

Museum Plans Move Forward

The long-anticipated local history museum sought by members of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Culver is moving closer to reality with the possibility of construction work beginning in the next few months.

The Museum Committee has been meeting regularly since early last year, especially after an agreement was signed between the society and the Culver-Union Township Public Library board, anticipating a museum located on the lower level of the historic Carnegie library in downtown Culver.

The agreement calls for us to provide the museum combined with a place for historical and genealogical research in the same quarters. The current plan is for the research area to be concentrated on the stage, which would be reached by way of a ramp that would meet Americans With Disabilities Act standards.

The library is to provide access into the museum along with necessary utilities, including lighting, heat and cooling.

Members of the committee have visited many other history museums in recent months and have been in contact with several professional museum designers, according to Fred Karst, committee chairman.

"Our goal is to create a museum that will tell the story of the Culver community, the Indians, the town, the lake, the academies and the rural parts of Union Township," Karst said.

A public announcement was made in April with a news release that was distributed through the library board to area news media.

The first stage of construction is expected to create an environment suitable for the museum in the space available to the society. Chris Landskron, whose credentials include professional experience in interior design and who formerly owned the shop, Interior Views, which she moved to Culver, prepared the interior plan, which would preserve the Carnegie library ambiance. Her design also would bring the space up to current standards and would blend the decor with the design of the newer parts of the library, including oak paneling.

A contract for the initial work is expected to be signed as soon as authorization is received from the society's board of directors.

The Museum Committee has received help from the Indiana Historical Society in bringing its goals into focus and in the preparation of an accessions policy and documents to be used to record accessions and loans and for

the de-accession of artifacts that do not contribute to the society's mission.

Applications are being sought in the community from persons willing to volunteer to serve on the Accessions Board, which will select items to add to the museum's collection in keeping with the accessions policy. Donations of artifacts for the museum collection have been increasing in the last few weeks, even though there has not been any public appeal for donations of historic items. Anyone interested in serving on the board is encouraged to contact Jeff Kenney at the Culver library. Kenney is both a library staff member and the secretary of the society and the Museum Committee.

"This is a truly unique community, and we believe the museum will serve to create an awareness of its significance for both residents and visitors," said Jim Peterson, chairman of the board.

The museum is the most ambitious undertaking of the Antiquarian and Historical Society since its founding. Other projects have included republication of historic documents, a CD Rom, designation of three National Register historic districts, the creation of Heritage Park and the restoration of the historic lighthouse in the Culver Town Park.

Members of the Museum Committee include: Fred Karst, chairman; Marcia Adams, Jo Dugger, Dusty Henricks, Jeff Kenney, Chris Landskron, Dorothy Peterson, Ron Cole (liaison to the library board), Ted Schenberg (liaison to the Finance Committee), Agnes Bramfield and, ex-officio, society President Bob Kreuzberger and Chairman of the Board Jim Peterson.

The Finance Committee is made up of Jim Peterson, E.P. Severns, Ted Schenberg, Leo G. Watson M.D. and Dave Zeglis.

It is anticipated that a fund drive will be launched as the project moves forward and that money in the form of grants will also be sought for the museum.

Meanwhile, a subcommittee of the Museum Committee is preparing a display for the downstairs lobby of the library in order to give a foretaste of the story the museum will tell. The exhibit will be located near the two display cases provided earlier by the society, which will be used in the new display.

Serving on that subcommittee are Marcia Adams, Agnes Bramfeld, Fred Karst, Jeff Kenney and Chris Landskron.

Several other members of the society have been active in their support of the museum project. There will be additional needs for assistance as the actual work gets under way. Regular reports on the progress will be given at each meeting of the society and in future issues of the newsletter.

Village of Maxinkuckee Remembered

In the mid-1800s, the village of Maxinkuckee was centered along Lake Street about one-half mile east of Lake Maxinkuckee. When the Marshall County roads were numbered in a logical system, Lake Street became 18B Road. Many refer to it as Maxinkuckee Road.

