

MORGAN COUNTY

HISTORY CENTER & MUSEUM



Vol. 4, No. 3

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026

What Do You Know About Morgan County's Towns?

Which town will celebrate its bicentennial in 2034? The town was platted and laid out in forty-five lots in Section 12, Township 13N, Range 1W by Gideon Johnson and George Hubbard. Early merchants were Gideon Johnson, Ira Hadley, John Carter, Thomas Edwards, I. B. Edwards, Eli Vestal, and C. G. Hussey. By 1842 there were no stores in town.

The first tavern keeper was Irvin Caveness. Around 1837 the first steam grist mill in the central part of Indiana was built not far from town. It couldn't keep up with the numerous water mills in the area and was soon abandoned. In 1856 Harris & Goddard built the second steam grist mill which eventually became Hubbard Mill.

At one time Ira Fowler owned a distillery south of town. Joseph Pray started a tannery. George Hadley built a wool-carding establishment about 1840 that used cattle on an inclined plane to drive the machinery. The town contained a shoe shop, a saddlery, spinning and weaving, and flannels, jeans and other cloths were manufactured.

Stotzell started a town newspaper in 1880 which lasted about 6 months. The town was incorporated in the 1860s and ordinances were adopted, streets were drained, and sidewalks were built. A few years later the municipal government was abandoned. In 1995 the town was incorporated.

Churches and schools were important with the West Union Meeting of Friends being the first church followed by the Methodist and Christian followed by other denominations. Schools in and nearby the town were West Union, Smith, West Grove, Center Valley, Hopewell, Gasburg, Bunker Hill, Lindley, Mineral Springs, and Maple Grove.

The town? Monrovia. Information gathered from Counties of Morgan, Monroe & Brown edited by Charles Blanchard and Monrovia 150 years.

The museum has a small exhibit on Monrovia and a exhibit from the Hubbard Mill, pictured at right.



M0837_BOX3_MONROVIA



Gymnasium

Church

School 1912-1967



Our Contact Information

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Facebook page: Morgan County History Center and Museum

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Web page: morgancountyhistorymuseum.org

Open Hours:

Monday 10:00AM-2:00PM

Thursday 4:00PM-7:00PM

Saturday 10:00AM-3:00PM



What is it?

You will find this little gem in the Farm/Railroad room of the museum.

The what is it in the last issue was an antique mimeograph machine.

Work in Progress

Preparing a list of past Morgan County officials is a project begun by the America 250 group. Using poll books, past "Nosey" books, old newspapers, and information from the Morgan County Library, we are attempting to produce a list of all our past officials. The Blanchard book, "Counties of Morgan, Monroe, and Brown" was the starting point, but records are incomplete due to the courthouse fire in the 1800s.

Morgan County Cemeteries

A recent reoccurring question at the museum has been cemeteries—finding them and specific graves. One gentleman reported finding a lost cemetery off SR44 that no one knew about. Elkins family members are buried there. It turned out to be Pearce Cemetery which is documented on Findagrave.com.

People were in from out-of-state to visit the Townsend and Williams' cemeteries. Like many of the cemeteries in Morgan County they are on private property and require permission from landowners to cross property to get to them. The museum can often supply names of people who need to be contacted to receive permission.

The Morgan County History and Genealogy Association cleaned and re-erected tombstones in Goss Cemetery, Paragon, in June.

Guests from Out of Town?

If you are hosting guests from out-of-town, think about a visit to downtown Martinsville. We book private showings of the museum during closed hours. Call us 765-315-6982. Visit the Candy Kitchen, shop the many boutiques downtown, or enjoy a meal at one of the many restaurants on the square.

Tractors—Big News 1915

October 5 & 6, 1915 International Harvester held a plowing demonstration on the Lawson Fisher Farm, 1/2 mile north of Martinsville using the 8-16 Mogul Farm Tractor. The tractor powered by coal oil weighed about 4000 pounds. Two plows were attached to the tractor and it was compared to doing the work of six horses and two men.

In November, J. A. Landers, Waverly demonstrated a Big Bull tractor manufactured in Minneapolis which plowed an acre of ground in 65 minutes. March 24 & 25, 1916, an 8-16 Mogul tractor, powered by kerosene pulled two Oliver plows, each fourteen inches in width, so that the plow turned twenty-eight inches of dirt. The claim was six acres could be plowed per day.

The demise of the draft horse was predicted due to the cheap farm tractor. The author said the bloodless machines could not whinny their greetings nor scratch the pocket for sugar. It took a little longer than the writer predicted for the draft horse to be replaced in Morgan County. There were farms still using the horses in the 1950s.

