



HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Portage Community Historical Society, Inc.

OVERACHIEVERS IN ACTION

The Past 25 Years of the Portage Community Historical Society
1988 - 2013

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The possibilities for the creation of an organization to preserve, manage, and promote the history and heritage of the Portage community was conceived in the mid-1980s. At that time, there were serious storm water drainage problems in the southwestern area of the City of Portage. City officials came together in a cooperative and creative way to purchase enough land not only for the construction of a storm water drainage facility, but also for the development of a new park, which was named Countryside Park. This land contained an old-style farmhouse, barn, and a couple of outbuildings. Instead of tearing down these older farm buildings, it was decided to pursue the possibility that they could become the nucleus for a historical museum site. So a public-interest meeting was held at the farmstead in June of 1987, and there was strong interest for the establishment of a community historical organization. In 1988, the Portage Community Historical Society was officially organized and incorporated. Since the Portage Park and Recreation Board is the owner of the land and buildings, a mutually acceptable and beneficial contractual agreement was put into effect, which provided the terms and conditions for the Historical Society to operate and manage a historical museum complex at Countryside Park.

The Society's first officers, Board members, and other interested people, all of them volunteers, "rolled up their sleeves" and worked/pulled together to get this new organization functioning and operating in a wonderful way. People in the community responded in a most helpful fashion by donating/lending many, many historical artifacts and memorabilia. The farmhouse was the centerpiece for the historical displays, because the condition of the old barn was too deteriorated for public display purposes.

The growth and development of the vision and mission of the Portage Community Historical Society was so significant during the ensuing years that much more space for displays and programs was direly needed. Through the tireless and resourceful efforts of President/Board Member Alton Goin and the financial support of then-Mayor Douglas Olson, the Alton Goin Museum (3,200 square-foot building) was publicly dedicated and opened in June of 2003. What a wonderful milestone this was in the progressive life of the Historical Society!

Another significant achievement was the historical restoration and renovation of the old farmhouse. This was accomplished through the use of grant and bond issue funding. The farmhouse is now an outstanding replica and rendition of around a 1920s rural home site.

Then there was that big "blessing in disguise!" The old deteriorated and basically unusable barn caught fire and burned to the ground. Through the use of replacement insurance money and bond issue funds, the exterior superstructure of a new barn was constructed in historical replica fashion. While there is still more interior completion work to be done on the new barn, the lower level has provided much-needed display space for larger artifacts.

So, the foregoing information has been an overview of significant highlights of the past 25 years of the Portage Community Historical Society. The museum complex at Countryside Park, along with the services and programs that the Society provides and offers, have added so much to the quality of life for the Portage community during the past 25 years. And they will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Any organization is only as good, progressive, and productive as the people who lead it. The Historical Society has been so blessed with many dedicated volunteer leaders over the years. They have indeed been "overachievers in action!"

Submitted by Carl Fisher
2013 President

Special points of interest:

Our anniversary year is over but we still have a lot to do. Please sign up to help with the museum, the festival and our other events.

"What is the oldest business in Portage that is still in business today?
(Answer will be in the following newsletter)"
If you care to guess, check in on our Facebook page with your guess.

Society News

Introduction of our new President from outgoing President Carl Fisher

Val Roach was born and raised near Mott, North Dakota on an 800-acre family farm. As a young adult, she taught school at a one-room schoolhouse. In 1957, she and her husband came to Northwest Indiana so that he could work for the U. S. Steel Company. She has lived in Portage since 1961, so she is very knowledgeable of the history of Portage. She has treasured and preserved her own family's history and heritage by being a collector of family antiques. After raising her family of 4 daughters and 1 son, she went back to being a teacher, working with preschoolers at St. Mary's School in East Chicago. She retired in 2010.

In terms of community involvement and civic service over the years, Val has done the following:

- PTA Treasurer
- Room Mother
- Treasurer of Portage Music Sponsors
- Volunteering at Portage Public Library
- Very active at her church
- Historian for a women's charitable group called 8 and 40
- Treasurer of Lake Station American Legion Auxiliary Unit 100

Because of her background and skills in leadership and community service and because of her love of history, the Portage Community Historical Society is very fortunate to have Val Roach become its 2014 President.

The Portage Historical Society is having their Festival this year on June 21, 2014. We are in need of a few volunteers which includes Publicity (newspaper, internet, tv, local business signs, etc.) Set up and tear down, Gopher (someone to go for supplies etc. during festival), If you are interested in volunteering for anything for the festival please contact Patti Coppess at intrepidwife@yahoo.com or 219-921-9577 or Jim Franzen at 219-405-7194. We will be scheduling a Festival meeting shortly.

Museum Hours

*Closed until
spring but we are
still busy creating
new displays for
next spring.*

Winner of the Christmas Birdhouse raffle is Tamara Galic a longtime member and mother of Olga Valasquez.

