

The Packet



Huntington County Historical Society News

❖
315 Court St.,
Huntington, IN 46750

❖
Phone:
260-356-7264

❖
Website:
www.huntingtonhistoricalmuseum.com

❖
Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/huntingtonhistoricalmuseum/>

❖
Email:
huntingtonhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com

❖
Museum Hours:
Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday —
10 a.m.-4 p.m.,
Saturday — 1-4 p.m.

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**April-May,
2023**

Historical Museum program puts local focus on Indianapolis 500

The green flag will wave at the Huntington County Historical Museum on May 17, when Huntington's Chuck Homier offers an insider's account of his involvement with the Greatest Spectacle in Racing — the Indianapolis 500.

Homier became one of Huntington's most successful entrepreneurs in the 1990s. His business led him to become a car sponsor — and even a pit crew member — in five Memorial Day classics. Along the way, he developed an enduring friendship with members of what is considered the first family of American auto racing — the Unsers.

In his presentation, "The 200-Mile-an-Hour Billboard," Homier will reflect on his association with some of the most prominent drivers and teams in what was then the Indy Racing League. His company, Homier Tools, sponsored entries for driver Johnny Unser at Indianapolis from 1996 through 2000.

Through his support



Chuck (second from left) and Pam Homier with Johnny Unser and the car he qualified in for the 1997 Indianapolis 500. Car owner Ron Hemelgarn is on the far left. | PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUCK AND PAM HOMIER

for Johnny, Homier became friends with several members of the Unser family, including the late Al Unser Sr. — a four-time "500" victor — two-time winner Al Jr., and Al Sr.'s brother Bobby, who won at Indianapolis in three different decades.

After building a thriving business selling tools through traveling truckload sales, Homier saw a sponsorship association with the "500" as a great way to promote his wares, building on the nationwide promi-

nence of the race and the credibility it offered.

He traveled to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on a rainy day in early May 1996, to talk with various racing teams about joining them as an associate sponsor. He struck a deal with a team that had Johnny Unser as one of its drivers, and the Unser connection was forged.

The Unser family asked Homier to be a charter member of the board of its racing muse-

Continued on Page 3

President's Report

There are many to thank for the events and successes of the Huntington County Historical Society and Museum.

Certainly the work of our staff, under the leadership of Director Barb Rupley, is foundational in the work, and there is continuous work to upgrade and modernize the displays, and discussions for future plans.

Before the work can even begin, there must be those in the community who care deeply enough about our mission to contribute their own time, talent, and other resources to the cause.

The contributions and the volunteers who work to help recreate the displays and the stories of our county's past are necessary to our present and future success.

Governmentally, the county commissioners have been steadfast and consistent in their support for museum projects and

the preservation of our heritage. They also provide input, and are very interested and involved.

In the corporate community, there are many who can rightfully claim ownership of many of the successes of the Historical Society for their kind and meaningful contributions to our efforts.

Some of those include the Huntington County Community Foundation, McElhaney-Hart Funeral Home, Meetinghouse Productions, Frederick's Photography, Our Sunday Visitor, Shuttleworth/ProMach, Novae, Schact-Pfister, Johnson Junction, Sportsmobile North, Clounie Landscaping, and Bailey-Love Mortuary.

Still other resources that the Historical Society uses include those from Lake City Bank, the Kroger Give Back Program, Slagel Construction, Wertenberger Tire, Juergens Hardware, Stine

Printing, Nick's Kitchen, Schroeder's, and Purviance House Bed and Breakfast.

Many local philanthropic organizations go out of their way to contribute to the Historical Society's mission and projects.

We also appreciate the time and contributions of Phi Chapter of Psi Iota Xi, American Legion Post 7, Tri Kappa, the Disciples of Christ Foundation, Sons of Union Veterans Champion Hill Camp 17, and the Huntington North JROTC.

Mentioning the JROTC brings to mind the Huntington County Community School Corporation itself, which is and has been an active participant in encouraging students and their families to take advantage of the experience of seeing the museum and studying our history.

We look forward to working even more closely with them in the coming year to plan a curriculum and displays aligned directly with the school curriculum through the direct leadership of our teachers.

In the preceding you can see a good and wide cross-section of a strong and mutually supporting community, and the Historical Society it supports is proud to display and record its heritage.

