

Winter

2020

North Manchester HISTORY

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



Architectural Drawing by Allan White

Christmas in the '30s, a memoir by Gladys Airgood

'Tis the Christmas season! So many memories come with it. The reason for the season, the birth of Christ, has always been at the center of my celebrations. I love all the Christmas hymns and carols. One of my earliest memories is of Santa giving each child at church a small bag with an orange, some candy and nuts.

I loved the Christmas trees. We had some tiny candle holders that clipped on the branches, but we never lit them. A few beautiful glass ornaments of various shapes and colors were carefully saved from year to year. Some years we strung popcorn and cranberries to make garlands – and there were always lots of shiny icicles. A few pieces of red and green construction paper was cut and glued into connecting circles to make garland also. Our Christmas trees were spruce, very sparse compared to the bushy pines today. But they smelled so good!

We always had a family meal and exchanged gifts representing the gift of the Christ child. My favorite time was when I was given money to purchase nativity figures at the dime store. For many years I would arrange them on a stand, put a dark blue cloth behind them, and place a gold star in the sky. As more children came along, they loved to play with the baby in the manger, Joseph and Mary, the shepherds and wise men, the donkey and sheep. After the meal, we would gather round the piano and sing hymns and carols. This grew to mean more than the food and gifts.

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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

CLOSED for the SEASON

WHERE OUR VISITORS CAME FROM

JULY—DECEMBER 2020

Arkansas

Marmaduke

Arizona

Buckeye

Maricopa

Mesa

California

Azusa

Redlands

Georgia

Woodstock

Illinois

Elgin

Michigan

Coldwater

Niles

Minnesota

Minneapolis

Ohio

Cincinnati

Oregon

Silverton

Pennsylvania

Lancaster

South Carolina

Abbeville

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Claypool

East Chicago

Elkhart

Fishers

Fort Wayne

Gaston

Goshen

Greentown

Huntington

Kentland

Kokomo

Lagro

Laketon

La Porte

Leesburg

Logansport

Macy

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The Irish War in Wabash County

by Dr. Jay M. Perry

In July of 1835, 600 Irish immigrant laborers stopped digging the Wabash and Erie Canal. Half marched west from Huntington with the rest marching east from Peru. Halfway between stood the present-day site of Lagro, a predetermined location for two rival groups to violently resolve a longstanding dispute.

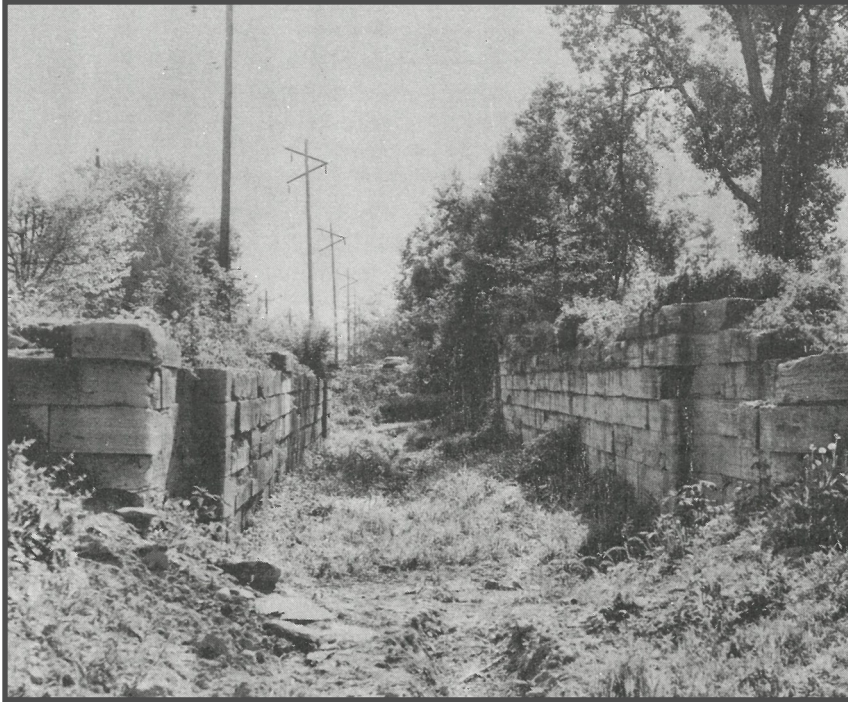
Those laborers near Huntington were known as *Corkonians*, named after County Cork, the largest county in southwestern Ireland. Those near Peru were called *Fardowns*, an old colloquialism for those from Ireland's northern counties. Despite sharing experiences as Irish immigrants and the backbreaking labor of canal construction, Corkonians and Fardowns viewed each other as competitors. They organized into competing factions to protect the interests of those from geographic regions in Ireland close to their own. The rivalry predated their arrival in Indiana; members had fought previously in other states on other canal and railroad sites. The Wabash and Erie Canal often struggled to pay its hands and evidence also suggests a payroll shipment had recently gone missing. An increase in workers coupled with a decreasing likelihood of payments intensified hostilities as Corkonians and Fardowns sought to preserve jobs and payments for their own membership.

These growing concerns manifested in frequent Corkonian and Fardown attacks on each other. Rumors spread through work camps and the community about pending raids. Locals living along the canal line also came under threat as laborers robbed wagons and houses in search of weapons. By July 10, work on the canal stopped as the Corkonians and Fardowns began marching to Lagro for a proposed battle on July 12.

