

# How Venetian Village Was Born

As property owners in Marshall County study their abstract of title, they find we were once a part of the state of Virginia. This was accomplished by an act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia on December 20, 1783. It took Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Hardy, Arthur Lee and James Monroe, then delegates in the Congress, to sign a deed transferring this territory to the United States government in 1784. The "Treaty of Tippecanoe, October 26th and 27th 1832" opened most of Marshall County to settlers.

The United States ceded large tracts of land for various purposes to the State of Indiana. These areas were designated as canal lands, Michigan Road lands, swamp land, saline land, university land, seminary lands and school lands, in some cases amounting to a subsidy for a project that would be of public benefit. Tracts were sold under various acts of the Indiana General Assembly, and patents were issued to the purchasers in the name of the state. A state commission surveyed these lands in 1829 and opened them to be sold in 1830.

In 1836, James Lanier was issued a patent on land south of Lake Maxinkuckee. In February

1842, this land was acquired by the Board of Directors of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad. The railroad executives chose not to use the land south of the lake but rather have the route going to the north.

During the intervening years, these lands south of the lake changed owners several times. In 1919, Daniel Easterday sold a part of this South Shore land, designated as lot number seven, to John Kline. In 1958, Clarence Kline requested approval of the Indiana Department of Conservation to construct water channels which would be open to the public.

In that same year, the land was sold to O.W. Macy of Cass County, Indiana. Articles of incorporation were approved on June 4, 1957, by the Secretary of State of Indiana. O.W. Macy's Inc. was prepared to create the Venetian Village Subdivision.

Macy named the streets Village Lake Road, Driftwood Drive (South Shore Drive) and Venetian Drive Road. The subdivision was divided into 48 lots, most of them 70 feet wide with some variation. All lots were to be for residential, single family homes. Everyone was required to have a sea wall. Several years later they were required to put rocks in front of the seawalls. This helped to clean the channels as

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**VENETIAN VILLAGE** was developed along the southeast shore of Lake Maxinkuckee in the mid-20th century, when channels were constructed and lots laid out for the new subdivision. This is a recent view, looking toward the lake.



well as to encourage the spawning of fish.

Charles Ted and Mary Grace (Tiny) Wildes decided they would like to build their home in Venetian Village. Tiny doesn't know if all buyers of property had the same experience, but Macy wanted to meet her before he would agree to sell the Wildes property. They were taken out to dinner to get acquainted. She was unsure if she was being tested, but, if so, she passed the test. Macy agreed to sell them property.

Charles Ted Wildes loved living on the channel so much that he became the protector of the area. Those boaters who ignored the "No Wake" signs would be reprimanded as they sped along. There were many who called him their honorary "Mayor of Venetian Village," as he watched over the wellbeing of the cottages and the people who lived in them.

One evening, their barking dog alerted the Wildes to the possibility of a problem in the neighborhood. Tiny called the police, and Ted went to see where the trouble might be.

A nearby cottage was being broken into. Dick (Woody) Woodward, a police officer at that time, responded to the call and took care of the situation. Woody kidded Tiny by telling her that he had one gun with only one bullet, just as Barney Fife had on the Andy Griffith show.

Even though Ted was known as the honorary mayor of the village, it became more official, to their surprise, as a sign appeared on South Shore Drive with the message, "Welcome to Venetian Village, Charles T. Wildes, Mayor."

A week later a picture of the sign appeared in the Culver Citizen.

Venetian Village was also a place for the younger generation to catch fish and turtles. Joel Johnston was one of the most successful. His story appears here.

(Many thanks to Tiny Wildes and Joel Johnston for their contributions.)

— Jo Dugger

## ***Capturing the Coveted Crown of 'Turtle King'***

The channels on the southeast shore of the lake were the most likely place to catch turtles, since this marshy area provided the perfect habitat. On one occasion, John Demaree and I caught 135 assorted turtles in a single day.

We used finger nail polish to paint numbers on their backs and then released them. With that record catch accomplished, we moved into the trophy-hunting phase to catch the biggest, meanest snapping turtle.

I grew up near the old marina that was located near the center of the South Shore. Henry Goodman and the other mechanics who worked at the marina always had a story of a monster snapping turtle they had seen.

John and I routinely checked the marina and on occasion caught a turtle that was average size, but we knew that "Old Mossyback" was out there somewhere. Ted Wildes lived on the main channel in Venetian Village and was my lookout there. He also had many stories of a huge snapper he had seen. I regularly surveyed the channels for evidence of this behemoth, but it eluded me.

There were many types of turtles we used to catch. The common names we used for them we either heard from adults or coined ourselves. There were leatherback, greenback, painted, mud or "stink-pot," map and, of course, snapping turtles. The leatherback is interesting, because it is a very fast-moving turtle both in and out of water. Catching one of them is a challenge, but through years of practice and studying their behavior, I mastered the technique. The snapping turtle, on the other hand, is very slow moving. Perhaps the danger involved in handling one of these beasts is what made the catch so alluring? All the boys involved in the snapping turtle trophy hunt wanted the accolades and recognition and to ultimately wear the crown of the "Turtle King."

There were "fish stories," of course, about the time when

the net broke and Old Mossyback got away. These stories only fueled the fire.

One day the king was crowned. John Demaree delivered a huge snapper to the old marina, where the men witnessed the leviathan. My recollection was that the turtle weighed in at 30 pounds. John held the crown for the entire summer. The next summer would be my chance to claim the crown.

