

# Clarksville Historical Society

NEWSLETTER



Volume 11 #8

October 2007

## Notice

Because your newsletter person is taking a rather long vacation to travel, and because I didn't think members would want to go newsletter-less for 2 or 3 months, I am putting together the October newsletter in August. To do that I could not have material that was current to October, so I decided to have the oposite.....selections of past years.

Those of you who have saved newsletters for many years will find the material familiar. However, we have many new members who have not seen items from our early newsletters. This is their chance to recapture the past of the Clarksville Historical Society that they missed in the early years.

**October Meeting 2007**

**Clarksville Community Center**

**October 10th - 5:30 p.m.  
Social time at 5:00 p.m.**

**Speaker: Gary Purlee, on the  
Local Cyclone of 1913**

## *From the June 1997 issue*

As a result of the June meeting votes, changes are underway for the future of the History Committee. On September 1st, the name will become the Clarksville Historical Society. Dues will be \$10 per year. Paid members will receive the newsletter. Those who are members on the September 1st date will be considered Charter Members of the Society and will have their names placed on a plaque in the Municipal Center.

Pat Hommel, Mary Virginia McBride, and Pat Knight are working on by-laws for the Society.

## *Field Trips of Years Past*

Riverfront History Walk  
Locust Grove  
Portland Museum  
Meeting at the old Car Works  
Meeting at Colgate  
Dry Silver Creek Walk  
Wet Silver Creek Walk  
Covered Bridges of Southern Indiana  
The John Hay Library & Museum in  
Salem

## *Early Ferries*

The first ferryman below the falls was Moses McCann, at Clarksville, who had a ferry across the mouth of Silver Creek. In those days, ferry rights were included with property rights and was written into the deeds of ferry sites. These early ferries could be anything from a flat boat to a canoe or a skiff.

A resident of the west side of Silver Creek, John Carson, kept the ferry at a later time. Mr. Carson owned no land, but built a cabin on the western side of Silver Creek and has the distinction of being the first resident of what was to become New Albany.

## *Fond Memories of McCulloch School*

Mrs. Dolly Carter was a teacher at McCulloch School. She had her student do deep breathing exercises by the open classroom windows each morning, in all seasons.

## *Clarksville in 1872 (a.k.a. Ohio Falls)*

The Trustees of Ohio Falls met at Falls View Hotel on Monday last. An ordinance which reads as follows was offered and adopted.

*"Be it ordained by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Ohio Falls, that any person or persons caught bathing in any public place in a naked or nude state, between the hours of 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. on and after the first of July, shall be fined in a sum not less than \$2, and not exceeding \$5, together with the costs of the suit."*

## *Hot John Manning*

*by Don McDonough*

Hot John lived in a trailer below the Falls of the Ohio. He was a real riverman and worked as a commercial fisherman most of his life. He once operated a bait house in Portland at Louisville and knew a lot of people along the river.

Daily there was a steady stream of visitors to his place, and he was well-liked by all who knew him. I was his mailman and saw him every day for a number of years.

He was an interesting character and a real story teller. One story about the 1937 flood had him rowing a boat through a west end Louisville supermarket shopping for groceries. He gave some of it to others.

Another tale was about a strange looking fish he caught in the river and pulled into his boat. He claimed its eyes followed his every move. I asked him what he did with it. Did he call U of L or someone knowledgeable about the subject?

He said, "Hell, no. We were hungry! We ate it!"

Once when the Ohio River was at flood stage and everyone around him was moving to higher ground, he stayed put. I was worried about him and tried to get him to evacuate too.

He said, "Don't have to - the river will get up to that tree over there." It did just that. Hot John knew the river well.

When he passed away a friend of his gave me \$20 that Hot John had told him to give to me. I bought a round of drinks with it. I know he was smiling.

He gave more than that to me. I'll never forget this unforgettable character and his kindness to others. I never knew how he got the nickname "Hot John," but he was one cool dude. I miss him.

## *The CHS Meeting of March 1997*

Twenty-two Clarksville history patrons attended the meeting. We welcomed new friends, Paul Cualfield, Georgia Avery, Robert Kissinger, and Don and Sue Munich.

The video subcommittee reported on plans to video the photo collection and all of the museum's collection. Kathy Chaney offered to bring her video camera and help with that project during the High School's spring break.

The committee also hopes to develop a video of Clarksville history. This will be a large and expensive undertaking. Lynda Meyer discussed possible funding sources. Pat Hommel reported that Mr. Minta has offered to serve as consultant for fund-raising efforts.

Mr. Popp announced that the Town Council will consider the two names for old Highway 62 that the committee selected and choose the new name at the March 25th Council meeting. Proponents for each name are invited to come to the meeting and present the case for their preference. (*The two names were - Midway and Brown's Station Way. You can see which won.*)

Mr. Don Munich gave a very interesting and entertaining talk about Clarksville as he remembers it in the thirties. Don lived in three neighborhoods during his thirty-odd years here: Ohio Falls, Howard Park, and Lincoln Heights.

