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Genealogy  
Township History  
Plainfield, Indiana  
1120 Stafford  
Plainfield, IN 46168  
(317) 839-6002

# HENDRICKS COUNTY

## HISTORY BULLETIN



VOLUME XX NUMBER I

FEBRUARY 1989  
PUBLISHED BY

THE HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
DANVILLE, INDIANA

HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

ORGANIZED 1967

OFFICERS 1989

PRESIDENT

Judge Jeffrey V. Boles  
407 E. Mill St.  
Danville, IN 46122  
Tel. 745-6100

VICE PRESIDENT

Mrs. Judy Pingel  
R. R. 1, Box 153  
Pittsboro, IN 46167  
Tel. 745-4127

SECRETARY

Miss Jewell Bell  
212 E. Road 200 W.  
Danville, IN 46122  
Tel. 745-4055

TREASURER

Mrs. Blanche Wean  
249 S. Wayne St.  
Danville, IN 46122

HISTORIAN

Marie Hopkins  
1634 Forest Drive  
Plainfield, IN 46168

PUBLICITY

Miss Jewell Bell  
212 E. Road 200 W.  
Danville, IN 46122

GENEALOGISTS

Miss Grace Cox  
494 W. Clinton St.  
Danville, IN 46122  
Tel. 745-2552

Mrs. H. Harold Templin  
20 Clinton Court  
Danville, IN 46122  
Tel. 745-5322

Mrs. Roy Fisher  
Pittsboro, IN 46167  
Tel. 892-4780

HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

Danville Public Library  
101 S. Indiana  
Danville, IN 46122  
Attention: Lori-Wynn  
Tel. 745-2604

Plainfield Public Library  
Guilford Twp. Hist. Col.  
1120 Stafford Rd.  
Plainfield, IN 46168  
Attn: Susan Miller Carter  
Tel. 839-6602

Hendricks County Hist. Museum  
Danville, IN 46122  
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For further information call  
(317) 745-4055 or 852-2810

ANNUAL DUES \$3.00 PAYABLE IN NOVEMBER

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The Hendricks County Historical Bulletin is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. It is distributed without charge to members of the Society and to Hendricks County School Libraries. Individual copies of \$2.00. Communications concerning back copies or individual copies should be addressed to our secretary. Contributions or suggestions to The Bulletin should be mailed to the editor.

Libbe K. Hughes, Editor  
85 Cartersburg Road  
Danville, IN 46122  
Tel. 745-4833

*Libbe K. Hughes*

A page of history is worth a volume of logic.

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

Callford Town 429 116100  
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Plainfield, IN 46168  
(317) 839-6002

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have a great line-up of things to do for 1989. Let me get right to them:

HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY MEETINGS  
1989

February 5, 1989, 2:00 p.m.:

In the Hendricks Circuit Courtroom, Danville, Indiana. A tribute to Margaret Baker and lecture by Bill Dory and Marsh Davis on the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory to be done in Hendricks County for 1989 sponsored by the Hendricks County Historical Society. A reception will follow in the Circuit Court Jury Room.

May 7, 1989, 2:00 p.m.:

Pittsboro Christian Church, Pittsboro, Indiana. Wendall Trogdon, Author, and Gary Varvel, Chief Artist, of the Indianapolis News will present a combined program on Indiana history and cartoon newspaper art. Wendell Trogdon has published many books on the history of Indiana and writes a daily column for the Indianapolis News. Gary Varvel is the chief artist for the Indianapolis News, a Danville resident, and excellent political cartoonist.

August 6, 1989, 2:00 p.m.:

Lynn Hopper, Editor of the Hendricks County Flyer and antique expert, will present "show-and-tell". Members are urged to bring antiques to be discussed, valued, and identified by Lynn Hopper. Plainfield Public Library.

November 5, 1989, 2:00 p.m.:

Back by popular demand of our members, John J. Newman, Director of Records Management Section of the Indiana Supreme Court, will present an encore of his knowledge of photography and other items of interest of the members of the Hendricks County Historical Society. Brownsburg Public Library.