The village's magnificent view of the lake changed as the trees grew taller. Settlers from southern Indiana began coming to this community in 1836. Two streets were platted in Maxinkuckee, the north-south Washington Street, (now Queen Road) intersected with Lake Street.

In the early days, the place that became the village of Maxinkuckee was one of two communities in the area that grew into Marshall County, sometimes called the "lower settlement." The other, referred to as the "upper settlement," also became known as Wolf Creek.

Maxinkuckee was originally called by the unflattering name of "Fizzletown." The roads between the two settlements were considered important and an effort was made to keep them open in all kinds of weather.

The land on both sides of Lake Street was part of a reservation belonging to Chief Nees-wau-gee and his brother, Chief Quash-quah.

Ed Morris wrote of his family's friendship with the Indians of Nees-wau-gee's village, as they lived about two miles apart. His mother visited often. The village consisted of housing built for the Indians by the United States government in 1828. The first dwelling on the lake was built by H.H. Scott of Illinois, a few rods north of the resi-

dence of Peter Spangler. A village spread out from the cabin occupied by Chief Nees-wau-gee. Ed Morris' uncle, Eli DelMoss, was one of the carpenters said to have built cabins in the tribal village.

Chief Quash-quah was reported to have had a cabin south of Lake Street, but he apparently delegated most of his authority to his brother, Nees-wau-gee.

George Winter, a British-born artist who painted many of the Potawatomi Indians before the government removed most of them from this area, described Chief Nees-wau-gee in this way: "He was an intelligent man, deeply knowledgeable of protocol and able to recall mundane discussions in some detail. He was dignified in his manner, tall in stature; his long flowing hair fell with much grace on his shoulders. He was far from being handsome, yet he was a remarkable looking Indian."

"Chief Nees-wau-gee was one of the principal negotiators for the Pottawatamies. His scale as an orator was seemingly only surpassed by the flashiness of his attire. He displayed a fondness for stark colors and flowing fabrics, being dressed in a caped, long shirt. He wore a red sash when I rendered his likeness." Nees-wau-gee was sometimes called "the lawyer and the councilor."

Maxinkuckee is credited with having one of the first schools in the county. In 1836-37 Thomas McDonald opened a school in a temporary residence, on the property of Vincent Brownlee. McDonald taught school during the day. At night, by the light of a turnip light (a type of

kerosene lamp), he made and mended boots and shoes for family and neighbors.

A first attempt was made to build a Union Township school in 1840. The residents were given the right to vote on whether or not to accept this proposition for a school for the children. The vote was 38 in favor, 21 opposed.

A hand-hewn log school was built about a



Guy and Chester Bigley built a new store in 1907, replacing their earlier store nearby. The two-story brick building was torn down in September 1969 to make way for a lake cottage.

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half-mile to the east of the original school. When school was in session, the adults recalled the pleasure it was to hear the students at noontime as they made the woods sing with their shouts of joy and laughter.

In 1906, the taxpayers of Union Township were interested in building a first-rate school at a moderate cost to the people of the township. A beautiful location was secured on the corner of the Bigley farm at the intersection of Washington and Lake streets. The builder, Fred Thompson, completed the school in 60 days. The school was closed in 1937 as students began attending Culver schools.

The Bigley Orchard became a thriving business in the village. The 80-acre farm has been in the Bigley family since 1844. The farm received a Hoosier Homestead Award from Governor Bowen and Lt. Gov. Robert Orr in 1981.

The orchard began with the determination of a young widow to give her children a better life.

Daniel and Susanna Fisher (born 1789) lived in Peru, Indiana, with their seven children. Susanna was widowed in 1833. To support her family she cooked for men who were digging the Wabash and Erie Canal.

She asked her oldest son, John, to seek a place where her family could prosper. It happened they would prefer living near Lake Maxinkuckee. John made the trip to Marshall County and chose land about one-half mile east of the lake. In 1844, John, with his mother's money, went to the land office in Logansport to make a payment for an 80-acre farm.

Susanna and her family came to Maxinkuckee and built a meager log house. The following year they completed the payment of \$1.25 per acre.

Settlers were encouraged to come to northern Indiana by the bargain prices of land. Much of this area became known as "Canal Lands," as the proceeds from the sale of land were used to build canals.