Lastly, it has become necessary for a longtime and hard-working board member, Richard Beemer, to resign his seat on the board for health reasons.

On behalf of the entire board, I thank Rick for his work on the board and for the museum, and his dedication to preserving the history of Huntington County. ❖

Chris Whitacre
President

Director's Report

Happy spring! As we move through spring and into summer, we have several activities planned at the museum.

During Heritage Days week we will host the Peacemakers Quilt Club, which will have a quilt show at the museum.

They will display quilts through the ages, including quilts that the museum has in its collection. Along with the quilt show on Saturday, June 17, the Huntington County Historical Society will have Nelson's Chicken at the museum,

located at 315 Court St., from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The price of the chicken is \$10 per half; we will also be offering pit-tatoes at \$4. We will have pre-sale tickets available beginning May 3. You can purchase those at the muse-

um during regular business hours, Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. or from any of the board of directors. As always, stop in at the museum to see us. ❖

Barb Rupley
Director

Huntington Township: From a rough, untamed frontier to a civilized society

By Jean Gernand

Imagine a land covered with primeval forests and underbrush so dense that it was almost impossible for humans to walk through. And in that wilderness were wolves prowling and howling, bears lurking, as well as bobcats, cougars, and of course, an abundance of deer.

This was the scene in the early 1800s in what was to become Huntington County, Indiana.

Indianapolis 500

Continued from Page 1

um in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He has served in that capacity for two decades and has helped negotiate the museum's impending relocation to Lincoln, Nebraska.

Homier will recount highlights from the time he and his wife Pam spent in the exciting, high-stakes world of auto racing in a program that will begin at 7 p.m. at the museum, 315 Court St. The program is free to Historical Society members, and there is a \$3 admission fee for non-members. Light refreshments will be provided.

For more information, contact the museum at 356-7254 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. ♦

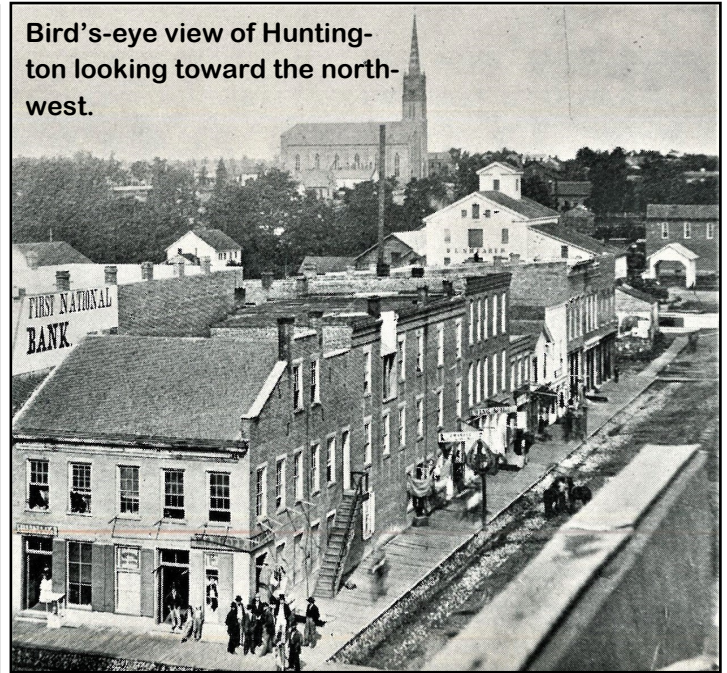
On May 5, 1834, Huntington County was organized and to chronicle the county's development, the Huntington County Historical Society in cooperation with the Huntington County TAB, began a series that featured the history of one township each month following the order in which they were organized.

The Historical Museum has a display of early maps dating back to 1866. A current county plat map will be available so that present-day residents can learn the history of their property.

A special attraction to the area that became Huntington has a large vein of flint that early Indian tribes used to make their tools and weapons. It was also a favorite home for the Miami Indians, and the Forks of the Wabash actually became their tribal headquarters in the early 1830s.

The first known permanent white settler, Artemus Woodworth, arrived in 1828 and built his log cabin on Silver Creek on the north side of the Wabash River, about 1½ miles from the present town of Andrews. Woodworth was a fur trader and later operated a supply station for workers who were busily constructing the

Bird's-eye view of Huntington looking toward the northwest.