Richard Turnak donated boxes of his deceased mother's Christmas ornaments and we were able to decorate a large tree in her memory, Mary Turnak (1919-2008)

Eva Udick recently completed her fifth scrapbook of newspaper clippings for our society. Please ask to see them when you visit the museum. She has started on the sixth scrapbook for us. Thanks Eva for all you do.

Member News

James Lynch, husband of Sue Lynch, passed away. Our sincerest condolences to Sue and her family.

Also, Jim "Bud" Knoll a former member, passed away in January 2014.

Al Goin was hospitalized during the holidays but is home recuperating. Get well soon, Al.

Welcome new members:
Valeria Roach,

THE VERNON PATTON DICKINSON FARM WAGON

This wagon was brought to Porter County on May 27, 1929. On this date Vernon Patton Dickinson and his wife, Lotus, purchased Maple Lawn Farm in Hebron, IN. Vernon, Lotus and their son, Roy, began to make repairs to the run down house, barn and property. The main front barn doors were lying flat in the barn yard with weeds growing up through them. The head stones from the Civil War cemetery in the front lawn were removed and later laid flat and buried under the concrete in the dairy barn. (1940) This wagon was used for transportation and utility for the farm. As the years went by with the invention of tractors and automobiles the horses and wagon took a lesser role in daily farming activities.

Roy Dickinson married his wife, Alice, about 1940 and farmed Maple Lawn Farm with his parents. In 1943 they had their first son followed by two more in 1955 they took over farming and milking operations from his parents. In 1954 they milked 54 head of dairy cows twice a day which was the biggest dairy herd in Porter County.

The wagon had been retired, but with the sons growing and getting involved in 4H it was revived. The wheels were cut down to use with an eight pony hitch. Shetland Ponies were used in parades with one of the favorite being for Virgil O. King from Hebron to further his political career. It was also used in Porter, Lake, LaPorte and Jasper Counties 4H fairs. As the sons grew up, Roy retired and the wagon was again retired to the old dairy barn.

On April 14th, 2013 it was removed, back into the sunshine for the first time in over 35 years. We hope this gives all of the generations to come a picture of the simple times in southern Porter County. This wagon is donated by the grandchildren, great grandchildren and the great great grandchildren of Vernon Patton Dickinson. We know that he would be proud that he was a little piece of our history. It is now in the possession of the Portage Historical Society.

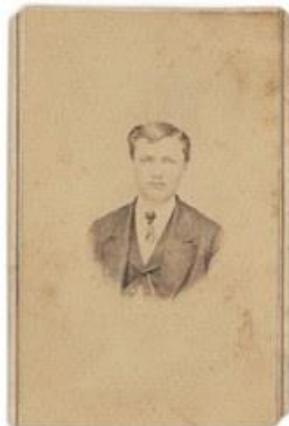
Posted on his Find A Grave site I contacted the submitter:

Hi Kathy,
 If you click on the photo you'll see underneath...
 Writing on back "D.P. Blake taken March 1868".
 Photographer is Mandeville, Valparaiso, IN.

This was in a group of photos I bought from an

eBayer in Seattle in 2006.

There were no other Blake photos in the group.
 Regards,
 Bonnie



Darius Perry Blake

2014 Board of Directors
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Valeria Roach

Vice-President:

Sue Cowsert

Secretary:

Donna Smith

Treasurer:

Barb Borg-Jenkins

Board of Directors

Patti Coppess

Jim Franzen

Al Goin

Lois Mollick

Richard Turnak

Wanda Samuelson

Eva Udick

Newsletter

Lois Mollick

Kathy Heckman

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~inpchs>

Membership:

Individual \$20 a year

Family \$50 a year

Business \$60 a year

Lifetime \$100 forever

Calendar of Events

**Tuesday February 11,
2014**

Board Meeting at Portage
Public Library, 6:30 pm

April 5 & 6 , 2014

Museum reopens for the
2014 season

**Wednesday, April 16,
2014**

General Meeting

Woodland Park, 7:00 pm

See * above

**Saturday, June 21,
2014**

Summer Festival

Bi-monthly Meetings

*The Board wants to vote to change the General meetings to the 3rd Wednesday instead of the 3rd Tues. (because they fall on the same nights as the Music in the Park at Woodland and then there's nowhere to park and music coming through the walls).

The Board also wants to skip the February meeting because people just don't come out in the cold weather months. We would then start with the April meeting as the first of the General meetings.

All this has to be announced to the general membership before anything can be voted on.

If anyone has any comments or opinions about the changes, they can come to the next Board meeting in February.

We have several items we offer for sale in the museum: Historical House Booklet, Steel Shavings, Postcards, and we ordered and have copies of Portage Township by Jim Wright and Dennis Norman.

Please remember that any books or items sold by the Historical Society must have sales tax collected on the item.

Indiana sales tax is 7%. If members wish to order one to be shipped, there will be an additional charge for shipping.

Clement and Lynda Khan have finished the Wolf Mansion History book and are selling them for \$15.00. We will have them available for sale in our museum.

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