John Fisher had helped his mother find property and the home she desired. He had been longing to make the trip to the California Gold Rush. He began his journey in 1850 but died along the way, never reaching his destination.

Susanna's daughter, Amelia, married Edward Bigley. Edward also felt the call of the Gold Rush. He operated a supply store for miners in California. Money and gifts were sent home, including a pair of gold-dollar earrings. He set out to return home by way of the water route around the tip of South America but was never heard



An early photograph shows the interior of the original cider bar and sales room at the Bigley Orchard.

from again, probably lost at sea.

Amelia's mother died in 1854. Amelia was left with a small son and four orphaned nephews. Times were hard. In 1861, she married William C. Smith. William felt called to enlist in the Army at the time of the Civil War and was killed in 1862. Amelia received a widow's pension.

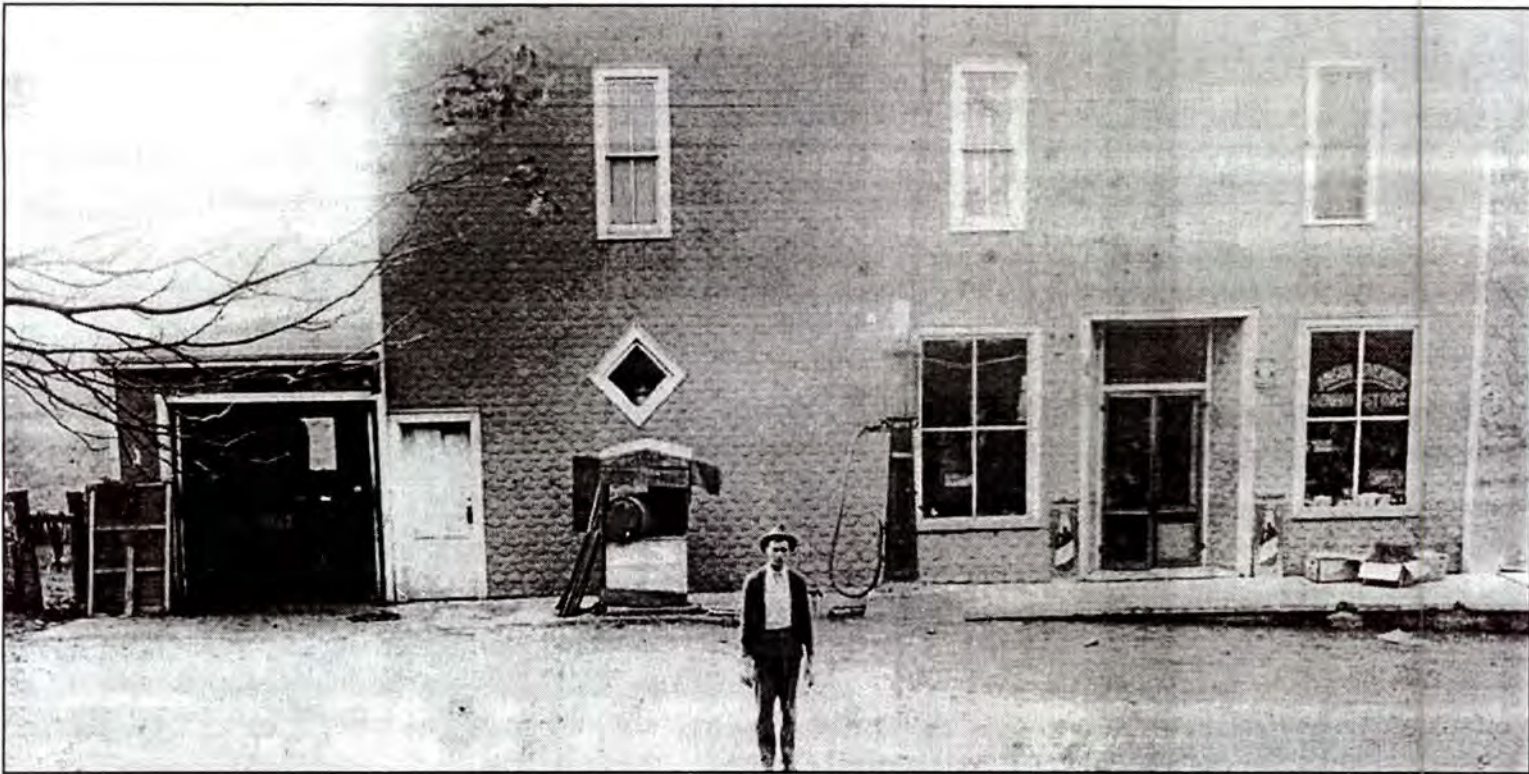
Thomas Jefferson Bigley, Amelia's 10-year-old son, dropped corn for their neighbors in return for plowing. Over the years, he cleared their land.