Canal Commissioner David Burr met with the opposing sides in hopes of avoiding the battle. He would later write that both sides claimed to be living under constant threat and believed they had little recourse but to fight until one group left the canal. Burr secured a temporary cessation of hostilities, buying enough time for militia units to arrive from Fort Wayne, Huntington, and Logansport.



Continued next page



***“Jim Curr or Kerr”
Canal Lock, Lagro,
attests to the
durability of the
limestone used
to build the canal.***

The arrival of the militia scattered the Corkonians and Fardowns with some fleeing into the woods and others returning to their camps. The militia arrested 100-200 participants. The mass arrests, however, exposed two problems – Wabash County had no jail and detaining the laborers delayed work on the canal. The authorities released all of the arrested except eight leaders that were marched to Indianapolis; they too were soon released on a technicality.

While the militia thwarted the major battle in Lagro, Corkonian and Fardowns conflicts persisted throughout the canal’s construction. Elsewhere in Indiana, a Corkonian was sentenced to prison for murdering a Fardown on the Central Canal near Indianapolis in 1837. That same year, two Corkonians received prison sentences for killing a Fardown during the construction of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad. The feud would continue on to Illinois and other states as canal and railroad construction continued.

For more information, see Perry, Jay M. “The Irish Wars: Laborer Feuds on Indiana's Canals and Railroads in the 1830s.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 109 (September 2013): 224-256.

My Grandmother

by Ed Miller

My paternal grandmother, Anna Shank Lehman Miller, 1856-1948, was the third of eight children and eldest of three daughters. When she was 10 years old her mother died of typhoid at age 39. Grandma took on the responsibility for raising her younger siblings and was in charge of household duties. She was the only grandparent I knew. The others died either before or within a few years after I was born. Grandmother was the second wife of my grandfather, George Mathias Miller, 1854-1929. His first wife and their child both died during childbirth in 1886. Anna and George were married in 1889 and had three children. Elsie, 1890-1984, who is modeling the wedding hat, Adin, 1891-1983, my father, and Naomi, 1897-1990.

We lived on the family farm just across the road from where grandma lived with my dad's two school teacher sisters and I spent many hours with them until she died at age 91 when I was 13. Of German heritage, she spoke mainly German (Pennsylvania Dutch) until she started to school. One of my memories is of the quilt frame that was so often set up in their living room where she stitched quilts. One quilt was for me in which I did several (longer) stitches that are easy to find. Another memory is of her, at advanced age, contentedly snipping larger fabric scraps into smaller pieces as though she were cutting pieces for a quilt of which she made many when younger.

Grandmother was an invalid for most of the time I knew her. She fell off the back porch and fractured her hip, so in many of the pictures of her she is sitting. She was a gentle, kind, uncomplaining lady highly respected by her siblings who often came to visit her and reminisce of their times together as a family.



Aunt Elsie Miller Kletzly wearing my grandmother's hat.

Grandmother Anna Lehman Miller's wedding hat and gloves.

Wooden hat box 1848-1851 belonged to Lydia Shaffer Miller, the 2nd wife of my great grandfather Joseph Miller.



Market @ the Museum



L-R: Pottery by Elizabeth Wamsley; Art Bank Studio, Christmas tree in the museum, Wreath by Diane Binkerd, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Olsen, Miniatures by Ashley Sanson, Round Barn Metal Works, Mandy (Underwood) Mahan; Juniper & Co. jewelry. Not pictured; Dee Hoffman, Templar Farms, Heidi Lovett; Happy Little Flowers Studio, Susan Ring, and Peg Herendeen.

Letter from the Director

What a year it has been! The staff and volunteers at the Center for History have had an action packed year despite the seemingly endless ups and downs of the pandemic. We hosted our first ever Smithsonian exhibit and from that had many, many first time visitors to the museum. Although our opening was delayed by several months the response was gratifying. Our appreciation goes out to the numerous volunteers and donors that made the experience a great success. Working with a world class museum like the Smithsonian Institute has been encouraging and educational on many levels.

This year was our first year to host a summer camp and Sandra Bendsen is to be credited with the success of that endeavor. Students came and did crafts, enjoyed music, discovered what life was like before GPS; learning to read maps and explored diversity by recreating their images in life size figures.

2020 was the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and we celebrated women in our community, past and present, with an original exhibit that we were all very proud of. It took many volunteers to research, design, build and execute – all on a very slim margin, but there isn't a thing I would change about the finished product it was magnificent!

Changes brought by the pandemic forced us to venture outside of our comfort zone and learn new skills. Videography wasn't part of the job description for any of us, but we learned! Our monthly educational programs have gone virtual since May of 2020. We plan to keep them in that format throughout 2021. Access information for all of our programs is always available on our website, www.northmanchestercenterforhistory.org. Maybe you missed one or would like to recommend one to a friend – they are there for your enjoyment.

Finally, we finished the year with our first ever Market @ the Museum and we were amazed at the response. Ten local artists shared their talents and time for ten days at the museum. We had nearly 200 guests during that time providing an opportunity for the artists to sell their wares. Overwhelmingly the artists and staff have agreed this is going to be an annual event.

I am very proud that despite the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis we embraced opportunity and showed perseverance by forging ahead regardless of the setbacks. We all hope for a better year in 2021, but we have learned that despite adversity we have much to celebrate and much to be proud of. Waiting for a better time can be considered by some as wasting our life away . . . our staff, volunteers and members chose to live in the moment and make the best of the opportunities we had. Kudos to all of us! Thank you for being a part of the North Manchester Historical Society and the Center for History.

We look forward to seeing you when we re-open March 16, 2021 – *be safe and best wishes for the Holidays and New Year.*

Laura Rager, Director
Center for History

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**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.

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