

Summer

2021

North Manchester HISTORY

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



Kids Get first Auto Ride

On April 22, 1911, Olinger and Warvel brought together other auto dealers and owners to give kids a ride in an auto. There were 56 autos; they made two trips to Laketon and back in order to take all the kids who showed up to ride. Steering wheels on cars are on right side. Front drivers are Jonas Warvel in a Hupmobile, George Schumaker in a Mitchell (Stanley), J. Martin in a Marion, John Snyder in an Overland.



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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

First Saturday Apr—Dec

1:00p—4:00p

Harry Weimer and the Manhattan Project

Harry Raymond Weimer was born on a farm in northwestern Wabash County on Dec 9, 1906, to Cain and Adella Hill Weimer. A shy child, he loved literature and could read an average size book in an hour. With family connections to the ministry, it was thought he would go in that direction, and that was his thought until high school. He was an excellent scholar and held several school offices.

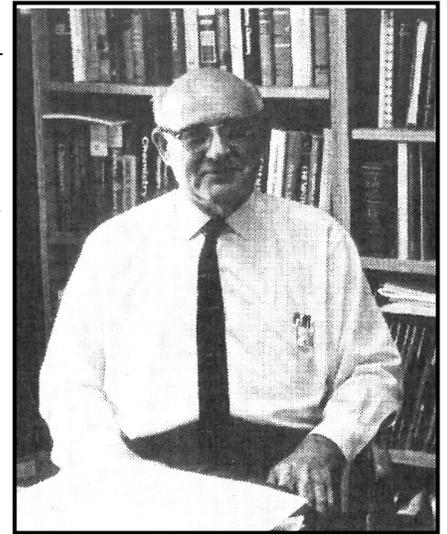
In 1912, Adella and a neighbor began doing canning for others. Cain helped by developing a backyard pressure cooker and other small tools

including a tin can sealer. He taught Harry to use these. From this grew the Weimer Canning Company, employing as many as 80 local people working 15-20 hours at times. Harry received 1/4¢ per can for his pay. This helped finance his education.

Harry graduated from Central High School and Manchester College. He was advised to take a master's degree. He received his Ph.D. in chemistry from Ohio State University in 1933. He taught at Bridgewater College in Virginia for five years, then returned in 1938 to Manchester College.

As World War II began, the United States, Canada and Britain wanted to build an atomic weapon before Germany or Japan. In 1943 Harry received a call from Ohio State: "Would you participate in a government-sponsored program involving a totally new field of science with no questions asked or answers given?" Harry agreed and was sent to Unit III at the Monsanto Chemical Plant in Dayton, Ohio. He was under oath, had daily physical checks and his roommate was an Army colonel who could not wear his uniform.

Full details of Harry's employment in Dayton were not known until after July, 1983 when the records of the highly secret Dayton Project were declassified. Early in the design of an atomic bomb, researchers at Los Alamos determined that only polonium provided the strong radiation necessary to initiate the chain reaction leading to an atomic explosion. A rare, artificially produced highly radioactive metal, it had only been produced in minute quantities and little studied.



On May 24, 1943 Monsanto signed a contract with the Manhattan Project to research and produce polonium. The company never acknowledged the contract nor did the Manhattan Project. An internal memo referred to its Dayton activities as “a secret war project which cannot be disclosed at this time.” The scientists worked 24 hour days in an isolated building.

The total project was called the Manhattan Project. It employed 129,000 workers. Sites were located over much of the United States with some in Canada. The work culminated in the explosion of a “Little Boy” bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 5, 1945 and a “Fat Man” bomb over Nagasaki on Aug. 9.



Harry came home and literally walked the floor all night long. Exhausted by morning, he picked up a cup of coffee and remarked, “We have succeeded, but I wish to God we hadn’t. It’s awful, but it has to be.” In later years he told several amusing and interesting anecdotes, but he never discussed his feelings or details. He was still under oath. He accepted nuclear energy but he did not entirely trust man or military power.

The Manhattan Project left a network of national laboratories. The Navy had been interested in using nuclear power for submarines. The new reactors sparked a revolution in the field of nuclear medicine. Radioisotopes were used in diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Atomic power was no longer a dream but a reality.

Harry resigned from the project Aug. 1 and returned to Manchester College where he taught until his death in 1970. At times he taught math, physics, and geology as well as chemistry. He was a favorite of students and was often called to help with them in problem situations. When he died he was Head of the Chemistry Department and chairman of the Division of sciences at Manchester.

Harry held memberships in several organizations, the American Chemical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma XI, the honor society Phi Lambda Upsilon of Phi Beta Kappa, and the Indiana Academy of Science. He was listed in American Men of Science. Locally he was a Kiwanian, was in the Masonic Blue Lodge, and he held the York Rite degree of Masonry.