I had caught so many smaller snapping turtles that I could easily predict their behavior. I had used a net to catch them for so long but had learned a new technique. I would spot the turtle, race over in the boat and quickly reach into the sediment to grab it by the tail.

The summer after John's big catch, I spotted a huge snapper's head and watched as it slowly withdrew into the water. The turtle was near shore in shallow water, so I pointed the boat in the direction of the sighting and cut the engine to drift quietly in.

As I skimmed away the algae on the surface over the turtle, my heart nearly leapt from my throat. I quickly grabbed the tail of the biggest snapper I had seen and tried to hoist it into the boat.

It clung with its huge claws to some branches deposited in the channel by beavers. When I finally managed to get the turtle in the boat, I felt a tremendous sense of pride and fear. As I started for home with my trophy, the turtle began to chase me around the boat with its gaping jaws, and I had to fend it off with an oar.

The turtle weighed in at 33 pounds, and I was finally able to wear the Turtle King crown. I would like to think that I still have it to this day, but I would also like to think that other boys have had such real life adventures and accomplishments.

— Joel Johnston



# Society Erecting Lighthouse in Park

The Culver Antiquarian and Historical Society is memorializing a structure from the community's past, with the erection of a lighthouse near the site of the original in the Culver Town Park.

The original Maxinkuckee Lighthouse is said to have been built around 1900. A picture taken at the base of the lighthouse on July 20, 1907, survives. The original lighthouse was erected of concrete block and stood 10 feet tall, built on the North Shore near the train depot and steamboat pier in Vandalia Park. The lighthouse alerted the steamboat captains to meet the night trains. There were six passenger trains every 24 hours. The lighthouse was blown down by the "Big Wind," on July 8, 1913, and never rebuilt.

The location of our lighthouse is as close to the original site as possible while also integrating it with other projects noted in the town park master plan. It will be directly in front of a new VFW fishing pier, which will be built to conform to the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act. It will be on a base approximately 18 feet in diameter, including a five-foot walk around the lighthouse.

The project should be finished this fall, having been started and completed in the same year, possibly a Culver "first." Dick Brantingham, project chairman from the Antiquarian Society, is working closely with Kelly Young, park superintendent; Mike Stallings, Friends of the Park; Leon Bennett, Park Board member and general contrac-

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**SHOWN WITH** the new lighthouse are president Bob Kreuzberger, left, and project chairman Dick Brantingham.

## Loyal Members Who Will Be Missed

Since the publication of our last newsletter, we have lost four Antiquarian members.

Frances Osborn Butler died on August 15. She was preceded in death by her mother, Minnie Shilling Osborn, her father, William O. Osborn, and her husband, Arden N. Butler. Her funeral was at the Bonine-Odom Funeral Home in Culver with interment at the Culver Masonic Cemetery. Several cousins and many friends will fondly remember her.

Jeanne Keller Epley died on September 9. She was preceded in death by her husband, Clarence W. Epley Jr., and has left a son, C. William Epley III, a daughter, Elaine Epley, four granddaughters and a great-grandson. She was loved as a mother, grandmother, teacher and by many friends who were blessed to know her. Her funeral service was at Grace United Church of Christ with burial in Culver Masonic Cemetery.

The society lost board member George Wilkins Jr. on September 10. He was a pediatrician in Granite City, Illinois, for many years before moving to Culver. A graduate

of Culver Military Academy, he continued to love and support that institution throughout his life. He is survived by his wife, Fran, and their four children. Their son Geoff is familiar to members of the Maxinkuckee Country Club as the man at the desk who keeps things going smoothly on the golf course during the summer months.

"The Rt. Rev. William C.R. Sheridan, 88, the retired Episcopal bishop of Northern Indiana, was called 'Father' by people of all faiths to whom he has ministered over the past 62 years," according to an excerpt from the South Bend Tribune obituary.

Bishop Sheridan died on September 24, and the sentence just quoted describes, although inadequately, the love and respect we all had for our faithful Antiquarian member and friend. Everyone wanted to talk to the bishop as he sat comfortably at meetings with Rudith at his side. We will miss him beyond words. Our heartfelt sympathy to Rudith, his wife of 62 years, their five children, nine grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

— Marcia Adams and Agnes Bramfeld





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## 'Rough Magicke' Theme of September Meeting

Our September meeting was graciously hosted by Clair Heise in her lake home on a perfect Saturday afternoon.

John Houghton, local author of the novel, **Rough Magicke**, told the members attending how he conceived the plot and developed it, using his large experience as a teacher and counselor and the works of Meredith Nicholson and Charles Williams as helpers, to produce the absorbing story about our neighborhood.

There were also, as always, remembrances of connections to the Heise house by several members who recalled the previous owners and long-ago happenings at the house.

This nostalgia, and the speaker's interaction with his

audience are among the things that make our meetings interesting and lively.

A social hour followed the program, and everyone reported having an enjoyable afternoon.

— Agnes Bramfeld

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### YEARLY DUES \$20.00

Send 2005 dues to the Antiquarian and Historical Society, if you have not already paid.

### Lighthouse

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tor, and Jon Guenin, town manager.

The society's decision to purchase the lighthouse and erect it in the park has given us another opportunity to remember one of the good things from the past and look to the future of our community. There will be news of the dedication, hopefully during the 2006 summer season.

— Dick Brantingham

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