Wabash and Erie Canal.

In 1831 two brothers, Joel and Champion Helvey, paddled their canoe up the Wabash River and became the first white settlers in what would become the town of Huntington. They built a large log inn along the little River and called it the Flint Springs Hotel, after the large springs near the present Lafontaine Center.

This spring actually provided the source of water for Hotel Lafontaine during its operation and was noted for its purity. A mural depicting the Flint Springs Hotel can still be seen in the museum, and a model of the building is on display. One of the brother's log cabin homes still stands at

726 East State St.

In 1833 Captain Elias Murray, a land agent for General John Tipton, filed a plat for the town at the Grant County Courthouse, where the earliest legal records had been kept. In his report to Tipton, Murray said, "It will be an excellent village and an ornament to the country."

According to tradition, Murray changed the name from Flint Springs to Huntington in honor of his uncle, Samuel Huntington, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Today Huntington County claims the distinction of being the only county in the state which has the same name for the county, township, and county

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Bob McKinley: A dear friend of HCHS who played a pivotal role at the museum

By Jean Gernand

With the recent passing of former museum director Bob McKinley, the Huntington County Historical Society and Museum lost one of the best friends it ever had.

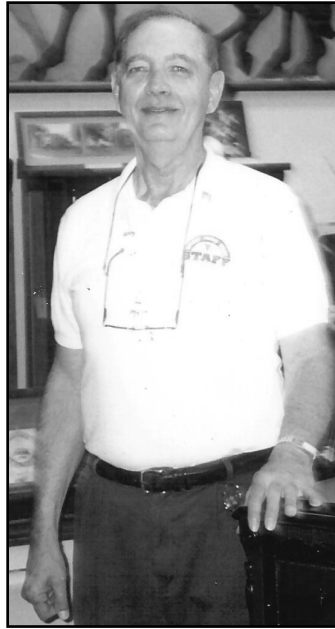
In the late 1990s, the county commissioners notified the Historical Society that the fourth-floor courthouse space the museum occupied must be vacated as it was needed for another use. Thus began a search for other suitable space.

After a failed attempt to acquire the old high school other options were considered.

A controversial vote was made by the board to merge with Historic Forks of the Wabash and combine treasuries with the promise of someday building the Historical Museum on Forks property.

When the membership voted to oppose this plan, the board members resigned in protest. In recruiting new board members, McKinley, who had just moved back from California, agreed to be a member and secretary.

Later that summer he was asked to serve as museum director. Jim Wasmuth served as treasurer, Jean Gernand as vice president and Mary Brooks, Jane Zahm, and John R. Michael were the other board members.



Bob McKinley, director of the Historical Museum from 1998 to 2003.

The quest for space continued until Brooks suggested the former Harold's Auto Parts building at 315 Court Street.

President Bill Abbott led the negotiations and the offer to purchase was accepted. McKinley and I successfully obtained a grant of \$90,000 from the Huntington County Community Foundation with the assistance of Wasmuth. (McKinley was so helpful we thought he might be an angel!)

The summer of 1999 was spent in the laborious task of wrapping, packing, and transporting countless items to the new building, and McKinley was a vital part of a tiny crew of volunteers who

moved all of the items except the large pieces of furniture.

He went far beyond his paid hours as director. He always had a warm welcome for visitors and helped

to increase membership and the number of museum visitors.

Bob played a pivotal role in those early years of the museum and his contributions should never be forgotten. ❖

Huntington Township

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seat. In 1834, the county was officially organized by an act of the Indiana Legislature. Tipton, a veteran of the War of 1812, a United States senator and Indian agent, is recognized as the founder of the town. He donated 51 lots to the county in 1835 as an enticement to make Huntington the county seat. Several streets still bear his name today, and Park Drive was originally called Matilda Street to honor Mrs. Tipton.

The first jail was built with double log walls and a cement layer in between. The only door was on the second floor with a trap door in the floor where prisoners could be lowered. Early minutes record a discussion of county officials on the question of whether to install a stove in the jail for the winter.