In 1875, Thomas married the neighbor girl, Jane Benedict. Jane's father Aaron had dammed a creek around 1863 on the Bigley property, creating power for a saw mill and a grist mill. Thomas cut timber from the farm as he built a new home and barn, using the Benedict sawmill in Maxinkuckee.

Amelia lived in comfort at Thomas and Jane's home until her death in 1917. Thomas' grandmother, Susanna, had willed a part of the land to Amelia. Friends called her "Aunt Millie." She spun wool yarn, knitted socks for neighbors' sons and helped the neighbors when they were sick. For those who could not write, she wrote letters. She named her great-grandson John Fisher for her favorite brother. What joy she had in telling him stories of the pioneer days and her Indian friends. They had taught her many things and brought fish, venison and other wild game in exchange for corn meal. Her Indian friends showed her how to use red clay as a reflector in her fireplace. She said some of them escaped being taken on the Trail of Death by hiding in the marshes.

The village of Maxinkuckee grew with more families mak-

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Anson Overmyer stands in front of his store on Lake Street in the village of Maxinkuckee. The building previously had been the Parker-Wise Store. At various times the store building also housed the post office and the IOOF lodge. (Photo courtesy of Helen Overmyer)

ing their homes there along Lake and Washington Streets.

Elizabeth Wingert was born in Germany. She longed to visit her sister, who had immigrated to America. When her father gave his permission, she prepared warm clothing for the trip. In the mid-1800s, it was necessary for passengers to prepare dried fruit and vegetables for the journey by sailing ship. The only fresh food they had was from flying fish that landed on the deck. By train and boat, towed by mules up the Erie Canal, she arrived in Buffalo, New York. It was there that she met and married Debolt Klein.

Debolt and Elizabeth had heard of land offered at \$1.25 an acre if the buyer would promise to improve it. The couple thought nothing could be better than beginning a home in the West, in Indiana. They wanted to be all American and changed the spelling of their name to Kline.

When they settled near Lake Maxinkuckee, as was the custom, the settlers built the newcomers a log house with a fireplace of native stone. The home eventually housed seven children.

If the sons of the family did not care for farming, they found other occupations. George made fine shoes; two sons were carpenters. Their grown children were told, "You should always work at the thing you like best to do."

In 1860, Eli Parker and John Wise opened a store diagonally across the street from the school. There were apartments on the second floor.

The village of Maxinkuckee had a store, a blacksmith, a church and an Odd Fellows Lodge. The population was

about 150 people.

A corner of the Parker-Wise Store was reserved for the Maxinkuckee Post Office. George Spangler, the son of Peter and Elly Spangler, recalled the process of delivering the mail. "When the mail came in, it was put into a wooden bucket. The store, at mail time, would be filled with people around and about. The postmaster, as he shouted out the names of those receiving mail in a voice that could be heard from one end of the store to the other, would throw, hurl or fire the mail at addressees. His aim was true. He seldom pitched a bad one and could have qualified for a baseball team. At the receiving end, the catchers were nearly all adept, too." The coming of Rural Free Delivery in 1902 ended the local post office. The second owner of the store was Anson Overmyer.

The IOOF held meetings on the second floor of the Parker Store. On the east side of the building was an iron staircase used to access the meeting room.

