

MORGAN COUNTY

# HISTORY CENTER & MUSEUM



Vol. 3, No. 23

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2025

The museum receives many questions about old homes. This Columbus Street home, occupied by Benoni & Claude Clark Lewis the first half of the 20th century piqued our interest.

Rebecca Fisher informed us that Lloyd Sighting had purchased the home for his parents, James & Rosetta Sighting, upon returning from the Korean War. The home was featured in the Reporter-Times as an old historical home in 1967 and 1994.

Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Mann were restoring the property in 1986. Benoni Lewis was born and raised in Jefferson Township. He married Claude in 1897. Their daughter, Gladys, born in 1898, a precocious child, planned her own 8th birthday party inviting neighborhood children unbeknownst to her parents. The Reporter-Times reported that Mrs. Lewis served

them watermelon and fruit. Gladys graduated from Butler University, received her masters from Columbia University, taught school at Martinsville & Marion High Schools, and worked for the National Security Division in Washington, D.C.

Some of the high school classmates of Miss Lewis were Clara Kirk, who became a teacher; Wayne Abbott, dentist; Raymond Lowder, farmer who was considered to be the first official cheerleader for Martinsville High, and Byron Burton, an engineer who served as Vice President of First National Bank.

Benoni's business property on S. Main St. was part of the properties located on lot 2, block 26 of the original Martinsville plat. It was part of the more than one quarter of the block that was sold to Indiana Bank & Trust in 1967. The bank planned to build a new facility where the following businesses were located: A & P, Sears & Roebuck catalogue department, Neal Furniture, Berry's Pizza, and Walker's Barber Shop. People may remember the A&P that sat where Key Bank is today.



THIS OLD WEST Columbus Street house is shown in early years when it belonged to Ben and Claude Lewis, parents of Gladys Lewis who is in the buggy. Mr. Lewis owned a grocery and dry goods store where the Neal Real Estate Co. on South Main Street is now located. He was also a member of the city council for many years. The picture belongs to Mrs. Harry Bain.

### Our Contact Information

Address: 127 S. Main St. Martinsville, IN 46151

Telephone: 765-315-6982

Facebook page: Morgan County History Center and Museum

Email: [morgancountyhistorymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:morgancountyhistorymuseum@gmail.com)

Web page: [morgancountyhistorymuseum.org](http://morgancountyhistorymuseum.org)

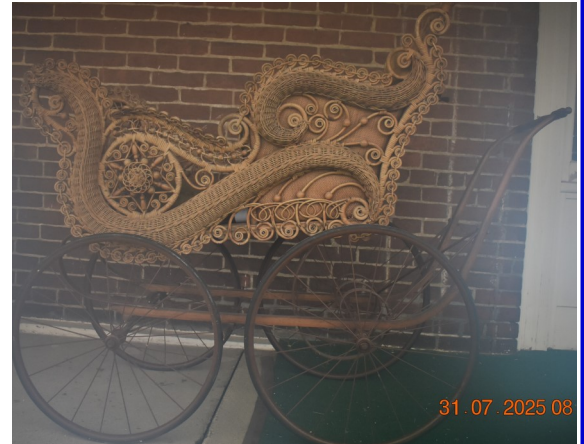
Open Hours:

Monday 10:00AM-2:00PM

Thursday 4:00PM-7:00PM

Saturday 10:00AM-3:00PM

This beautiful late 1800s perambulator (pram or baby buggy) was recently donated to the museum. It was once used by Benoni E. Lewis and wife Claude Clark Lewis for their daughter, Gladys. It had been discovered behind a wall on the second floor of their Columbus Street home. The picture on the front page is of Gladys Lewis in the pram in front of the house. The pram was manufactured in Indianapolis, IN. It contains a parasol which would have been mounted at the top and back of the pram.



High Rock Mill appears on an 1860 map in the SE corner of Section 20 in Jefferson Township northwest of Martinsville on the White River. John W. Cox moved to Indiana from Ohio in 1823 and built the first river dam and mill about two and one-half miles northwest of Martinsville. They originally ground corn, according to The Reporter-Times, 9 May 1938. Later a saw mill was erected at the same site. "The mill was built on a rock, but it was necessary that the building should project over the rock, so part of it stood upon piles, set in the river. The riverside building was 90 feet above the water, thus the name High Rock."