By April Dr. W. E. Hendricks and J. W. Ellis had formed the partnership Hendricks & Ellis to sell J. I. Case tractors in Martinsville. Clyde Schmidt hired on as a salesman for the Indiana Bull Tractor Co. By May P. M. Blankenship, Paragon, was plowing his corn ground with a two plow oil tractor.

Purdue University held a farm tractor school Aug. 20-25, 1917. That October, Bob Maxwell held a Cleveland Caterpillar Tractor demonstration on his farm 2.5 miles southwest of Martinsville on The Dixie Highway.

1915 Mogul

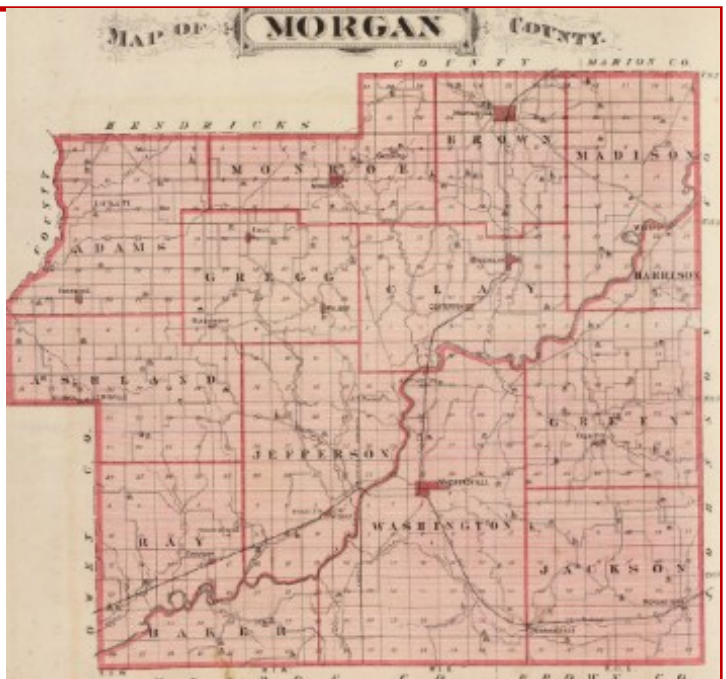


Morgan County Townships

How many townships did Morgan County have when it was first divided into townships? In early June 1822, Morgan County's Board of Justices met at the house of Jacob Cutler to divide the county into townships. The four townships named were Washington, Monroe, Ray and Harrison. (Blanchard, Counties of Morgan, Monroe, and Brown, p. 15)

The first County Board of Justices (of Peace), elected in 1822, were Larkin Reynolds, Samuel Reed, James Burris and Hiram Mathews. All received a commission from the governor, dated May 22, 1822. Other early acts of the County Board were destroyed in a courthouse fire.

Shortly after the Civil War Ashland Township was split off from Ray Township. An election report in November 1844 showed that Madison, Brown, and Green Townships existed. Election counts for November 1860 also listed Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, Jackson, Clay, Gregg, and Baker townships. If anyone has found an old map or verbiage that describes when the four townships became 14 please share the information with the museum. (1876 map)



Morgan County 1976 Time Capsule

July 4, 1976 the County Bicentennial committee used a full size burial vault, donated by Sonny Crismore, as a time capsule. County residents filled it with letters and memorabilia for their ancestors or themselves to retrieve July 4, 2026. The vault which had been buried on the court house lawn was dug up in June 2025 due to court house renovations.

The vault was stored at the county garage until it was to be opened July 4, 2026. Due to the sealant used to keep the vault air-tight, the monument company felt they would have to saw off the lid. When this was done in preparation for the ceremony on the 4th the vault was found to be damaged and had allowed water to seep in and destroy its contents.

Immediate recovery efforts were made by the Morgan County America 250 group. Drying the contents and identifying as much as possible was a monumental task. August 15, people will be able to retrieve the remnants of the time capsule.

Two other towns made the news with the same disheartening result of water-logged contents in a burial vault, New Ross, IN and a town in Missouri. The Indiana America 250 Commission advised that time capsules should not be buried in 2026. The 2076 vault is an antique trunk in which items will be stored in archival boxes. It will reside in the Morgan County History Center & Museum.

Pictures of the vault and soaked items.



Membership Form

The Morgan County History Center & Museum is a 501(c)3 organization.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Membership Categories: _____ Single (\$35) _____ Family (\$50)

_____ Business (\$100) _____ Life Member (\$250) _____ Family Life (\$400)

Make Checks Payable to: Morgan County History Center & Museum, 127 S. Main St.,
Martinsville, IN 6151

OR

Credit Card No. _____ Expiration Date _____ CVC _____

Donations may also be made through the Community Foundation.

Coming soon on-line payment capability.