The cornerstone of the Maxinkuckee Christian Church records its construction on the north side of Lake Street in 1888. After a fire destroyed the nearby East Washington Church in 1914, some of the insurance money was used to repair the Maxinkuckee Church. The building later became a Methodist Church but was discontinued in the 1960s.

It was later purchased by the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. William C.R. Sheridan as their retirement home. Sheridan had been the Episcopal bishop of Northern Indiana. They converted the church into a home while preserving most of the

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church features. Bishop Sheridan died in 2005.

Thomas Jefferson Bigley was a charter member of the Maxinkuckee Christian Church.

The land that Thomas Bigley had cleared was rolling and slightly hilly, not good for grain but more suitable for fruit. John Fisher Bigley made the first planting of apples and peaches in 1928. The orchard was one of the largest in Indiana. He and Beatrice built a home. There was no income yet from the young orchard. John built sea walls, did landscaping and raised vegetables for market. He also raised hybrid seed corn. The orchard became quite productive, producing peaches before apples. A refrigerated cold storage unit was added and a 250-gallon cider press, as well as a sales room for doughnuts, candy and apples. The boys, Bryce and David, helped.

When the school was no longer in use, it was converted into cold storage for apples. The building is now a County Historic Landmark.

In 1907, Guy and Chester Bigley built a two-story brick building to replace a smaller Bigley store on the northwest corner of Lake Street and the Lake Road (East Shore Drive). In this new grocery store, there was a meat market, an ice cream parlor as well as a tea room. Gasoline and kerosene were also available.

A large wheel at the side of building helped to carry water from an artesian well to the living quarters. Many people recall filling their drinking water jugs at the store.

After buying out Chester's interest, Guy and his wife, Mabel, operated the store. John, their son, remembered his experiences and how popular the store was for lake residents and visitors. Visitors could partake of refreshments at the store if they were staying overnight at the Spangler Allegheny House or going a short distance to Sarah Jane Rector's house for meals and lodging.

The telephone company occupied two of the rear upstairs rooms. Two rooms at the front of the building were rented as living quarters.

About 1932, they sold the store to Sarah Jane Rector. The present owners of the property took the store down in 1969 to build a cottage.

A livery stable operated by Dow Rector was on the north-



The The Manor Market, known earlier as the R & J Market, is shown in a view from June 1, 1970, apparently after a wind storm.

east corner of the crossing. He rented horses and rigs and did dray business.

Manor Market was later built on this corner. It caught fire and burned on a cold night in December 1985.

— Jo Dugger

Sources:

The Bigley Family History, courtesy of Bryce and Ann Bigley.

John and Beatrice Bigley writings of local history.

Robert Rust's written history of Marshall County.

A Twentieth Century History of Marshall County, Vol. I, Thomas McDonald.

History of Marshall County 1836-1880, Daniel McDonald.

As I Remember Grandmother, by Bertha Cornell, courtesy of Robert Kline.

Marshall County Surveyor's Office.

Culver Citizen.

Culver-Union Township Public Library, History Room.

Marshall County Historical Museum.

Indiana and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter.

In Memoriam: Chris Stubblefield

On January 9, 2007, we lost Allene "Chris" Stubblefield, a tireless contributor to the work of living a good and useful life.

Most of us have worked with or enjoyed the company of Chris, either in the community or at the Culver Academies, and miss her patient instruction, good humor and good sense.

Our condolences go out to her husband, Frank, board member and committee chair for many of our activities in the Antiquarian and Historical Society.

Her children and grandchildren, her many friends and the Culver and Academies communities have suffered a grievous loss.

We will remember Chris.

— Agnes Bramfeld

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Time to pay 2007 dues

Now that your income taxes are paid and before you see the new real estate tax bills, please help the Antiquarian and Historical Society continue to do its good work by paying your 2007 dues. This is the first request for the \$20 contribution we ask from each family.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is an article about our exciting plans for a history museum in the library, and we are still maintaining the beautiful Heritage Park in downtown Culver. Check out the landscaping improvements. Thank you for your cooperation in paying the bills.

— Agnes Bramfeld

YEARLY DUES \$20.00

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