His first residence was a three-story, twelve-room house on the river above the falls. This home was built by a wealthy Louisvillian named Hochstrasser. It had a hand operated elevator and a carriage house with a mushroom garden under it.

Don's mother was Irish, and a Catholic, and he spoke of the activity of the Ku Klux Klan in Clarksville. The Klan, which met at a local church, burned a cross alongside their home.

Many homes did not have running water then, and water was obtained from hydrants on the street corners. Windows had no screens and houses did not have bathrooms, but outdoor privies.

Menus consisted mostly of chicken, pork, beans, eggs, biscuits, and bologna. Watermelons were hung by ropes in the cistern to cool.

It was considered stylish to whitewash tree trunks.

Colgate paid workers 14 cents an hour.

Diseases such as Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, and Tuberculosis were rampant.

Don gave some interesting insights into Clarksville Fishing Culture. The activity on the riverbank was a big part of life at that time. Some men spent their days sitting on the bank, whittling. Many fishermen made their living by using illegal cast nets to catch fish, which they sold at four cents a pound. There was a particular protocol as to the order in which the men could cast their nets; the first to arrive put his net in first and the others waited their turn in order of arrival. They went to a shoe cobbler at 6th and Indiana in Jeffersonville to get hob nails put on the soles of their shoes, so they could navigate the slippery rocks.

The River culture led to some interesting characters. One man drilled holes in his floor so that, when the floods came, the water would drain out quickly and he could rinse the mud out more easily. Another man, who liked his beer, hung bottle openers all over the house on string from the ceiling, so he would always have them handy.

There was a cobblestone road along the river from Clarksville to New Albany until the construction of the floodwall supplanted it. The levy was built wide enough to be paved on top as a replacement for the road, but neither the town nor the Corps ever completed the plan.

Our thanks to Don Munich for a wonderful look at the thirties in Clarksville.

## *World War Two in Clarksville*

- George Eglund, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, has announced that, because of the European situation and possible activities of foreign sympathizers in the country, his company is increasing the guard of the Pennsylvania Bridge to prevent sabotage.

The bridge has been guarded by one watchman, but, effective at once, there will now be three watchmen on the structure at all times.

- A blackout was staged on June 24, 1942. Not a single violation was reported and the citizens of Clarksville were commended very highly by the Army officers in charge of this area for the fine cooperative spirit they showed.

- War Damage Insurance was offered. The contact for the insurance was Harry Loomis, at phone 403. Harry also served as coordinator for the Clarksville Civilian Defense.

- In December of 1942 the construction of a paved highway on the top of the Clarksville dirt section of the Jeffersonville flood defense system was cancelled, at least for the duration of the war, by the War Production Board, due to shortages of labor and strategic materials.

The plan to build a blacktop highway from near Sherwood Avenue to near Harrison Avenue, a distance of nearly 2 miles, was thought to help preserve the floodwall, as a soft surface on the levee would tend to wash away in severe rains. The road was expected to relieve the traffic burden on Lincoln Drive and Clark Boulevard and would have extended past the Ohio River Falls and other picturesque spots in town. ■

## *1937 Flood, First Hand*

*Rosemary Prentice, who was a devoted member of CHS until she passed away, donated a copy of an unusual document to the museum. It is a diary, kept by a Jeffersonville woman who decided to ride out the flood at home, and whose name is unknown. What is known is that she had a gift for descriptive writing that allows us to picture life in that stressful time. We serialized the diary in 1999. We present here an excerpt from it.*

It's now 10 a.m. o'clock. Here comes Charles and a truck with dad's furniture and the rest of the coal. We got one-half ton now. I'll sure stretch it out. Charley says she is still coming up. We talked a while before he left. Says he will be back tomorrow, but I think its useless to try, for there is only one way out of there now and it will probably be closed in by morning.

Well, we can ride her out for 2 weeks. I got the bathtub filled with drinking water, also 4 gal. jugs, a 10 gal. jar and 11 qt. bottles, for the water supply can't last long. The dogs can drink the surface water outside. Guess we will start boiling our water tomorrow or when they cut us off, and I have to tap my supply.

Its starting to sleet now and getting colder. Radio is off. No lights now at all at 5 p.m. We got the candles out and are just about halfway through supper. Its getting colder now and at 8 o'clock is still sleeting. Well, off to bed and see what tomorrow brings. Hope we can get current to run the radio. But guess we won't for I expect the water is over them. Gas has been off since last nite. Guess it will be water next. All street cars and buses are at a standstill in Louisville. Going to bed now.

Jan. 23rd. Sat. morning. Out of bed at 9:30. Boy, I sure slept last night. First sleep in two days. Hear an airplane going over. Yes, its a big yellow plane with Boak Carter on the plane wing. Gues the old boy is after something to talk about. Well, he will get it. ■