

Summer

2019

# North Manchester HISTORY

*Interpreting the History  
of North Manchester  
and the Eel River Valley*



## *School Lessons*, a memoir by David B. Bagwell

In our small town were two elementary schools that served the community. Thomas Marshall elementary school (b. 1929) resided in the eastern part of town, where the more affluent families sent their children. It was a relatively new structure, built with decorative pink red brick and sculptured effects on the exterior. The interior featured bright colors, ceramic lined hallways and attractive rooms. It had an extensive play-ground area that featured slides, swings and a merry-go-round that attracted and delighted the young students at recess.

On the west side of town was the Martha Winesburg elementary school (b. 1891- r. 1961) It was an older structure constructed of the regular red brick, now worn and partially blackened by the years of weathering. Inside, the halls were dark and the floor boards creaked and squeaked as the students entered their school and went to their classes. The outside grounds were very minimal, mostly having patches of concrete with dirt spots where the grass was well worn. The slide and swings were rusty, lacking paint and needed repair.

I attended Thomas Marshall during my third and fourth grades. I enjoyed the privilege of attending such a nice school. My parents were happy to have the opportunity to send me to the more desirable placement compared to the Martha Winesburg school which served a lower economic class population.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

School Lessons .....	1
Staff Notes .....	2
Friendship Home .....	3-5
Then and Now .....	6
Programs .....	7

*Continued next page*

## OFFICERS AND BOARD

Jim Myer, *President*

Mary Chrastil  
*President Emeritus*

Nancy Alspaugh  
*Vice-President*

Karen Hewitt, *Secretary*

Matt Mize, *Treasurer*

Jeanne Andersen

Tom Brown

Bernie Ferringier

Kathy Prater

Jeff Pyle

Tim Taylor

Joe Vogel

David Waas

## ADMINISTRATION

Jeanne Andersen

*Interim Director*

Joyce Joy

*Archivist . Office Manager*

Paula Dee

*Museum Coordinator*

## DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Jeanne Andersen . *Editor*

Paula Dee . *Designer*

Joyce Joy . *Contributor*

Gladys Airgood . *Contributor*

Social Media :

[www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/)

North Manchester Center for History

Instagram: [north\\_manchester\\_history](https://www.instagram.com/north_manchester_history)

Website::

[nmanchesterhistory.org](http://nmanchesterhistory.org)

Email:

[nmhistory@cinergymetro.net](mailto:nmhistory@cinergymetro.net)

Phone: (260) 982.0672

**The Center for History**

122 East Main Street

Tuesday through Friday, Mar—Dec

10:00a—4:00p

Saturday 10:00a—2:00p

**Visit Thomas Marshall House**

409 North Market Street

First Saturday Apr—Dec

1:00p—4:00p

One day my father came home from work quite upset and agitated. He had learned that due to a redistricting decision, the dividing line between east and west schools had been moved such that I would have to attend Martha Winesburg for my fifth and sixth grades. He made a request to the superintendent of schools to allow me to complete my schooling at Thomas Marshall on the east side. But he was unsuccessful in his attempt.

The first day I had to go to my new school, I was terrified. I didn't know what to expect. Beside the loss of friends I had made at my other school, I had doubts and anxieties about what I would face ahead. I sensed my parents' disappointment that I had to attend a new school and lose contact with my former school.

When I arrived and met my new classmates, I noticed they were somewhat different. They spoke in a little rougher language, dressed a little more shabbily and were more confrontational. However, as the days went on I remember joining in the marble games on the grounds at recess. There I met Karl Merritt, who became my closest friend. We enjoyed competing in the marble games and this friendship extended into high school and college. My fears were *not* confirmed. I enjoyed my new schoolmates and I met a lifelong friend. My parents were relieved to see my adjustment to the new conditions. My father, I remember, actually had turned around in his opinion of the situation, stating that it was one of the best things that I had experienced.

This became what I call a "school lesson." The building does not always tell the full story. It is more what is inside ourselves, how we react to change and participate in a new setting.

*David lived at 610 Front Street in North Manchester from 1938 – 1960. He graduated from Central H.S. in 1956 and went on to graduate from Manchester College in 1960. This story was written for a memoir writing class in Riderwood Village, Silver Spring, Maryland where he currently resides with his wife.*

*Hello from all of us at the Center for History!*

*We have been busy this summer planning upcoming events for our patrons to enjoy. Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street exhibit, Crossroads: Change in Rural America, will be here before we know it, March 21-May 3 2020. We will need your help staffing our museum for the extended hours we will be open for our community during the exhibit. I have been appointed Museum Director for the interim and have been challenged daily in a good way! The supporting staff and wonderful volunteers have gone above and beyond duty to make your North Manchester Center for History the best volunteer led museum in the state of Indiana! Please join us in our efforts!*

*Historically yours, Jeanne Andersen, et.al.*

## FRIENDSHIP HOME PARK (*Lukens Lake*)

**L**ukens lake is located four miles north of Roann, Indiana, in Pleasant Township, bearing the name of Mathias Lukens who purchased the land surrounding the lake, February 15, 1837 from the U.S. Government.