I hope we can make a tradition of beginning our meetings with the February meeting here in Circuit Court. I also hope the weather is with us. Our first meeting will be very important because our recognition of Mrs. Baker as well as the explanation of our big project for 1989.

I hope this message finds you all in good health. From the window here at the courthouse, things look really gray. I'm looking forward to the Spring flowers. See you in February.

Best regards,

J. V. Boles, President

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WELCOME OUR NEW EDITOR

As you will all notice, we have a new editor ... Libbe Hughes. I have long felt that the Bulletin needed some perking up ... some new ideas ... maybe some young blood. I have had my eye on Libbe for quite a while, but she is such a busy lady that it took me some time to work up the nerve to ask her. But when I did, and she agreed to take over the helm, I was delighted.



Libbe is a natural for this job. She is vitally interested in the Society, she is articulate and she writes beautifully. And praise be, she is young!

To all those who have helped with the Bulletin since its inception 18 or 19 years ago, I want you to know how nice it has been to work with you. It has been a labor of love ... love of the work and love of the many friends I have made through it. I urge you to keep your contributions coming for Libbe, for without them, the Bulletin would be pretty dull.

To Jewell who willingly assumed the duty of calling her helpers to assemble the magazines, sort and tie them according to the strict postal regulations, and haul them to the post office (all this in addition to her duties as secretary) well, all I can say is that she is well named. She is truly a Jewell.

Libbe has been fore-warned that I can't easily break habits that have been ingrained for so many years so I will probably be poking around at bulletin time. She also knows that I will be here to help if she ever needs it.

But it is so nice to shift the responsibility over to younger, stronger and more capable shoulders. Thanks Libbe, and good luck.

Margaret Baker

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#### NOVEMBER MEETING

The Hendricks County Historical Society met in the Plainfield Public Library Meeting Room on Sunday, November 6, 1988.

Our vice-president, Judy Pingel, opened the meeting and extended greetings to members and guests. About 45 attended. The treasurer's report was given and accepted. The secretary's report was read, and after correction, was approved. Museum board vacancies were in part filled. Guilford Township--Robert Castetter, Liberty Township--Ruth Rogers, Lincoln Township--Mary Ann Moore. Franklin, Brown and Washington Townships are still vacant. Dorothy Kelley gave her museum report. She showed a suit-case she had prepared for showing when she talks to school groups. This case was assembled for reading. Mary Jeanette Winkelmann, chairman of the nominating committee, offered the following slate of officers: President, Judge Jeffrey Boles; Vice president, Judy Pingel; Secretary, Jewell Bell; Treasurer, Blanche Wean; Historian, Marie Hopkins. The slate was accepted.

An announcement was made of a birthday reception for Frances Fisher on Saturday, November 12, 1988 at the Pittsboro Christian Church.

Dates of next year's meeting were announced: Sunday, February 6, Sunday, May 7, Sunday, August 6, and Sunday November 5.

The Historical Survey by "Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana" was discussed by President Boles. The book will come out after we get a benefactor to back the project.

Judge Boles introduced John Newman, the speaker for the afternoon. His subject was "Art for Profit." Mr. Newman described photography, an art form, from its beginning around 1840 and its evolution to the present time as it was applied to both business and social uses. He told how to identify photography from era to era. He gave several tips on how to care for photographs. A lively

question and answer period followed.

Meeting adjourned.

Refreshments of doughnuts, cider and coffee were served by the ladies of Guilford Township.

Judge Jeffrey Boles, Pres.  
Jewell Bell, Secretary

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FEBRUARY MEETING

The February meeting of the HCHS will be held on Sunday, February 5, at 2:00 p.m. in the Hendricks County Courthouse, Danville, Indiana. We will meet in the Circuit Courtroom ... if the stairs look too forbidding, try the elevator!

Members (and the general public, of course) are invited to attend the program given by Bill Dory and Marsh Davis on the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. The society is sponsoring this project to be completed in Hendricks County in 1989. Also scheduled is a tribute to Margaret Baker, past editor of the BULLETIN. It will be the perfect opportunity to thank Margaret for her hard work and unending devotion to the BULLETIN. Refreshments will be served following the meeting.