Gladys Airgood, Contributor

Source: Weimer, Robert emails December 2020

LOCAL VETERANS’ EXHIBIT

Beginning June 14, Flag Day, the Center for History will have a special exhibit of uniforms and stories recognizing military personnel over the years. Harry Weimer was not in the military, but his work was very important to the outcome of World War II. The Center has many uniforms from different times and is pleased to share them at this time. Come in and see the uniforms and learn about how different people reacted to spending time in the service, most during war time, but some during peace time. These are the people who have done the most to keep our country free.

*Brethren Head North to
Purchase Inexpensive Land, but they also find
barriers and pitfalls as well, Pt.2*

by Tom Brown

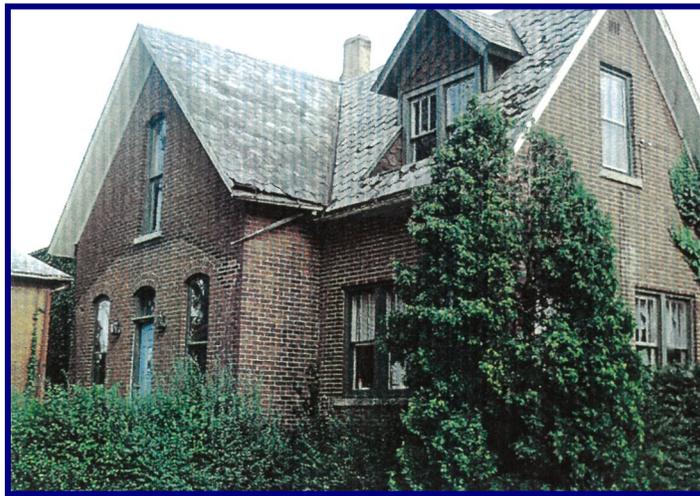
A brief recap from Part 1; Jacob Metzger had just returned to his home in Montgomery County Ohio where he and seven other Brethren from his local congregation had purchased land in northeastern Indiana (an area known at the time as Wabash Valley) for \$1.25 an acre. Jacob purchased two quarter sections, with a quarter section consisting of 160 acres for his third son, son Jacob, Jr. and 4th son, Joseph C. Word soon spread among the opportunistic Brethren to head north to purchase inexpensive land which would become farms for their sons. Thus they rapidly flocked to the area soon to become known as Eel River Settlement. So why other than cheap land was this so ideal for the Brethren?

The Eel River Settlement was ideal for the Brethren as they sought land that was isolated, for they tended to migrate in groups where they could establish new communities of their own and not have to assimilate into an already existing one, where their religious practices were often viewed as odd. During the French and Indian War (1756-63) many Brethren in Pennsylvania were killed by marauding bands of Indians, who were sympathetic to the French. The Brethren refused to take up arms to protect themselves (even though they owned and used rifles to hunt). During the Revolutionary and War of 1812 their doctrine of non-violence was viewed by their neighbors as supporting the British and that is the main reason they left Pennsylvania. Certainly another reason for their discrimination was because the Brethren refused to pay a tax required by law, for those who were willing to take up arms to defend their homes and country. Patriotism was much deeper than it is today and to not support the military efforts to protect your neighbors and country was treasonous.

Although this new Eel River Settlement in northern Indiana seemed perfect for the Brethren there were many barriers and pitfalls. The biggest pitfall to the area was that there was no infrastructure. There were trails rather than roads and the woods were so dense the owls had to fly out into the sky to determine if it were night or day. One had no idea where boundary lines were, so just attempting to start to clear land was next to impossible. Rivers were major barriers for settlement until fords or bridges could be constructed. Crossing a river was extremely difficult, if not impossible, especially if you had a wagon or goods of any quantity. The land north of the Eel River in Wabash county was not settled due to the fact there were no fords or bridges built. As one crosses the Eel River today, what looks like a rather small river was not at all small in 1835, especially if you can envision yourself as a pioneer in Jacob Metzger's shoes. The covered bridge in North Manchester was not constructed until 1872.

Nevertheless, the Eel River Community grew rapidly between 1835-1860. It was said that most of Montgomery County, Ohio moved to the North Manchester region. In fact, seven of Jacob's ten children moved to Indiana. Jacob did not have enough money when he traveled to Indiana in 1835 to purchase land for his 5th son, Solomon, whom he was obligated to provide a farm. In 1844, only 9 years after purchasing land for Jacob and Joseph for \$1.25 an acre, Solomon purchased a quarter section from Joseph Harter, on opportunistic Brethren, at a terribly inflated price of \$10.00 per acre, costing him \$1600.00, as opposed to \$200.00 just nine years earlier. If my calculations are correct that amounts to a 700% increase. Not knowing just how much land Brother Harter owned besides this quarter section of land, adds up to sizable profit for Brother Harter!