Mathias Lukens arrived in Wabash County by wagon traveling through the “Black Swamp” which was located in northwestern Ohio. Lukens was very well known throughout the area. In the first township election Mathias was elected as a township trustee. Lukens died March 25, 1896, leaving his estate to Nancy Lukens, his widow. Their son, George Lukens, was the court appointed estate administrator. When Nancy Lukens died the value of the estate was \$500.

Prior to 1905 the area was known locally simply as *Lukens Lake* and subsequently as *The Resort North of Roann*. On May 13, 1905, 85 acres of the property was transferred to Jacob W. and Elsie B. Kreig. In 1907 they began developing the area under the name *Friendship Home Park*. The park was described as “away from noise, smoke and railroads” and was very popular. Friendship Home operated as a farm resort on the shores of the pristine lake. Vegetables for the table were gathered fresh from the gardens. Fresh eggs and milk were plentiful. Fine fishing was free to all who visited. Advertised were “cool nights, no mosquitoes and an abundance of shade around the bubbling springs . . . conducive to make your stay a pleasant one.”

By May of 1908 *Friendship Home Park* was described as one of the “most beautiful camping grounds” in the area. The park had been thoroughly cleaned for the season and planted with beautiful flower beds. A number of swings had been set up throughout the park and a new boat house had been erected. *Friendship Home Hotel* was located on the hill overlooking the lake. The hotel was “well lighted” and had “ventilated rooms with modern, free baths.” *Friendship Home Park* was an ideal place to spend a vacation with free boats, available by the week, free bathing and an abundance to eat for all boarders.

Nearby was the *Farm House Inn*, an old style farm house 300 feet from the lake, surrounded by a grove of trees. As an inn, it was touted as having “all rooms well ventilated and the best of water.” In later years the *Farm House Inn* became the home of Katherine VanBuskirk.

Close at hand was the *Launch House*, composed of three rooms, two beds and a gasoline stove, all for a \$1 a day. Families who wished to camp on the grounds in tents were charged 50¢



c. 1910 Band playing to a listening audience. Property owned by Jacob W. Kreig.

*Continued next page*

a day. On special days the Kreig's would provide free entertainment for guests. On October 8, 1918, J.W. Kreig sold the land and the *Friendship* buildings to George W. Kingston.

In the 1920s Lukens Lake became the site of an annual ritual that occurred on New Year's Day. Homer T. Showalter formed a group known as the Wabash Polar Bear Club. Each New Year's Day area lakes, but particularly Lukens Lake, were the scene of their antics. Hundreds of observers would turn out to see two or three dozen brave souls go for a "polar bear swim."

*In the 1920s  
Lukens Lake  
became home to  
the Wabash Polar  
Bear Club.*

Hearty souls would splash about in the cold water for nearly 15 minutes. Sometimes the lake would have three to four inches of ice, which had to be chopped open, with temperatures as chilly as 25 degrees. This annual celebration was in fashion until the start of World War II.

In the early 1920s, a dance hall was built at Lukens Lake and well known radio bands played their music. The dance hall was a round building located on top of the hill. The hall was open every night and on weekends in good weather. Dick Showalter remembered going there and recalled Bob Milliner sold tickets at the door for a 10¢ dance.

Later, when there was no longer a dance hall, a roller skating rink was built on the site. The music at the rink was "live." Emmaline Haag recalled that "she, Louise Nicely Sloop and the gang went there to skate all the time." At the time the roller skating rink was owned by Russell Myers and operated by Jerry Miller and Olive Zerbrug. Free shows (movies) were held each Sunday evening at the lake.

George W. Kingston sold the property to Ernest P. Rumpf on May 20, 1946. Twenty-one days later, on June 10, Rumpf sold the property to Rex Sims. The years of ownership changes had not been kind to the *Friendship Home Park*. The property had become an abandoned patch of tall weeds and undergrowth when Rex and Clara Sims cast an eye along the lake front. Sims was an industrial arts teacher for 35 years at Wabash High School. With his knowledge of construction the couple made their plans.

The Sims' sold their home in Wabash, came to Lukens Lake and began a complete renovation of the grounds and buildings. Also remodeling what was to be their home on the hill at the south end overlooking the lake. The home was originally three stories high, but Sims removed the top floor. The glass chandeliers in the home were added and the tall white pillars at the front of the home were made by Sims.

Soon Sims created a new beach, bath house and a boat channel, along with an 18 hole miniature golf course. An up-to-date concession stand was built on a nearby hill. Also a picnic shelter was erected using logs from an old "concession stand."