Shortly after the county's organization, the newly elected public officials proceeded to set up a tax rate for their constituents. A tax of fifty cents was levied on brass clocks, gold and silver watches, each pleasure carriage and yoke of work oxen, each white male citizen and each mule and horse in the county. Brass locks were also taxed at fifty cents each and town lots were fifty cents for each hundred-dollar valuation. One hundred acres of first-rate land was taxed at 40 cents, second-rate was 30 cents, and third-rate was 20 cents. In 1835, the license fee for wooden and brass clock peddlers was set at \$10 per year.

Early records indicate that a fine of \$3 was collected by the justice of the peace from a surprised settler for "swearing three profane oaths!" The same year the county sheriff was paid \$70 and the assessor received \$20 for his services. This reflects some attempt at maintaining a degree of civiliza-

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Huntington Township

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tion, which does not fit the common impression of the rough, untamed frontier.

The first death of a white settler was the wife of William Delvin and occurred in 1832 or 1833, and the first graveyard was located near the old Herald-Press building. This graveyard was later moved to an area behind Mount Hope Cemetery.

Early streets in Huntington were filled with stumps and logs. Mud was a frequent problem and pigs roamed freely throughout the town. A heavy rain would cause the wooden sidewalks to float away.

Two early roads came through Huntington and actually crossed each other at the southwest corner of the present-day courthouse. The Fort Wayne to Lafayette State Road

probably followed the early portage footpath, which ran from Fort Wayne to Fort Ouiate-non near Lafayette and had been used by early explorers, traders, and missionaries for more than 100 years.

The Fort Recovery to Goshen State Road enabled travelers from Western Ohio to reach the Lake Michigan area. Early settlers recalled having to travel all the way from Huntington to Goshen to obtain such scarce necessities as salt.

The very first section of the entire Wabash and Erie Canal to be completed ran between Fort Wayne and Huntington.

It opened with a grand celebration on July 4, 1835. The canal was a significant factor in enabling settlers to come into this area

more easily. It is said that after the canal began operating, as many as 200 settlers a day entered the state. There were seven canal locks within the county and three were located in the town of Huntington. An inn where travelers could spend the night still stands on West Park Drive across from Victory Noll. The streets in Huntington were designed to intersect the canal at right angles, making only First Street and Salamonie Avenue true north-south thoroughfares today.

In 1839 John B. Richardville, principal chief of the Miami Indians, laid out a town at the Forks of the Wabash. The town was to be called Richardville and each street was named for an American president.

Treaty negotiations at the Forks of the Wabash resulted in three

successful agreements in 1834, 1838, and 1840.

A dam across the Wabash River west of the bridge on Etna Road is a remnant of a once thriving settlement. It was named Coon and Coll for the men who founded it in 1835.

They constructed a sawmill but soon learned that the quickest way to get the lumber into Huntington was to float it down the Wabash to the Forks, then up Little River to the town as forest growth was still a problem.

In addition to the sawmill, the hamlet also contained a cider mill, gristmill, ice house, blacksmith shop, and several other homes.

The brothers also operated a ferry across the river. ❖

The history of Huntington Township will be continued in the June-July issue of The Packet.

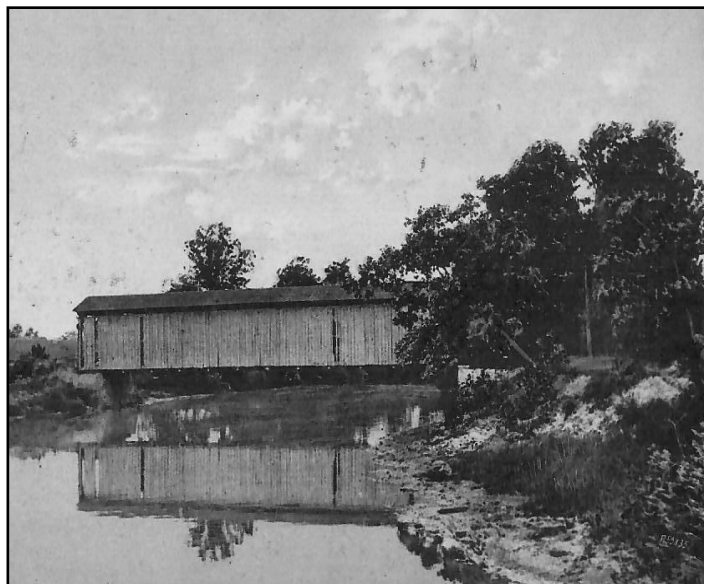
Who, what, or where was it?

