The Search for Entertainment in 19th Century North Manchester, by Ladoska Z. Bunker

By 1871, North Manchester had two railroads. Along with food, the railroads brought theatrical troupes—“tour shows.” Presenting Uncle Tom’s Cabin was an annual affair. North Manchester was on a main line into Chicago, so sometimes exceptional talent came—Nora Bayes, the star of Shine on Harvest Moon and Fay Templeton, among others. Local people occasionally put on home talent shows, usually black face minstrels.

Traveling circuses, often dog and pony shows, came to town. Medicine shows, first with a minstrel and later with wild west themes, held forth on Henney’s Lot, the vacant block on Main and Elm streets.

For about a decade, 1910-1920, a remarkable institution, the Redpath Chatauquah, spent a summer week here camped out on the Central School ground. It was billed as strictly high class, educational, family entertainment. They brought in large bands, fading opera stars, U.S. Senators, poets, British propaganda speakers, and an occasional play.

Transportation and education produced a more sophisticated citizenry. By the 1920s, radio, and later talking and colored movies, and still later, television assumed leading roles in entertainment.

This is an excerpt of an article taken from the book A Sense of Place: Reflections on the Life and Times of North Manchester. You can purchase this book in our Gift Shop for $3.50.
OUR VISITORS COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

OTHER COUNTRIES
Solomon Islands
Norway
Netherlands
New Zealand
Paris, France

OTHER STATES
Alabama
Woodville
Arizona
Mesa
Chandler
Pea Ridge
Arkansas
Bentonville
California
Chico
Los Osos
Los Angeles
Oceanside
Orange City
Sonoma
Colorado
Grand Junction
Florida
Ecala
Hollywood
Jacksonville
Lake Mary
St. Petersburg
The Village
Winter Haven
Winter Springs
Georgia
Marietta
Atlanta
Illinois
Chicago
Mahomet
Park Forest
Peoria

Iowa
Prairie City
Kansas
Manhattan
McPherson
Olaine
Michigan
Ann Arbor
Charlesvoix
Chelsea
Fenton
Grand Blanc
Lansing
Novi
Worthing
Minnesota
Minneapolis
Prior Lake
Missouri
St. Louis
Nebraska
Reno
New York
Honeoye Falls
Grand Island
North Carolina
Asheville
Raleigh
Cary
Hendersonville
Ohio
Cincinnati
Cleveland Heights
Cloverdale
Continental
Eaton
Garretsville
Medina
Ney
North Olmstead
Smithville
Willoughby
Oregon
Ashland
Forest Grove
Pennsylvania
Downingtown
South Carolina
Camden
Hilton Head
Tennessee
Friendsville
Nashville
Primm Springs
Texas
Austin
Shady Shores
Utah
Provo
Vermont
Plainfield
Virginia
Arlington
Ashburn
McLean
Richmond
Woodbridge
West Virginia
Hermit
Indiana
Akron
Andrews
Angola
Batesville
Bloomington
Bremen
Claypool
Columbia City
Columbus
Crown Point
Elkhart
Etta Green
Fishers
Fort Wayne
Galveston
Greensburg
Hartford City
Hudson
Huntington
Indianapolis
Knox
Kokomo
Lafayette
Lagro
Laketon
Leesburg
Leo
Logansport
Marion
Mishawaka
Monticello
Nappanee
New Paris
New Waverly
Noblesville
North Webster
Osceola
Pendleton
Peru
Pierceton
Roann
Rochester
Rossville
Silver Lake
South Whitley
Syracuse
Tipton
Urban
Somerset
Warsaw
Westfield
Winamac
Winona Lake
My Life on the Farm

by Garland Wilcox

My parents, Amelia and Ernest Wilcox, got married in 1917. They purchased a 120 acre farm from my Grandpa Wilcox. Things went well for them until 1929-1930. By that time, they had six children, five boys and one girl. I was born in 1930 in the depth of the Depression. There were three more children after that. When the Depression hit, Dad had no money to make a payment on the farm. Dad didn’t want to lose what he had worked so hard for. Dad told the two oldest boys that he was going to lose the farm. The boys said, “We are not going to lose this farm. We will work as hard as we can to save it.”

Dad had worked with the Bippus State Bank to buy the property. This bank was one of the few banks in Indiana that didn’t go broke during the Depression. Dad went to the bank and to ask if something could be worked out. People at the bank told Dad to see a lawyer, a Mr. Eberhart. The two oldest boys went with him and told Mr. Eberhart they would work to save the farm.

Mom took care of the house with help from her oldest daughter. Our house was fairly old and needed repairs around the windows and doors. When it was very windy and snowed, the snow would blow in around the sashes. The kitchen range was more for cooking than it was for heating a large area. The fire would almost always die by morning. Mom put a pail of water out in the kitchen in the evening, but it sometimes froze over by morning.

To heat our house, we had a wood and coal stove in the living room. It was one of those that would burn your front side and freeze your backside when you stood near it. You could bank the stove so it would stay warm all night and the coals would be ready the next morning. Dad took care of the stove.

We had two bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs. Mom and dad slept downstairs to watch the stove. The girls had one bedroom upstairs. The boys slept two and three to a bed in their room upstairs. One time I had a straw tick bed to myself that was quite neat.

We did have water piped into the house with a suction pump, but in the winter time mom would let the suction out so it would drain the water back into the well. Then each morning we had to put some water back into the pump to get the suction back so we could pump water again.
In the fall, we hunted squirrels, rabbits, quail, and a few ducks or geese for food. The older boys hunted raccoon, opossum, skunk, muskrat, mink and fox for fur they could sell. Sometimes these animals would get into the neighbors’ chickens and the neighbors would call us to remedy that.