A new entrance to the grounds was put in. Outdoor fire pits and picnic



Original entrance to Friendship Home Park c. 1910



Above: Friendship Home Park, c. 1910

Below: Entrance to Friendship Home Park, 2019



Labor Day weekend. Campers are encouraged. There are many activities, including boat rentals; canoes, paddle boats, kayaks and a marina for pontoon boats, fishing, video games, pool tables, a shady picnic area, hayrides on holiday weekends and still there is a concession stand on the top of the hill.

tables dotted shaded areas. Visitors came from Wabash and surrounding counties. 4-H clubs, scouts, church groups, family campers and picnickers enjoyed the area. In 1966 a new pavilion was added, as was a riding academy.

At the beginning of summer, before the resort opened for business, Sims would hire local youth to come out and clean the picnic area. Kevin, Kim and Kerry Steele were three of the employees who did much of the cleaning and recall many fun experiences. Weekends were crowded with several hundred people enjoying the resort, playing miniature golf and swimming on the hot days of summer. Local youth had summer jobs working in the concession stand making milkshakes, grilling hamburgers and selling candy to visitors.

On March 21, 1971 Rex Sims passed away and his wife, Clara, remained in the "big house" until she became ill and passed away in 1976. Their home was sold to Lynn and Judy Ladson, then to William Garlits and later owners, Dr. Robert and Susan Mattern, worked to restore the home to its original grandeur.

While most of the public activity at Lukens Lake was focused on the south and west sides, some people eyed the east and north sides of the lake with different ideas. New homes were built on the east and southeast sides of the lake.

In 1972, after the death of Rex Sims, *Lukens Lake Resort* was purchased by Carl and Frieda Steiner. The business was then passed on to two of their sons, C. J. and Cameron Steiner, partners, who continue to this day operating the *Lukens Lake Resort* as fun place to go. The resort opens each Memorial Day weekend and closes

# THEN and NOW

1903



*Before the paving  
of the street - and the  
removal of the wood sidewalks  
from 1903 -*

North Manchester Center for History Collection

Above: South side of East Main Street, 127-141, just before the street was paved and sidewalks were boards. "Ebbinghaus Brothers Boots and Shoes" is printed on the side of three story building (133-135 East Main), the Masonic Lodge is on the 3rd floor, east part. Another building had "W. E. Will" painted on window. Sign on wooden awning reads "G. R. Barratt's Variety Store."

Below: 125-127; Periolat Family Dentistry, 129; Modern Impressions, 131-133; Grands Ice Cream, 135; Guideline Tattoo, 137; Plunge Creek Photography, 139-143; Main View

2019



Photo by Scott McAlpine

*Coming to the Museum in September!!*

**You must escape the North Manchester Center for History by unlocking a box which contains the keys to the front door. Good luck and enjoy your journey through time!**

**Escape the Museum** is a program provided by the North Manchester Public Library and the North Manchester Center for History and is part of our Crossroads—Change in Rural America programming.

Groups will each have 40 minutes to Escape the Museum! You will solve a series of puzzles using clues linked to exhibits showing how our town has changed, located throughout the museum. When the puzzles are solved, correct combinations will open locks to get you closer and closer to your escape!



**Registration will begin the last week of August at the North Manchester Public Library.**



*Crossroads: Change in Rural America*

Our 'Eel Team' has been busy meeting and arranging for monthly programs that are very exciting! These programs will relate to our theme: Changes in North Manchester. Check your newspaper and follow us on Facebook for scheduling. Programs will take place at different area venues including Timbercrest, Peabody, the Center for History, and library. Everyone is welcome!

North Manchester Historical Society  
P. O. Box 361  
122 East Main Street  
North Manchester, Indiana 46962

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

**A Traveling Exhibit  
from Indiana Historical Society  
FREEDOM: A History of US  
is on display at the  
Center for History  
now through August 15**



**Center for  
HISTORY**  
North Manchester

## North Manchester Center for History

### Mission Statement

The North Manchester Center for History of the North Manchester Historical Society serves to promote the Society's mission as a nonprofit educational association that collects, preserves, and interprets the history of North Manchester and northern Indiana (the area of the Eel River Basin) from the arrival of the first Native Americans in the region to the present day through the collecting and preserving of books, documents, artifacts and other cultural objects. The Center interprets its collection to the public by means of a museum facility, educational programs, lectures, public events and publications and encourages others to help collect, preserve and interpret the history of North Manchester area.

## **Please share this form with a friend!! MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**Please Make Checks Payable to North Manchester Historical Society  
PO Box 361  
North Manchester, IN 46962  
260.982.0672**

New Member  Renewal  
 Individual \$30  Couples \$50  Sustaining \$75  Supporting \$100

In addition to membership, I would like to give a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be used for:

Where most needed  Center for History  Thomas Marshall House  
 Other (Please specify)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Would you prefer to receive your Newsletter by Email?  Yes

We are a 501-(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.  
**Note:** Membership dues provide specific member benefits and are not the same as Annual Fund gifts, which provide purely philanthropic support.