It's a big courtroom, and the HCHS officers would like to see it filled. So mark your calendar and plan to attend.

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GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

By now, most of you know that Margaret Baker has done an unspeakable thing. She has requested 'early' retirement from the editorship of the HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORY BULLETIN. In doing so, she has also asked me to take over as editor of the BULLETIN. And without looking, I have jumped headfirst into an enormous challenge!

I had the opportunity to observe the November BULLETIN 'going to press' and was amazed at the work involved in its production. As editor, the submissions have to be gathered from the contributors or written first-hand, edited, captioned and/or introduced. The BULLETIN must be made readable, the articles have to appear in some semblance of continuity, thanks must be given, members congratulated, programs touted, meetings announced. Then there is that awful, dreadful wait ... was there enough material to fill ten pages??

Margaret is the sole reason this society has a first-rate quarterly. She has selflessly devoted twenty years of time and effort into making the BULLETIN the cornerstone of the Hendricks County Historical Society. We are all of us in her debt.

You will please note that Margaret's retirement from the HCHS is far from a severance of all ties. She has provided us with a history of Baker & Son hardware which is included in this issue. She has also faithfully promised to hold the hand of the BULLETIN's fledgling editor. I plan on keeping her very busy in the coming

months with that task alone.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an article titled "Editor's Policies". These policies were included to update readers and contributors with the HCHB's guidelines.

I fully believe it is the editor's primary responsibility to encourage the contribution of articles. And the BULLETIN provides an excellent format for the reproduction of privately held manuscripts which have not previously been available to the public. Using the HCHB in this manner insures that the BULLETIN remains a valuable research tool for students of Hendricks County history.

As editor, I am interested in reviewing materials (letters, diaries, family histories, business ledgers, etc.), in any form, for possible inclusion in the BULLETIN. These submissions are vital to the continuation of the HCHB as an informative journal of Hendricks County past and present.

This year promises to be an exciting one. Plainfield is making plans to celebrate its sesquicentennial and the HCHS programs are as intriguing as always. So there is much work to be done. Your comments and suggestions, as well as your contributions to the BULLETIN, are greatly appreciated, so please contact me at any HCHS meeting, by telephone, or by mail.

Best wishes for the New Year,

Libbe

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#### EDITOR'S POLICIES

The HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORY BULLETIN is published quarterly and precedes the February, May, August, and November meetings of the Hendricks County Historical Society.

The HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORY BULLETIN is provided free of charge to members of the Hendricks County Historical Society. Society dues of \$3.00 per year may be made payable to the HCHS, PO Box 128, Danville, Indiana 46122 or presented to the secretary at any meeting. The HCHS is a non-profit organization. Please notify the secretary immediately of any change of address to avoid a delay in receiving the BULLETIN.

Contributions are most welcome and will be printed on a first come first served basis. The editor reserves the right to make any necessary corrections in the manuscript for clarity, to edit the contribution in consideration of available space, and to reject manuscripts which do not meet the standards of this publication. In lieu of payment, the contributor's name will be presented with the article.

Contributions submitted to the BULLETIN for publication should be mailed to the editor's address. All contributions become the property of the BULLETIN. Contributors should keep a copy of submissions for their own use.

The editor of the HCHB does not assume responsibility for errors on the part of the contributors, but every effort will be made to publish accurate material.

Genealogical queries will be published in the order they are received as space permits. Please limit to 100 words and be certain the submission is legible. Queries should have a connection to Hendricks and/or surrounding counties.

The comments and suggestions of HCHB readers are always welcome. Your interest in the production of this publication is necessary for its continuation.

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#### CHRISTMAS AT THE MUSEUM--Museum Musings

Christmas at the Museum was a success! The weather was made to order. The sun shone and there was no rain!

