court house assembly room on March 17, 1936, although there was not a pole in the ground yet. An application for funds to construct, operate, and maintain electric distribution lines within the area designated to this REMC was submitted to REA on November 4, 1936. This was for an initial 400 miles of line to serve approximately 1600 member - consumers. This loan was approved early in 1937, making the money available to let construction contracts and proceed with construction.

In early spring, 1937, Ed Davis, manager of Hendricks Co. Farm Bureau Co-op, who lived near Jamestown, contacted Mr. C. O. Stamper to see if he would be interested in heading up the Hendricks Co. REMC. Mr. Stamper at that time was the superintendant of the municipal power plant of Jamestown, and owner of an electrical appliance store there. Actually Mr. Stamper was project superintendant when he first started working in the area and Mr. Edgar Reitzel was the executive secretary or one who took care of all correspondence and paper work. Later, Mr. Stamper was hired as the first manager and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1964.





## NAMES THAT BRING BACK MEMORIES

(Printed in THE INDIANAPOLIS NEWS, Aug. 25, 1953. Submitted by Mrs. Owen Stamper, daughter of Chester Parker, mentioned in the article.)

### She Switched to Weaving

By Wayne Guthrie

Many interesting reminiscences go together to make up the fascinating saga of the old Hamilton School of Hendricks County but none is more interesting than that of Edna Hamilton. She was the dutiful daughter of the settler, Abraham Hamilton, who gave the seat of learning its name.

The story goes that Edna was all set to be married. The date had been fixed and all her wedding accoutrements were ready. Even the bridegroom's suit had been finished by the home seamstress. His tucked and frilled wedding shirt also was ready for laundering.

Then there was a final prewedding call. The marriage was called off! On his return from that visit the bridegroom-not-to-be said forlornly:

"They need Edna at home. Insist she remain with father and mother."

And so it was that Edna was not married. In fact, she never was married. However, she sat about dauntlessly weaving coverlets. They were of such unusual strength and beauty that she soon acquired a fame that reached far beyond her own community. In fact, it reached out so far she was able to earn enough money to buy 40 acres of that fertile Hendricks County land.

And thus do the old grads of Hamilton School speak with pride of one of the original career women of that day, one who labored with unmatched initiative and creative skill.

That tale was told to me by Mrs. Eva Waters, of Pittsboro. It and many others doubtless will be retold at the annual reunion of the old school September 6. It will be at the home of Dr. and Mrs. O. T. Scamahorn, of Pittsboro, both of whom attended the old institution of learning.

In its hey-day the school had 69 to 75 pupils. The little tots were lined up on calico-covered boxes in the front rows, lacking desks. One of those who sat on such a box along with three others—all on the same box, mind you—was Mrs. Scamahorn, who then was Fannie Rutledge. I was interested in what Mrs. Waters had to say about that:

"A little later Fannie didn't laugh along with the rest of the school when scrubby, overgrown Oscar Scamahorn proclaimed:

"I'm goin' be a doctor."

"From then on Oscar was called 'Little Doc' by the youngsters. But he has lived to know over half a century as a country doctor, with the varied experience of the progress in medicine during that time—Fannie Rutledge along with him, accompanied in later years by two other Doctors Scamahorn, Malcolm, of Pittsboro, and Milburn, of Kokomo.

"Mrs. Virginia Heckathorn, of Jamestown, will recount the kindness of small, blond Fannie Rutledge befriending her when the scholars made fun of her in her home-made linsey woolsey dress when she came from Virginia and began school in the Hamilton School."

Among those who taught at that old school was Miss Eva Harper, whose 93rd birthday was celebrated recently at a party put on at the County Courthouse in Danville by the Women's Relief Corps. She, incidentally, was also a pupil in the school. A guest at the Danville party was Mrs. Iza Kennedy, 83, a close friend of the honor guest.

Miss Harper still teaches a Sunday school class in the Lizton Christian Church, just as she has done for more than 50 years. What a fascinating life she has lived. Entering land in the West, she built a sod house only to have it cave in on her during a rain. Then, while captive, she directed workers as they dug her out. She suffered only a broken arm.

Others who taught there are Chester Parker, Hendricks County Auditor; Mrs. Eldora Keeney, who ran a Danville book store until recently; Dr. O. T. Scamahorn, and Obe Higgins, who served several years as township trustee.

There was a time at the old school, too, when young Aubrey Moore, just here from Virginia, gathered the scholars in the Elmore woods across the way and there preached, prayed and sang hymns with them joining in. All the while those youngsters chewed calamus roots obtained from the nearby branch. Incidentally, the Rev. Aubrey Moore occupied pulpits in Noblesville, Indianapolis and other cities following his graduation from Butler University.

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One of the most interesting books to come our way recently is SO BRIEF A FRONTIER ... Scenes from the Transformation of Wilderness ... by Don Alan Hall. The son of Ruth Leak Hall, he has compiled a large number of stories about the families that settled and lived in the twenty square miles surrounding Lizton, or New Elizabeth as it was called earlier. It is the story of the Montgomery, Leak and Leach families and those who followed. It is a beautifully written book, a labor of love, which is the product of well over a decade's work. He acknowledges the great help of his mother, Ruth Leak Hall, his wife, Roberta L. Hall, who, as a professional anthropologist, helped greatly with the pre history and the demography. He also mentions the valuable contribution of Roscoe Leak and Eldora Keeney.

It is a must reading for all of us Hendricks County natives and especially for those who grew up around the Lizton area.

A copy of this can be found in the Danville Public Library, a gift of Ruth Leak Hall.

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MY FIRST PLANE RIDE

(By request, Dorothy DeHaven of Clayton submitted this copy of a poem written by her father, Joseph S. Thrush, who incidentally, lived to be 100.)

When I rose in the air on my first plane ride  
Something stirred me, was it fear or was it pride?  
The earth was receding, not a cloud in the sky,  
I was drifting and drifting, not even a sigh.

The farms down below seemed to pucker in size,  
And the fields were blocks - was I ever surprised!  
The buildings were toys, as they stood side by side,  
It's a memory I cherish - my first plane ride.

We passed o'er the woodland - mere shrubbery to me  
And the fields of red clover were as pink as could be,  
And the roads were so narrow, the cars seemed to glide  
I was thrilled and delighted with my first plane ride.

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DISAPPOINTED IN HISTORY OF HENDRICKS COUNTY 1914-1976

We all like to hear good things about ourselves and our efforts, and of course, we aren't exactly thrilled to hear criticism. Criticisms, however, come and are usually justified.

A recent letter from California reads, "After looking over a copy of your HISTORY OF HENDRICKS COUNTY 1914-1976, I was surprised to see how incomplete it was."

We are sorry the writer found our history so incomplete. Perhaps it was because her family wasn't mentioned. I would like to remind her that we worked long and hard for two years compiling that book. During that time it was well publicized. We begged, cajoled and sometimes threatened in order to get families to write up their histories and submit them.

Many families co-operated, but too many families did not. After the book was published, many people felt as our friend from California did ... that the history was incomplete, but please don't blame us!

Gail E. Whitton, the writer from California, in order to prove that her family did live in Hendricks County, sent an article about her great grandfather, Squire Thompson who lived and died in Brownsburg (1906) and her father, Cleo Everett Thompson who lived in Brownsburg and had one of the first gas stations there.

She is interested in tracing her family, so if any one can help her, please send the information to Gail E. Whitton, 8808 North Bank Drive, Ventura, CA 93004.

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