When dad harvested his corn, he always saved the best ears to be seed the next year. In late winter, he would shell the corn that was good and dry. He had a couple of shellers that fit in the palm of his hand.

Spring was the time to think about what fields would be planted in each crop and what was to be put into the garden. Mom always planted plenty of vegetables and flowers. She would go to Mrs. Brodbeck in Bippus to get plants such as sweet potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, or onions. The children helped carry water, hoe, or plant beans and peas in the garden. We used horses to cultivate our large truck patch. We put our potatoes, sweet corn and rows of sorghum molasses in the truck patch. We also grew grapes, gooseberries, peaches, crab apples and currents. Mom picked wild raspberries and blackberries for jelly, jam, and toppings. We had a quince bush. Quince was only good to put in with other fruit to make jelly. Mom also canned a lot of cherries and peaches.

In the spring, the men plowed and worked the ground to plant spring crops, then it was time to make hay. As the wagons went to the fields, the lane would get so dusty from the wheels that it would almost cover our feet. When Sunday came we would go fishing in the creek or hunting mushrooms. We enjoyed our days off!

Then it was summer and time to cut our wheat and oats with a binder that tied the plants into small bundles. These bundles were put into shocks to cure and dry the kernels of grain. The shocks could be left for quite some time this way. As fall would start to show, we cleaned the barn to get ready for threshing the wheat and oats. A German gentleman on a farm around a corner from us had a threshing machine. A lot of farmers would get together and hire him to thrash for everyone. He had a tractor to run the machine. Each of the farmers had a wagon to throw the bundles of wheat or oats in to bring them to the threshing machine. The threshing machine would blow the straw into the barn or blow it into a large pile outside where the cattle and hogs would lay around in it. The grain would
go into another wagon. Most farms had a granary to put the grain in, or the grain was stored in another building or the barn.

When the threshing work was completed, Mr. Urschel would hire my dad to take each farm’s bushels of grain and figure out how much they owed him for threshing their grain. Mr. Urschel would pick an evening for all the families to bring their bills. He would go to Huntington to the Double Dip Ice Cream Factory and bring back enough ice cream for everyone to enjoy, all they could eat. It was wonderful.

Then about late fall and early winter work. Frost killed the corn stalks and they dried in the field awhile. Someone had a corn binder, a machine that cut the corn stalks off and tied them into small bundles. These bundles would be stood up on the cut end and collected into shocks that looked like a tee pee. They did this to dry the corn kernels and let the stalks cure.

Dad bought a very old corn shredder. He had an old Hart Parr tractor that had steel lug wheels on the back. Those wheels dug into the road bed but that didn’t matter since the roads were all gravel anyway. Dad would go from farm to farm to shred the corn stalks into fodder to be used for bedding for livestock or food for the animals. The ears of corn were pulled off the stalks and shucked. The ears were carried up into a wagon for grain for all the animals. Most of the ear corn was put into a corn crib to be used later.

I think dad knew almost everybody in eight townships. As he would go from one place to another, people would ask if he could do their shredding, so he would work a lot of days in the winter. That really helped his bottom line when it came to keeping his farm. Dad died fairly young at only 61. The funeral director said that was the largest funeral he had, up to that time.

I remember Mom dressed a turkey for Mr. Eberhart every Thanksgiving and Christmas. He would always say, “Thank you,” but he would not pay her anything. He came year after year and got his turkeys but it was always “Thank you,” and never any pay. I asked my brothers about it, but they didn’t understand it either. I wondered about that for years. When our mother died almost thirty years later, I was co-executor for her estate. After getting things settled, I found out about my mystery, and that was the largest shock of my life.

Mr. Eberhart had written a note to my parents and they put it in with the final papers. The note said that he would hold the deed to the farm, made out to him. If they got back on their feet again to take over the payments on the farm, Mr. Eberhart would sign the deed back to our parents. That was his payment, dressed turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas for all those years. I felt that was more than fair on his part. I also thought that is what you call buying a farm with a turkey!

Garland Wilcox is a resident of Timbercrest Retirement Community. He was wounded in the Korean War which left his right arm and hand disabled. Even so he was able to have a career in floor covering for 41 years. He was a pool champion at the age of 89. He bought himself a new tractor for his 89th birthday to surprise his children.
Barn raising on the Ellis Miller farm, 100 E, north of North Manchester. Stone foundation built in 1902, barn built by Ellis in April 1903. When his son Harold married he took over the farm and his father moved to town. After Harold retired, he made a room in the barn into a museum of old farming equipment, some from the 1840s. After his death these items were donated to the Center for History. Come in to see a full barn display from the Miller farm.
Crossroads: Change in Rural America

The Center for History is planning many events from March 21—May 3, 2020. These events will be held at the Center. Details are forthcoming.

March
- 21 10-9 Ribbon Cutting, Grand Opening
- 22 1-4 Art Workshop with Hannah Burnworth
- 28 3-5 Local Musicians

April
- 4 2-5 Art Workshop with Heidi Lovett
- 11 2-4 Pete Jones Lecture
- 19 2-4 Art Workshop with Britta Glass
- 25 2-4 Jeff Diesburg Lecture

May
- 2 6-9 Closing Party

Jody Rockwell’s 2nd grade class was asked to draw a picture of a local farm and bring it with them when they visited the Center in September. All pictures will be available for parents to see during Crossroads.
North Manchester Historical Society
P. O. Box 361
122 East Main Street
North Manchester, Indiana 46962

Please consider receiving your newsletter by email to reduce cost to the Center for History
nmhistory@cinergymetro.net

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.

Renew your membership NOW so you will be eligible to vote at the January Annual Meeting!!

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

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