The house was beautifully decorated by Duane Martin, Martin's Greenhouse, North Salem, Indiana. He used lots of Poinsettias, ribbons and evergreens. One saw greenery peeking out from the most unexpected places. Thanks, Duane, for a beautiful job. The tree, a ceiling high cedar, was decorated by Miss Nancy Moore's Special Education Class of White Lick Elementary School in Brownsburg. They did a fine job of decorating and their work was much appreciated.

Owen Stamper played carols on his public address system and it make a real welcome. Lucille Stamper played Christmas music on the piolian. It all sounded great. Music always adds so much to the festivities. Thanks Owen and Lucille!

The fragrance of hot cider punch wafted throughout the house, inviting one and all to have some with their homemade cookies. Approximately 200 people attended during the open house. That number included several school classes.

#### OUR RESTORED KITCHEN

As we enter the door we encounter a collection of churns. Two look more like miniature washing machines and there is the old dash churn, probably the best known. This one has a stone jar but some we've seen were wood. One that wasn't so videly used had a rocking action to get butter. Right over them on the wall is an assortment of articles including a wooden apple butter stirrer, a gadget to clean soot out of the lower part of the range, and real ice tongs that used to be so much a part of the scene. That portion of the wall that juts out is all that's left of a fireplace that formerly was there. The kerosene lamp, a match-holder, and a hot pan holder adorn the wall by the blue and white enameled kitchen range. Coal ranges could burn wood too. On the extreme top of the range is a coffee-mill, a toaster (not electric), a grey enameled coffeepot, and a quart size glass canning jar with glass lid. There is a glass of jelly, a pint glass can, with zinc lid holding some raisins. Inside the warming oven are assorted stove lid lifters and a stove shaker (used to get rid of ashes from the firebox). On the stove cooking surface, a grey enameled coffee pot--giant size. Also assorted cast iron waffle bakers, a teakettle and a kettle is a large wooden spoon in it. None of the items are light weight!

Down on the floor beside the range is a can of kerosene (coal-oil) and a coal bucket of corn-cobs. There is a fire-shovel in the coal bucket. A big juice can holds cobs soaking in oil to start the fire. Some of you will say "That's messy!" Well, it was, but one had to be careful. The best way to learn that, is to have to clean up your own mess!

The old kitchen table dates away back. It is a single wide board and

entirely handmade. It was always used "as is" and never had a finish applied. On it we see quite an assortment of relics. A bread slicer, well it really is more of a guide to keep slices even. Candle molds, yes the folks then had to make their own candles. A glass milk bottle is next, non-disposable and returnable. Also we see a lunch pail, better known to those who carried them, as dinner buckets. This one is made of a sort of fiber-board. Another item some use today is a slow chopper. There are probably some other things I may have overlooked.

We mustn't overlook a very useful item that wasn't held in too high esteem except by those who didn't have to use it. None other than a dear old rug beater. Did the younger crowd--and some older ones too, welcome the electric vacuum sweeper! On shelf high on the wall are plates. Some are commemorative plates, others would be used as "best" if at all. Under the table is a quartet that helped toward singing "Washday Blues". If you are thinking "What next!" it is a wash boiler--copper--and 3 washboards. An item that many women liked to use in their canning was a "Conservo" canner. The steam would aid in helping preserve food. The rustic cane seated chair looks inviting. Someone left her knitting and a doll-baby there until she got back.

As we move on around the wall we notice a child's bath tub. This one is made of plain tin. In the days when water was measured by the bucket-full, it was pretty nice to not need so much. One of the first electric-powered washers largely made of copper. It holds a lot of water. There is a burner under the tub to keep the water hot. Some varieties of soap seen are some real for sure lye soap. The kind that took the skin as well as the dirt. There is a cake of Fels Naptha soap. According to the ads in its hey-day, there was none better! It is a stand-by with some for use in washing off the oil from poison ivy.