❖ ❖ ❖
The photograph that appeared in the January-February-March 2023 Packet was identified. Three people correctly identified the photo, and Mike Perkins won the draw. He wins a bottle opener from the old Huntington Brewery. It was an aerial photograph of the town of Markle. The photo-

graph for the April-May edition is at right.

Call 260-356-7264 or email your answer to the Huntington County Historical Museum at huntingtonhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com.

We will put all the correct answers received in a container and draw a name. ❖



What is the name of this covered bridge, and which river in Huntington County did it span?

Thank you to our sponsors!

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Museum Gift Shop

We have a supply of gifts at the Historical Museum selected to entertain and educate. Please stop by and peruse our affordable selection of books, pamphlets, maps, and other items.

Rescued & Restored — Indiana Landmarks —
\$29.95

The Bash Chronicles: F.S. Bash by Jean
Gernand — **\$40 (was \$50)**

Historic Pictures of Huntington County — **\$25**

Only in Andrews, by Janice Harshbarger — **\$16**

The Forks of the Wabash — **\$12**

Images of America, Huntington — **\$22**

Wabash & Erie Canal (Book I, Book II, Book
III) — **\$12 each**

Ghost Towns of Huntington County — **\$10**

German Immigrants Come to Indiana: Adam
Schenkel Family — **\$10**

Buried Under the Family Tree — **\$13**

Nellie & Clare — **\$6**

Huntington County Interim Report: Historic Sites/
Structures — **\$5**

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Victorian Ghost Stories — **\$5**

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CDs of Huntington County Towns — **\$8**

Recipe Books — **\$5 each (3 for \$12)**

Post Cards — **\$0.50**

Roanoke — **\$15**

Growing Up in '45 — **\$11**

Historical Maps & Other Documents — **\$2 each**

A Little of This ... a Little of That ... and a Whole

Lot of Other Things, by Danny Lee Bickel — **\$10**

Erie Lackawanna (The West End), Volume #2 —
\$75

DVD: Hotel LaFontaine — **\$17.50 and \$20**
(Signed)

Newsletter Staff

Editor: *Richard G. Beemer*

Contributors: *Chris Whitacre / Barbara
Rupley / Mike Perkins / Jean Gernand*

Huntington County Historical Society Mission Statement

The mission of the Huntington County Historical Society is to preserve and promote the history of Huntington County.

Officers

Chris Whitacre, President
Bruce Lemar, Vice President
Amy Richert, Secretary
Steve Hart, Treasurer

Board Members

Kevin Bledsoe / Eric Bruce / Charles
Chapman / Dan Drummond / Barbara
Fetters / Mike Perkins / Dr. John Regan /
Linda Scheiber / Mark Stouder / James
Wilson / Gib Young

Giving through Internal Revenue Service's IRA rollovers allowed

Internal Revenue Service IRA Charitable
Rollovers are now permanent.

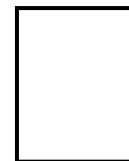
A bill passed in 2015 allows donors who are 70½ and older to make donations to qualified public charities such as the Huntington County Historical Society from their IRA accounts tax free.

In addition, the donations can be used to satisfy donors' required minimum distribution (RMD).

Donors simply need to notify their IRA custodians of their intent to make a direct transfer from their IRAs to a qualified public charity.

For more information, call Matt Ditzler at 260-356-8878. ❖

Huntington County
Historical Society, Inc.
315 Court Street
Huntington, IN 46750



Label

Huntington County Historical Society Membership Form



Huntington County Historical Society

Museum Hours: Wed., Thur., Fri. — 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sat. — 1-4 p.m. Phone: 260-224-7264;

Website: www.huntingtonhistoricalmuseum.com;

Email: huntingtonhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com; Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/huntingtonhistorical](https://www.facebook.com/huntingtonhistoricalmuseum)

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Your Yearly Membership Dues:

Student — \$5 Senior — \$20 Family — \$35

Single — \$25 Life — \$300 Sustaining — \$100

Donation _____ Signature _____

Make checks payable to and mail to: Huntington County Historical Society, 315 Court St., Huntington, IN 46750.

Membership Benefits: Free admission to museum; bimonthly newsletter; election of officers; become a volunteer at the museum; attend programs for free on Huntington County's history.