John Cox's daughter Martha ran a ferry across the river. She married George W. Clapper, who eventually went into business with Cox's brother James. John Cox went to California in 1848 to search for gold and died there. A large woolen mill was erected when William J. Sparks joined Cox, replacing Clapper. The mills suffered three fires and the third "swept away the historic mills." Sparks had added a carding mill.

"When the I. & V. railroad was brought to Martinsville instead of being located on the grade built for the road west of Martinsville, High Rock mill lost some of its importance" and business decreased. (Reporter, 16 Nov. 1937) About 1888, J. H. Maxwell, R.S. Barrett, and Ed L. Brown erected a comfortable ornamental club house on the leased High Rock mill site. It was a two story high cabin. An ornamental mill house was built over the mill where people could sit and drink refreshing water from an old oaken bucket.

### **Public Programs (all free admittance)**

**August 7, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Morgan County Library Genealogy Department,** learn to use the new photo digitizing equipment at the library; bring your own photos

**August 16, 2:30-3:30 p.m., Morgan County Library,** learn how to find adopted relatives; Nisa Claycamp, speaker

**September 4, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Morgan County History Center & Museum,** History of Mahalasville

**September 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Foxcliff manor house,** “Frank Brown Shields, Arthur Vandembark and Barbasol”. Come share memories about the Shields & Vandembark Families.

**September 27 & 28, Old Town Waverly Festival,** visit Old Town Waverly Park Facebook page for more detail

**October 8, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Morgan County Library,** History of the Library and Tour

**October 9-12, Morgan County Fall Foliage Festival, Martinsville**

**November 12, 6:30-7:30, Morgan County Library,** Join Bill Martin for the History of Martinsville Sanitariums

### **Inquiries**

We are working on several inquiries and would appreciate any help our members can give. Often inquiries result in our staff researching available avenues such as old maps and newspapers, ancestry.com, calling or visiting pertinent county offices, perusing Morgan County Scrapbooks I & II published by the Morgan County History & Genealogy, and reaching out to older citizens. This also happens with old homes, of which we often have no information. We are limited by what people have donated.

One block wall we have encountered has been the location of Ernest Williams property in Jackson Township, purchased in 1932 which was called Echo Park or Echo Village. There was a cottage and a house on the property. A family by the name of LaFary lived nearby. A second property, purchased in November 1936 at auction, was near the “old Kemp Schoolhouse”. Another query concerns two men of the same name, Thomas Baxter. One born in 1741, the other in 1764. The gentleman born in 1764 was supposedly buried at White Lick Creek in 1835 or 1837.

We have been asked where someone could find old medical records for the Martinsville Sanitarium during the 1930s. The county health department does not have these records. Has anyone come across them at an estate sale?

Indian history in Morgan County is always a popular question. We have very little available in the museum. If you have knowledge concerning any of these inquiries, we would appreciate your help. Either email or call, morgancountyhistorymuseum@gmail.com or 765-315-6982.



### Welcome to all our new Volunteers

Ron Vail, Mike Hankins, Cornelia (Dee) Adcock, Niki Shields, Leeanna Glidden

A training session is planned for new volunteers on August 7, 4:00-6:00 p.m., in the museum. Anyone interested in volunteering for the museum is welcome to attend the training.

### New Items in our Museum Gift Shop

- Stained Glass Crosses made from the windows of Home Lawn Sanitarium and the Old First Baptist Church which sat on E. Pike Street, each cross has a chain attached for easy hanging, \$20
- Daily inventory cards from Indiana Willow Products Co., Inc., a daily report of furniture made each day, \$1 each

### What is it?

The What is It in the Spring issue was a Dictaphone.



Can you identify this issue's what is it?



John E. Bundy, moved with his parents, John & Mary Bundy, southwest of Monrovia in Monroe Township in 1857 when he was four. He began to sketch and paint landscapes and farmyards. He was a birthright member of the Friends Society, according to Josephine Foster in an article written in 1997. He studied under B. S. Hays, a well known portrait painter. He moved to Martinsville in 1886-87 where he taught art classes. He later moved to Richmond and became head of the art department at Earlham College.

Numerous newspaper articles report his visits back to Martinsville. One of his many paintings, the High Rock Mill and Dam was owned by Eliza Cox in 1997. The museum is interested in acquiring a copy or picture of the painting if anyone has one.

The above painting is titled "A Bend in the Creek" painted by J. E. Bundy in 1900.

According to Mrs. Foster, Bundy was regarded as the dean of Indiana "Hoosier" artists after the death of T. C. Steele. This was due to Bundy's ability to paint lifelike scenes.