Well, will you look! A doll baby in its high chair! It's trying to tell us something but we just can't seem to understand what it is. The baby is all dressed up in a white baby dress with lots of tucks and the hem is a wide band of crochet lace. In the corner is a sink with a pitcher-pump. Right over the sink is a mirror. Well, one day that corner served as a sort of clean-up place. There hangs the well-ironed linen roller towel, and on the shelf right above the towel are shaving supplies. One wonders about the kerosene lamp right over the sink. It wouldn't be such a good idea to flip any water while the lamp was lit, or someone would be in trouble! Look right under the sink and see the jugs stored there. The model wears a pale yellow cotton voile dress from the 1920's era. It is trimmed with insets of lace and has hemstitching on the long shawl collar. More things along the west wall include a fireless cooker. According to the ad appearing in a magazine around that time, this cooker could do about any kind of cooking. Today we'd call it the forerunner of the crock pot. It doesn't have to be watched either. On the wall right above the cooker is a cabbage shredder, krout cutter or whatever you want to call it. Beside it on the wall is a "Spatter ware" blue and white baking pan, two more commemorative plates. On the old ice box right below is quite an assortment. A small stone jar, long-necked amber bottle, dust pan, stone canning jar, a sign for the ice man, an assortment of butter paddles, butter molds, a smaller clear bottle, match holder, cabbage cutter, wooden spoons. There is a stick of sealing wax and a package of sealing wax that looks like it was never opened. On the shelves we notice two graters. One, in particular, looks hand-made. The grater is made with what looks like nail holes. The bottom shelf has 4 milk bottles (glass) ranging from 1 qt. to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pt. and a  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal size crock with bales.

The model wears a dust cap and dress of printed material circa 1940's and she has on a black satin apron with black lace trim. Decorative! The china



closet contains pretty dishes of both china and glass. Underneath the cupboard is an assortment of a jug, jar, pitcher, a cream bucket--all stone ware. Included is a wooden bowl. The next model's dress is of printed material. Looks like what was worn during the 1950's and 1960's. A high-chair stands in the corner. Now along the south wall is a white enameled kitchen cabinet. This style was several years ago before the streamlining began to take place. We notice on top is a nice assortment of cook-books leaning beside a metal breadbox. The shelves contain an assortment of baking-powder cans, flavorings, spices, whatever is used for baking. We notice an egg beater and potato masher. Down on the work surface we see a cake-mixer. It has to be clamped onto the cabinet to keep it from "walking off". We see a small stone crock and small stone jar. There is a larger stone jar, a recipe cabinet, two very old amber glass quart canning jars. The flour is right there in the bin so sift away! Handy? Well, in its day it was the last word in equipment. Right next to the door is a dining room chair. Well, someone might just happen in for a cup of coffee.

We've been all around the room. We'd better talk about the dining table. It is round, covered with a white linen table cloth finished with drawn work embroidery. The china is "Tea Leaf" pattern, the silverware is a sort of bone handled material. The glass spoon holder is obviously Victorian or before, at one time a "must" on every table. Under the table is a braided rug. Woven rugs are in the door and cabinet area.

That does it for the restored kitchen. Another time we'll visit a different room.

Jewell

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#### SPECIAL THANKS

The editor of the HCHB would like to extend a special thank you to Susan Carter, Plainfield Public Library Historical Librarian. It is obvious to any visitor to the Plainfield Library that Susan spends long hours and much energy working with the Guilford Township Historical Collection. Yet, she devoted a good deal of time and effort in assisting with the compilation of this issue of the BULLETIN. Her advice, suggestions, and encouragement; cheerfully given, have proved to be invaluable. Thank you Susan!

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#### HAVE YOU PAID YOUR HCHS DUES?

Take a minute and think back to last November, before the nasty weather, before the holiday chaos. Did you remember to send in your society dues? While the dues of only \$3.00 a year per family are easy to forget, that money is very important. Renewing your membership insures that you continue to receive the BULLETIN and your money helps to cover our publication costs. Without your support, this society would cease to function.

So please talk to our secretary, Jewell Bell, or any of the society officers at the February meeting to pay your dues or check on your membership status. You can also mail your \$3.00 (check or money order made payable to the Hendricks County Historical Society) to HCHS, P O Box 128, Danville, Indiana 46122. Be certain to include your name, address, township, and phone number with your payment.

This February issue of the BULLETIN may be the last one mailed to non-paying members, so please renew today!