This is a 4 part series with emphasis on the Metzger family, one of the first families to settle in the Eel River Community.



The Lozier and Ruth Winesburg Rice Home
Located at 105 East Second Street
By Jodi Schultz Sanchez

The house was red brick with a concrete porch that extended the width of the living room with a solid wood wall that stood about 3 feet high. Two large windows were on either side of the front door that had an etched glass window. The large living room had a set of wood framed French doors on the right that lead into a large room that at first was called the sun porch. This room went through many transformations over the years. It was a bedroom for my parents and I was born in that room in 1940. It later was returned to a sun room or sitting room.

There was an arch on the left side of the room that led to the dining room. It had a closet on the left at the base of an enclosed staircase to the upper floor. The closet was later made into a bathroom with a sink. Ruth served noon meals to the local businessmen. One client was Dr. Wm. Damron, the dentist. Her table could accommodate 10-12 patrons that she cooked for during the war and depression period. There was a stairway off the kitchen that led to the basement, that had a wood burning furnace, later converted to coal, then electric. Canned goods were stored there also.

The back kitchen had an ice box and pitcher pump. The room off the kitchen in the back, was a storage and wash room that led to a large back yard with a lovely garden with flowers, fruits, vegetables and trees. There were three alleys that surrounded the property and Oppenheim's Store was directly in back. There was a chicken clearing house on the right where trucks brought crates of live chickens in from the farmers. (Operated by Ollie Burkhart). The house west of Ruth and Lozier's and in front of the chicken clearing house was that of Gladys and Ralph Walters. Grandma Ruth and I, if I was there, would go over and pick out a chicken for dinner. She would boil water for a big wash tub that she would dunk the chicken into in the back yard, and pluck its feathers. She taught me how to clean and dress chicken, squirrel and rabbit. The latter two were brought home by Lozier, my dad and Uncle Peck.

The second story started with six foot wide stairs, that ended with a short platform with a small narrow window on the right at the top. The only bathroom in the early years was at the top of the stairs, which had a claw tub, sink, toilet and closet. There were three bedrooms. The one to the front had a window seat, with a dark wine colored velvet pillow and a storage box under it. I would sleep in that room with grandma when I came to visit and grandpa would sleep in the room closest to the bath room. When I was a sophomore in college, I stayed there and slept in the middle room.

The yard and garden changed over the years. In the early years the garden extended from one side of the property to the other on the back part. There was a peach tree at the center and an apple tree was at the back left and a pear on the left side of the yard. There was a walk way that went from the back kitchen to the kitchen of the house next door, on the corner, which was the photography studio and home of Arthur and Johannah Rice.

Highlights from the Director

Summer time, and the living is easy... life is getting better every day! The Center for History is ready to welcome you back to downtown North Manchester. If like many, you have avoided public spaces for the last many months, you are long overdue for a visit. Our “Little Black Dress” exhibit is still on display and has received wonderful comments from our patrons. A new exhibit, “Local Veterans” opens on June 14. In it we share the stories of more than 20 local veterans from WWI up to Desert Storm. Friends and family reminisced with our contributing writer, Gladys Airgood, about their heroes and she was fortunate to be able to interview several veterans in person learning firsthand about their experiences. We are open 10-4 Tuesday through Friday and 10-2 on Saturdays.

This marks the second year of our collaboration with North Manchester Parks and Recreation as we welcome summer campers ages 5-11 to the museum. Sandy Bendsen and Diana Bucher have created an amazing program for the kids. They will be building log cabins, making butter, creating a story book about their family history – and lots more!

The Thomas Marshall House has been seeing more activity lately. We have coordinated with the North Manchester Public Library to host reading time in the backyard. Later this summer you will see young gardeners working the raised beds and some serious crafting will take place there as well. The Marshall House is the setting for the NM Historical Society’s July program as Thomas Marshall, a.k.a. Scott Strode, visits his old home and shares stories about his life. Remember the house is open the first Saturday of every month from 1:00-4:00 and will be open an extra day this month, June 19, for the Garden Walk.

The Center for History appreciates your membership in the North Manchester Historical Society and we want to remind you that your membership also includes access to the **Time Travelers**, a free reciprocal membership network for historical museums, sites and societies. All you have to do is ask or look it up on the address on the back of your membership card. I recently *forgot* to do this when visiting The History Center in South Bend – admission would have been free!

Our monthly educational series continues to be available on line. Visit our web site at www.northmanchestercenterforhistory.org to see our most recent program featuring Carrie Muford, Clerk Treasurer for the town. Upcoming programs include Erika Kambs from Habitat for Humanity and Keith Gillenwater, President and CEO of Grow Wabash County, presenting the Imagine One 85 initiative.

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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