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#### IN MEMORIAM

Once again, Death has entered our ranks. We note with great sadness the passing of Naomi Joseph, W. W. Smitherman, Ernestine Blair Wallace, and Mary Bartley (mother of Betty Jo Bartley). We share the grief of their families.

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Readers of the BULLETIN may be interested in reading the article entitled When Robert Louis Stevenson Was One Of Us in the December, 1988 issue of American Heritage magazine. The article by Margaret Hodges details the noted author's marriage to Fanny Vandegrift Osbourne on May 19, 1880. Fanny Vandegrift was born in Indianapolis March 10, 1840 and the Vandegrift family later moved to Hendricks County.

The American Heritage magazine is available at area libraries.

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#### HELP WANTED!

There is a wide range of diversity within the boundaries of our county, as we are all aware. It would be very easy to allow the BULLETIN to concentrate on Danville or the larger towns, but each town and township in Hendricks County has individual characteristics. These characteristics, borne of geographic and economic differences, are certainly important and deserve our attention. Therefore, the HCHB would like to recruit a staff of volunteer correspondents from all over the county to report on the people, places, and events unique to each area. These observations are crucial to the continued expansion and improvement of the BULLETIN's focus on the entire Hendricks County area.

It should also be noted that this 'staff' will be quite informal--no assignments, no quotas, just one or two articles a year as suitable topics suggest themselves. Anyone interested in being a correspondent should please contact the editor by mail or at any HCHS meeting.

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#### SOME THOUGHTS EXPRESSED BY A CHARTERMEMBER REGARDING THE HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORGANIZED July 13, 1967 AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE INDIANA SESQUICENTENNIAL JUBILEE IN 1966.

As I grew up History wasn't too popular. It meant memorizing such dates as 1066, 1492, 1620, 1914, 1918. All were important but school oriented. I always loved those memory sessions when Mother and Dad and their relatives and friends recalled "when we lived at Fleener" or "when Goldie was born" or "when an uncle went into service" or "the year we lived in Waverly" or "after he came out of service." Of course those weren't labeled as history. They gave "relativity"--relation between individual action and world actions.

But how our world has grown since those days! It takes serious study of relations these days to help us understand our personal interests in relation to world activities. I feel the point of view of all of us has been changed because of our consciousness of past events.

The idea of the Hendricks County Historical Society was started by such folk as Ruth and Roy Pritchard, Ruth Hall, Floyd Hufford, Frances Fisher, and many others too numerous to recall. There were some local problems which needed to be solved: What to do with the papers and records in the basement of the Court House; the records of the cemeteries; the passing of such leaders as Judge Brill; the tearing down of the white house which had served as the underground railroad station; the forgotten stories of the Van Buren Elm; the half-way house; the layout of the County seat in Danville or Bellville; the opening of the National road east to west through the state and through Hendricks County bringing many settlers, drovers and animals.

Even families began to point out the respective background of the Hadleys, the Clays, the Arnolds and many others with the background of the Quakers and Disciples. All these questions made many of us feel that we could make a contribution to the future by recalling them. A gift of \$1,000 was received from Mural Keeney toward a Museum and when a new jail was built, the 1867 jail and sheriff's residence became available for a Museum.

In 1974 the Hendricks County Sesquicentennial was celebrated. This raised the question of preservation and then the publication of the History of 1976. This really was an experience! Everyone was given the opportunity to contribute and did. The publication committee received more copy than could be used and produced stories and incidents unpublished before.

For those who worked at the job it meant new friendships, new knowledges and the opportunity to act on a county relationship. We learned the background and problems of other townships and who the leaders were. We feel this has changed the whole county. If you do not have a History of 1976, you should purchase one to learn of the many things in the county you may not know. A partial list is the transportation changes, the school systems, the early academies, the methods of farming, the factories and mills throughout the county, electricity, the county media, Hendricks Community Hospital, Cartersburg Springs, and almost three quarters of a century when there was a college at Danville with a registration of 1300 to 1500 at its peak. This was Central Normal College and later Canterbury College.

Personally, I have seen how Dorothy Kelly, Harold and Dorothy Templin, Roy and Ruth Pritchard, Roy and Frances Fisher, Floyd and Margaret Hufford, Sherman and Lois Crayton, Clark and Carolyn Kellum, Ed and Mary Jeanette Winkelmann, Ruth Hall, Grace Cox, Jewell Bell, Margaret Baker, the Josephs, Joe Davidson, George Heavilin, Maynard Noland and many others have "been there when needed." I pay tribute to all those who have served the Hendricks County Historical Society during the last 20 years when the Presidents of the Society have been:

Presidents of the Hendricks County Historical Society 1967 to 1989.

1967-1968	Frank Litherland	1973	Sherman G. Crayton
1969	Mildred Smith	1974	Floyd Hufford
1970	Scott Hosier	1975	Dessie Huddleston
1971	John Gambold, Jr.	1976	James I. Shockley
1972	Margaret Baker	1977-1978	Mary Jeanette Winkelmann

1979	Randall Joseph	1985	J. Robert Carter
1980-1981	Marian Worrell	1986-1987	Betty Bartley
1982-1983	Maynard Noland	1988-1989	Judge Jeffrey V. Boles
1984	Lois Crayton		

(This article was written by Blanche Wean who has served as treasurer since 1967)

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Danville residents were shocked and not a little saddened to see Baker and Son Hardware close its doors in October, 1988. The store, built on good service, quality products, and personal attention to the customer; was a landmark on the Danville town square. Thanks to Margaret Baker for providing us with a history of the store and the people responsible for its success.

#### BAKER HARDWARE

#### END OF AN ERA AS BAKER HARDWARE CLOSES ITS DOORS

He may have had only a dime in his pocket, but he had a dream in his heart. He may have had only a third grade education, but he had a master's degree in ambition and determination. He may not have been polished nor articulate, but he could communicate with his fellow men with a seemingly never ending supply of idioms and apt expressions that would go straight to the point. Charles E. Baker was man who could not be ignored. You either liked him or you didn't. There seemed to be no half way. But whether you did or you didn't, you had to respect him.

The Baker name has been an integral part of the Hendricks County business community since 1923. Horace Greely's advice, "Go West, young man, go West!" meant nothing to Charles E. Baker, a farm boy in Crawford County, Illinois, for in April, 1906, when he was 26 years old, he came east to Danville, Indiana. He was the proud owner (though in debt for) a black wagon, a pair of ponies, and a contract with the W. T. Rawleigh Company, a company that produced remedies for almost everything (so the story goes), flavoring extracts, ground spices and stock food among other things.

He realized full well that he would have to economize in every possible way, yet his ponies had to be cared for, for they would keep him in business. Danville, in 1906, was filled to capacity with Central Normal College students, so he rented a barn, still standing on South Indiana Street. There the ponies would be fed and warm from the wintry blasts, but where would he sleep? With his rough and ready nature, it was no problem at all ... he would sleep in the hay loft ... and that he did.

He soon became known as "The Rawleigh Man", a much loved and much looked forward to visitor throughout the county. Stories as to his sales tactics vary, but it was generally agreed that he was quite a sales man. As the late Lowell (Bill) Kirtley used to say, "He could sell you a barn without any sides!"

Children looked forward to his visits, for whether he made a sale or not, he had a stick of gum for each child, a rare treat in those days. So, since he kept pretty much on schedule, he was never surprised to see youngsters swinging on a gate or sitting on a fencepost eagerly awaiting his visit.

During his travels, his fame as a square dance caller spread, so when the Rawleigh Man was due to arrive, it called for a gathering somewhere in the neighborhood for a square dance.

His eating and sleeping habits had to very flexible during this time. He actually was at the mercy of the good people upon whom he called. He soon learned, however, sometimes with painful trial and error, where the best cooks lived and where the cleanest beds were located, and he timed his calls carefully.

His route grew and he prospered, so much so, that he returned to Lawrence County, Illinois, and married Miss Shirley Rebecca Rodrick, and brought her back to Danville. When his only son was born, he named him "Rawleigh" in tribute to the man and to the company that gave him an opportunity to make good.

The coming of the automobile age made him quickly realize that the future of the horse and wagon Rawleigh Man was limited, so with his acute sense of timing, he looked around for something with a future. This led to the establishment of the Baker and Son Funeral Home and the Baker and Son Hardware. The "and Son" has always been a part of the name. When twelve year old Rawleigh was informed of this, he was less than impressed, especially when he realized that it meant getting to the store early in the morning to sweep out, and reporting there right after school until closing time, and on Saturday nights until 10:00 p.m. But that was the way it was, and with Charlie Baker, there was no arguing!

The Baker Hardware started as a used furniture store, then stoves were added and finally it became a hardware store. Located in the building at the north west corner of the square, until recently known as the Danner building, debts were at last paid and business began to thrive. It was at this point that I imagine Charlie Baker began to think of relaxing a bit in the knowledge that the future of the businesses he had worked so hard to establish would be secure in the hands of his son. Then came the devastating fire of 1935 which practically wiped out the retail business.

I have never known a Baker to waste time feeling sorry for himself, so, characteristically, father and son acted quickly, picked up the pieces, salvaged what they could, bought the building on the southeast corner of the square from Joe Hess where the hardware store still stands.

They went in debt again, buckled down and prepared to start all over. The building needed extensive and expensive remodeling (more debt), a new heating system (more debt), and with new young blood in the organization, modernization in many different ways (more debt).

As time went on, the hardware business thrived, and the need for more storage space led to the decision to excavate under the full length of the building. When this project was well underway, the old building gave notice in no uncertain terms that it was in danger of callapse. This called for restructuring of, not only the building, but again of the finances.

Through all these hectic years of the struggles to establish a business I never once heard a word of complaint. Rawleigh always seemed to be optomistic, almost glorying in each new challenge. He had a quiet confidence that was contagious. How do I know so much about these years? It was at this time that my foolish heart dictated that I was to join forces with this remarkable family... a decision that I never once doubted and never once regretted.

In 1943, Rawleigh bought the hardware store from his father and later on the funeral home. Although the deals between father and son were the same as any business deals between individuals, with father making no concessions to son, in his heart, Charlie Baker never relinquished ownership. It was his ... it would always be his, and I think most of us can understand why.



For the past 53 years, Baker and Son Hardware has stood on the corner serving almost all people in almost all ways. "I could always find what I wanted in Bakers," I have heard said many times. It was simply "The Store" to many people. To say simply, "I am going to the store" meant going to Bakers to many families. Did you need some glass cut ... or pipe cut ... or a handful of nails ... or a lamp fixed ... or a sweeper ... or some paint mixed ... or something delivered ... just call Bakers. It was that kind of store that gradually went out of style with the coming of shopping centers and super markets and cut-rate stores. With the difficulty of parking and the exodus of most other retail stores from the square, Baker and Son Hardware stood alone for several years.

Bruce Baker, who already was part owner of the store, purchased the rest at the death of his father in 1979. With the increasing demands of the funeral business and the ambulance work, a service he was still giving, he found it almost impossible to handle the changing retail business as it should be conducted. It was an agonizing decision. He remembered his father and his grandfather, and the hardships they had overcome. However, he was reassured by the rest of the family that Charlie Baker and Rawleigh Baker were quick to recognize change when it came and to adjust to it. "If they were here today," he was advised, "they would say, 'Bruce, it is time for a change.'"

So, in October, 1988, Baker and Son Hardware closed its doors, leaving a long history of service, the kind that is rare today. Old fashioned hardware stores may become out dated, but it is our hope that hard work, determination, ambition and faith in the future may never go out of style for that is what made Baker and Son Hardware possible for 64 years.

(When our new Editor, Libbe Hughes, asked me to write the history of Baker and Son Hardware, I intended to keep it very impersonal for I had never been actively involved in that business. As I wrote, however, I realized that since those I loved so very much were so actively involved, I could not keep it impersonal. So if this has turned out to be more a tribute than a history, so be it. Margaret Baker)

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